

**RESEARCH REPORT ON**  
**“DISABILITY and the TSUNAMI in INDIA”**  
**PART II**

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## **Research findings:**

This research makes serious and sincere attempt to review the current responses in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency and conflict situations across the globe. This part of the research report throws light on the current responses in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Tsunami affected areas of India. The research findings are largely based on the responses of the various respondents from different stakeholders. The data was collected through using questionnaires, interviews, focussed group discussions, field visits, interactions, case studies and meetings with the respondents. The detailed report has been submitted in the month of May 2005 and this is the addition of the facts, which have been collected after the first draft report was written. The research findings are also based on the general observations, informal interactions with different players concerned and review of reports, studies and research reports conducted by various agencies by the researchers.

### **1. Laws and policies:**

There is a well-developed framework of policies and institutions for the development of persons with disabilities in India. The core disability legislations include, The mental health act 1987; The rehabilitation council of India act 1992; Persons with disabilities, equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation act 1995 and national trust for persons with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism and multiple disabilities act 1999. The persons with disabilities equal opportunities act is a comprehensive and progressive legislation, which includes the provisions for the holistic development of persons with disabilities. Apart from these core legislations there is a well-established institutional framework, which looks in to the issues of persons with disabilities. The institutional framework consists of 6 national institutes, national trust, rehabilitation council, national commission, national information center, national center for the welfare of persons with disabilities and other institutions. All these policies, legislations and institutions do not speak specifically about the responses during emergency or conflict situations. Even if these institutes respond during emergencies and conflict situations, the response is limited to assessment, distribution of assistive devices, surgical and other medical interventions required during the situations.

There is a national policy on emergency and conflict situation in India. The national policy is not inclusive of persons with disabilities. This does not mention about persons with disabilities and responses of the state to include persons with disabilities during the situation. The national policy focuses more on disaster situation than conflict.

The national emergency management authority is the apex body, which is responsible for preparing strategies and policies on emergency and preparedness. Apart from policy and strategy formulation it has to coordinate between different state departments and institutions to plan, implement, monitor, review and evaluate emergency operations but it is proved not so effective during emergencies of past and present. There is an emergency information center, which has to provide appropriate and timely information about emergencies, but this center has not reached to the needy people who require information.

The majority of the international disability and development agencies have policies on emergency and conflict situations. The disability agencies have a clear-cut policy on disability where as most of the development agencies do not have specific policies on inclusion of persons with disabilities. These agencies are well aware of state policies on emergency and conflict. Most of the local disability and development agencies have no policy on emergency but they respond to the need during emergency as organisational general policies mandate them to under take timely and appropriate interventions. Majority of these agencies are not aware of the state policies on emergency and conflict.

## **II. Stake holder's responses:**

The stakeholders are broadly classified in to 8 broad categories for the sake of distinction of their roles and focus. These stakeholders include:

1. State represented by the local State officials:
2. International disability agencies [Disability Ingo's]:
3. International development agencies [Development INGOs]:
4. National disability agencies [Disability NGOs]:
5. National development agencies [development NGOs]:
6. Disabled people's Organisations [DPOs]:
7. Persons with disabilities and families:
8. Communities:

### **1. State, represented by state local officials:**

The researcher has interviewed 6 state officials of the state at different levels from different departments. These officials include, official in charge of Tsunami operations in the region, district administration, disability department, disability commissioner and other departments. The response clearly indicates that there are no conscious efforts to include persons with disabilities in relief and reconstruction work by the state however Persons with disabilities are included in the operations along with other affected people. The extent of inclusion of persons with disabilities is limited to distributions of, surgical interventions, relief materials, compassion and other relief operations. There are no specific strategies to address the specific needs and issues of persons with disabilities. The official are not clear about the emergency policy of the state and provision

for persons with disabilities. The state has conducted survey of persons with disabilities but there are no figures available of those who acquired disability due to Tsunami. Camps have been conducted to distribute Assistive devices. The general feeling is that persons with disabilities are also included in the process with out any kind of discrimination. In contrary to this the NGO responses reveal that a section of affected people are discriminated in the operations. These groups include, Dalith [scheduled caste] other fisher folk other than traditional fisher folk and persons with disabilities. This shows that there is sheer exclusion of persons with disabilities in the operations.

## **2. International disability agencies:**

The researchers have collected information from the following agencies:

**A. Handicap International [HI]:** HI is an international disability agency, which has been operating since 6-7 years in India. It operates both through disability and development organisations and implements its direct initiatives. As for as Tsunami is concerned HI is operating through NGOs. The HI partners are involved in identification of persons with disabilities, providing appropriate services, relief and reconstruction work, medical interventions, lobbying with the state for compensation and accessible environment. HI has a clear-cut policy on emergency, which articulates well on effective and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency and conflict relief and reconstruction operations right from decision making to evaluation. The response of HI during Kutch earthquake of 2001 clearly reveals that HI applies comprehensive and holistic approaches during emergencies.

**B. Christopher Blindon Mission [CBM]:** CBM is an international donor agency, which provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs to promote inclusion, human rights of persons with disabilities. CBM operates through a set of NGOs in Tsunami affected area of India. CBM partners involved in identification, rehabilitation, relief, and reconstruction work of persons with disabilities. These agencies have been making attempts to build the capacity and sensitise development agencies to include persons with disabilities in the operations. CBM has a policy on emergency, which clearly mandates the organisation to ensure appropriate interventions to include persons with disabilities in the operations. No specific training material is developed but partners are using existing material to build the capacity of other agencies.

**C. Association of Italian Fleered Organisation [AIFO]:** AIFO is an other international donor agency, which promotes CBR initiatives for the development of persons with disabilities in India. AIFO basically operates through local organisations. AIFO has supported many organisations to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities. The partners of AIFO involved in identification, provision of services, relief, reconstruction and advocacy work. AIFO has no specific policy on emergency but respond according to the situation. The

general policies of the organisations mandate the organisation to make sure inclusion of persons with disabilities in of its operations including emergency responses.

**D. LCI:** LCI has its presence in India since 7 years as a training and development agency. It operates through its partners across the country. The Cheshire homes work is well recognised for intensive interventions to severely and profoundly disabled. One of its partners is implementing a project in Chennai and making attempts to build capacity and sensitise other actors for effective and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in Tsunami operations. This is planning to initiate three projects in three different states to trigger the process of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the operations with focus on inclusive livelihoods, inclusive education, advocacy and general inclusion. One of its staff members has been involved in the research process and actively involved in lobbying with other stakeholders for effective and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities.

LCI has a clear cut policy on emergency and conflict which mandates the organisation to respond the situational needs and issues of persons with disabilities with specific department to address the same.

### **3. International development agencies:**

The agencies include:

**A. ActionAid India:** ActionAid India is an international development agency, which works in India since more than three decades. The main objective of the organisation is to eradicate poverty. It recognises disability is a priority agenda and considers as a cross cutting issue along with women and children. 10% of its total resources are spent on disability related interventions. Action Aid India has clear policy on emergency, which clearly articulates the mandate of inclusion of persons with disabilities in all of its operations at all levels. Its past experiences during Kutch earthquake, Gujarat riots, and Orissa super cyclone clearly show that more than 11% of the total resources were spent on disability issues. AAI operates through local NGOs and it has direct initiatives also. AAI has made its entry through psychosocial counselling to the affected people with out any distinctions. The strategies of AAI focuses on inclusion, mainstreaming, access, policy influencing, advocacy and lobbying. The service delivery is one of the components of its operations, which mandates the organisation to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities. The training manual designed for psychosocial counseling, disaster preparedness and other aspects of relief and reconstruction operations inclusive of persons with disabilities. It works with most vulnerable sections like aged, orphan, socially and economically backward, minorities, women headed families and persons with disabilities.

**B. Peace Foundation:** This operates through local NGOs focussing on general development. Attempts have been made to include persons with disabilities in its operations. There is no conscious effort but disability forms one of its target group. Nothing much information is available about other aspects of operations with regard to inclusion of persons with disabilities.

#### **4. National disability agencies include:**

**A. Cheshire Home, Chennai:** This is one of the partner organisations of LCI. An exclusive initiative was implemented in Chennai to ensure meaningful and effective inclusion of persons with disabilities. It has been involved in sensitising and building the capacity of local development organisations to include persons with disabilities. It has conducted a systematic survey and appropriate interventions were planned and implemented. These interventions include, provision of Assistive devices, relief material, rehabilitation measures, formation of groups, compensation and other appropriate interventions.

**B. Joseph Eye Hospital.**

**C. GREMALTES HOSPITAL**

Both the hospitals have been involved in Tsunami operations through their respective wings of social work. These agencies have conducted a systematic survey of persons with disabilities. They have under taken few activities, which are as follows:

Assessment camps, provision of Assistive devices, distribution of relief materials, medical interventions for injured, applications for compensation and livelihoods for persons with disabilities. There is no distinction between different categories of disabilities in the operations. Psychosocial counselling support was provided to all the affected people. Few capacity building exercises have been conducted to their own implementing team and other agencies to address the issues of persons with disabilities effectively.

These agencies strongly feel that redtapism, politics, discrimination and cumbersome process have contributed significantly in delaying the process by the state.

**National Center for Promotion of Employment opportunities for Disabled People [NCPEDP]:**

NCPEDP is a well-established disability organisation operates at the national level. The main focus of this organisation is on livelihoods and advocacy. This has promoted disability rights group and national disability network at the national level.

As for as Tsunami is concerned this organisation has attempted to draw the attention of various stakeholders regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities across the country. They have collected materials and money to provide relief assistance to persons with disabilities. They have been lobbying with the state and aid agencies for accessible constructions for persons with disabilities. A research conducted by this agency reveals the hard facts that the sheer exclusion of persons with disabilities in the operations and misinterpretation of the term inclusion. The research criticises the blanket approach of state and development agencies, which failed to address the specific issues and needs of persons with disabilities.

**D. National Development agencies include:**

- a. Tata Trust.
- b. Salt Foundation.
- c. Anna Theresa Social Work Association
- d. Art Of Living Foundation
- e. Sanghamam
- f. Academy for Disaster Management Education Planning and Training

All these development agencies are on in Tsunami operations right from the beginning. They have been concentrating mainly on survey, distribution of relief materials, reconstruction work and lobbying with the state for effective and speedy implementation of operations specified in the plan and policy. There is no conscious effort to include persons with disabilities in the operations. At the same time they are not excluded from the operations consciously also. Whatever assistance provided to general population, which is affected has also reached to persons with disabilities with out any discrimination. They strongly feel that special attention may cause exclusion of persons with disabilities thus they have followed an inclusive approach in the operations. Even they do not have specific policy on emergency but organisation responds in emergency and conflict situations without any delay.

Sanghamam is one of the few agencies, which has made a conscious effort to include persons with disabilities in the Tsunami operations at all levels and in all aspects. The implementing team consists of persons with disabilities, which is instrumental in sensitising other actors to include persons with disabilities. There is a sincere and conscious attempt to involve persons with disabilities in planning, decision-making, implementing and monitoring process. It strongly feels that there is discrimination by the state in the operations. The discriminated groups include, poor fisher folk other than traditional fisher folk, scheduled caste people and persons with disabilities. These groups have no or limited access to relief and reconstruction benefits.

- g. NGO Coordination committee for Tsunami operations:

A coordination committee was constituted by local NGOs of Nagapattinam. This was constituted soon after Tsunami occurred. The first meeting was convened on 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2004. The objective of this committee is to ensure coordination among NGOs and utilisation of resources effectively with out duplication and over lapping of efforts. The other objective is to lobby and influence the state to implement and pay proper attention to affected people. Dissemination of appropriate information to NGOs for effective management of operations. The other activities include, advocacy, stream lining the operation processes, sectoral interventions and ensuring effective utilisation of resources with out duplication of efforts and resources.

As for as inclusion of disability is concerned there is no conscious effort to include persons with disabilities in their operations. Questions were raised now and then but no agency has made a conscious attempt to include them. This committee works with more than 600 NGOs and general feeling is that disability NGOs should sensitise and build the capacity of these agencies to include persons with disabilities.

#### **E. Disabled People's Organisations [DPOs]:**

Disability movement is well placed in India. There are self-advocacy groups of persons with disabilities both at national and state level in the country. The DPOs in India consists of both unidisability and cross disability organisations and networks of disability rights groups. The unidisability DPOs includes, national federation of the blind, all India confederation of the deaf, federation of physically handicap and other federations and confederations at state level and national levels. The cross disability DPOs include, disability rights group, national disability network, disability networks in various states and national levels.

It is evident from the field work that most of these national and state level DPOs have poor or no response to Tsunami neither during relief nor during reconstruction work. The researcher could get perspective and response of a local DPO, which is as follows:

It is a disability rights group of Nagapattinam, federated at district level which consists of more than 1000 members. This was formed after Tsunami Disaster. This works in collaboration with the union of construction workers for Tsunami operations. They have conducted a systematic survey of persons with disabilities in Nagapattinam district. They have been trying to get assistance from the state or international donors in order to under take specific interventions for identified persons with disabilities but nobody has responded positively to their request so far.

This rights group strongly feel that persons with disabilities have been neglected and excluded from the operations. They feel that state involves

only fisher communities who are well off but not poor in the decision making processes. State has been following the blanket approach rather than addressing the specific issues of persons with disabilities. This group has been lobbying with the state with regard to relocation of houses of fisher folk since the new location is very far from the coast, which is a potential barrier for gaining livelihoods through fishing for persons with disabilities.

#### **F. Persons with disabilities and families:**

A series of focussed group discussions; interviews and interactions have been conducted with persons with disabilities and their families in order to get their perspective on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the operations and stakeholders response to the issues of persons with disabilities during Tsunami operations. The researcher has met 36 persons with disabilities and their family members who include 12 female, 24 male, 14 persons with disabilities including 6 female and 8 male members to get their perspectives. The major outcomes collected during the interview and research process is as follows:

The general feeling of the majority of the respondent is that persons with disabilities were not included in the decision-making, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation process. The inclusion is limited only to distribution of materials and Assistive devices. The long-term reconstruction work is unnecessarily delaying due to state politics, red tapism and cumbersome process. They also feel that even development agencies have not made a conscious effort to include persons with disabilities but taken as granted in the pretext of inclusion. Absolutely there is no information, which's flowing to them regarding Tsunami operations. Few case studies are attached as annexure with the report for first hand information:

#### **G. Communities:**

Researcher has met and conducted a series of focussed group discussions to get their perspective of inclusion of persons with disabilities in Tsunami operations. The major outcome of these processes are as follows:

The majority of the respondents strongly feel that communities have extended their support to persons with disabilities during rescue operations and rescued few with out any further harm. The communities have been instrumental in deciding priority to persons with disabilities and their families during the distribution of relief and rehabilitation materials.

The general feeling of these communities is that the red tapism, unnecessary delay, cumbersome process and apathy of the state resulted in delay of rehabilitation and reconstruction work. There is no flow of information to communities.

**Recommendations:**

There is a great need to sensitise, train, and build the capacity of NGOs and state machinery in order to capitalize existing human resource, infrastructure and other resources to include persons with disabilities in the operations effectively and meaningfully.

International aid agencies need to support disability rights groups and DPOs to facilitate and trigger the process of inclusion through lobbying, influencing and sensitising the different stakeholders.

It is essential and important to establish effective communication channels to flow information both upward and downward in order to carry out operations effectively.

Existing coordination is very poor with regard to the inclusion of persons with disabilities there is a great need to strengthen coordination between different stakeholders in order to activate the process of inclusion.

A coordinated, concerted, collaborated, integrated and inclusive approach is required to address the issues of persons with disabilities and ensure meaningful inclusion.

There is a great need to capitalise the existence of thousands of development agencies in order to accelerate the process of inclusion.

The national and state level DPOs have to play a more proactive role in triggering the process of inclusion widely and effectively.

## CASE STORIES

**1. Chandra Sekar** is a 23years old boy affected by Polio and lives in Kovalam. He has studied upto 9<sup>th</sup> Standard and looking for a job. He is living with his mother, younger brother and sister. Hitherto, brother was going for fishing as daily wager. The mother (widow) sells fish. The house got damaged during the Tsunami and has no means to live presently.

The family was given assistance in terms of rice and other provisions Immediately after the disaster. As part of the Income Generation Support, the family is given a catamaran(country wooden craft), an engine(7hp) and two sets of nets for fishing.

Our focus enabled them to feel comfortable, dignified and element of mainstreaming has been realized. His family was in crisis before our support. Now He is willing to go to sea. He is going to start fishing to support his family. Chandra Sekar says, "I have a sense of independence and contribute to my family".

**2. Desapattu** is 42 years old orthopaedically disabled person lives with his wife and 5 daughters in Karikattu Kuppam village of Muttukadu and lost his recently bought boat and out board motor in the Tsunami. He has been hardworking and highly responsible person with maturity.

He was supported with monthly provision in the beginning. Later, he was included in the list of beneficiaries for the Boats. His engine was salvaged and repaired with our support. Now, he has got the boat and preparing for fishing. He is one of the potential leaders in our capacity building process

**3. Gobu** is a 25 years old man belonging to Kovalam village affected by polio. He lives with mother, wife and a small child. He goes to sea with others as daily wager. He is one among the four benefited from us in the village as there was no support was given from the community nor covered under Government. He has been given a Catamaran (country wooden craft), engine and two sets of nets from our relief programme.

He became jobless after the killer wave that struck the village on the 26<sup>th</sup> December. He and his family members escaped the giant waves by running to the higher grounds. In fact, he was not aware of the Tsunami, as he was fishing and returning after sometime to see his house crumbled and rubbles all over the place.

Gobu says "We would have got nothing but sympathy and little bit of charity, your support will make ways for my livelihood".

They are preparing themselves to go to sea for fishing.

**4.Nagooran** is a 21 year old young active and energetic boy lives with his parents and other family members in Karikattu Kuppam village of Muttukadu. The boy escaped the disaster by jumping over a wall despite his disability (polio with both the legs affected and confined to Wheel chair) and moves with the support of tri-cycle. He has been highly motivated and confident, hard working and busy with his business of fishing and marketing the fish in the local bazar.

He has been given a boat and engine for his economic development. His medical intervention is under process. The family was provided basic items for cooking immediately after the displacement during December 2004. The family is still living in the temporary shelter set up by the Government four months ago awaiting a decision on a permanent settlement. However, he and his family are preparing for their daily activities to resume a normal life

With our support the family have the feeling of participation rather than a burden. The parents believe that but for our intervention they would not have got anything. "Upgradation of accessories interms of boat rather than a traditional wooden craft has made us more confident and we will never forget Leonard Cheshire in our life".

**5. Jayalaxmi** is a beautiful intelligent 21 year old girl with polio. She is studying M.Com and was interested to take up a professional course in Computers course for which she had collected Rs. 14,000/- But now she cannot even continue her education because the tsunami waves have swept away all the money, her books, certificates along with the hut and household articles. She has somehow survived the killer waves along with her mother, elder brother, younger sister and father. But they do not have anything left. As such they were very poor and used to live in a small hut on the beach very close to the sea.

"I was having breakfast with two children related to us. I heard a noise like a helicopter landing and heard people shouting water is coming, sea is coming. I picked up both the children and ran to a cement building close by and rushed to the roof top." Father Kannadasan is a agriculturalist. Jyayalaxmi said, "We had half acre land in front of the hut. We used to grow paddy. The crop was ready for reaping when the waves came and swept every thing away. The land is filled with sea water and sand. They say we cannot grow anything on that land for atleast three years. I do not know from where my father will pay for my education. We also lost six goats in the waves."

Jayalaxmi is very intelligent and has a bright future. But after Tsunami she had a feeling that her future is dark. She needs support for livelihood and education.

Jayalakshmi is supported under ISRP programme for computer education course called "Honour of Diploma Computer Application". She got admission for the course in a local college by paying the required fees which has been funded by LCI.. Jayalakshmi now says that she is very happy that she got such a good opportunity to join HDCA course, she is eagerly waiting for the opening of the college to continue her studies and her dream got fulfilled. Jayalakshmi along with her family members expressed that they have not received compensation till date from Government and unfortunately no other NGOs have stepped into the area for any kind of help. Her parents expressed that only LCI ROSA office has provided support to continue their daughter's education and they are very grateful to LCI for the timely help.

**6. Sarvanan** is a 25 year old boy from Boombugar village and has haemoplaegic disability. He has never been to school. He has one elder brother who is a fishing labourer and a younger sister who is studying in 12<sup>th</sup> standard and was affected by polio in childhood. Father and brother are the only bread winners in the family. The family is very poor. Sarvanan is epileptic and needs medicines worth Rs. 250/- to 300/- every month. Just a week before the tsunami incident while the family was sleeping in the night a cat jumped onto the kerosene lamp which fell on the father and he suffered from severe burns to his face, eyes, neck, upper arms, upper chest and leg. Mother and brother took him to the hospital and admitted him. It was very difficult to meet the expenses for the treatment. When tsunami hit their village Sarvanan and his sister were alone in the house. They heard the killer waves coming but were unable to run away due to their physical disabilities. They kept shouting for help and watched helplessly as the villagers ran away. Srvanan was very brave and caught hold of his sister with the affected arm and held tightly on to a coconut tree with his good arm. He kept on holding till the waves receded and came out safely after the incident. Though they were not hurt all their belongings were washed away. The family has received same compensation as others i.e. rice, temporary shed, Rs. 4000/- and Rs. 1000/- once every three months. The elder son who is the only bread winner now cannot find any employment because the fishing activities have not resumed yet as the fishing owners have not been provided with fishing boats. Joseph Eye Hospital has supported the family by providing aids and appliances to Sarvanan and money for the girl's education. The family feels that the government does not have any schemes or plans for fishing labourers.

**7. Pakriamma** is a 25 year old girl from Pudukuppam with moderate polio. She is the second wife and has to care for five children of whom three children are from her husband's first marriage. The husband is a drug addict and does not contribute to the family income in any way. She has to work and take care of the children and the husband. One of the children died during tsunami. They received a compensation of Rs. 1 Lac for the death of the child and Rs. 8000/-

for wooden boat. The husband is misutilising the compensation money and Pakriamma is struggling hard to make the ends meet. She counts days to receive the 30 Kg rice and Rs. 1000/- every three months that is being distributed by the government.

**8. Karthik** is a six year old boy whose father is Arumugham and mother is Marimuthu. He is deaf. There are nine members in the family. At the time when the waves hit, his mother had gone for selling the fish and father was about to leave for fishing. But every one is safe. Karthik was saved by his sister. The family has lost the only boat they had which costs about Rs. 65000/-

**9. Jaish Kumar** 9 years orthopedically handicapped boy studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> std. He used to live with his mother, brother and grand mother. He had lost his father three years ago. The killer waves took his mother and brother as well. Mother used to sell edibles on the seashore and that morning she had gone for usual business. Brother used to work as watchman watching the boats on the sea shore. Both of them were killed in the surge. Jaish is left alone with his grandmother and there is no one to earn livelihood.

**10. Karthik** 13 yrs old, MD person, unable to walk independently. He has 2 elder brothers and 2 elder sisters. He lost his father and mother. While he was rescuing all the four family members, he got injured. The family has lost all the properties. Entire village Pattinacherry washed out. They have become shelter less. No food, water, no means of livelihood.

He lost his boat, which costs 1 Rs.lac Now he is the breadwinner of his family but he is unable to work and walk properly because of his injury.

**11. Anjappan** aged 35 yrs polio in right leg goes for fishing as labourer. He was earning Rs.50/- per day. Living in a hut on the seashore. 26<sup>th</sup> morning he was weaving fishnet close to the boat. Then killer waves hitted badly as a result he was sucked under the boat which was hitted by the waves. He became unconscious immediately. People pulled him out. As a result of this incident he has severe injury to his functional leg. Now doctor suggested not to walk for 4 months. Govt of Nagapattinam quickly warned fishermen not to enter sea for next 3-4 months. Anjappan lost all his property he is staying in temporary relief camp, dependent on food and shelter. He is very uncertain in his life. He has 2 children and wife. Luckily all of them are safe. But his 8-month-old child do not have natural anus. The stool is passing close to ribs. He had barrowed Rs.50000 for operation. All the money and property swept away. At present he is in dark.

