

TSUNAMI RECOVERY PROGRAM - NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION PHASE

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INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka, the tsunami that struck on the morning of December 26, 2004 left behind widespread destruction killing over 38,000 people, destroying around 100,000 homes, damaging natural ecosystems, and coastal infrastructure and creating hitherto unseen human devastation. Vulnerable groups, such as fishermen and the poorer societies, living close to the shore in simple houses and shelters, have borne the brunt of the impact. This has compounded the already acute social problems in these areas and increased previously existing vulnerabilities.

Task Force to Rebuild the Nation (TAFREN)

The Taskforce for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) was established on a Presidential directive on the January 03, 2005 with a view to rebuilding the infrastructure and livelihoods, restoring trading, commerce and business and recreating normal life in the affected areas in a better and sustainable manner, as quickly as possible.

Towards this end TAFREN has completed the following work with the assistance of the Ministry of Finance and Line Ministries

- Initial Damage Assessment by 10th Jan 2005.
- Development of a detailed & comprehensive Action Plan for rebuilding the affected sectors of the economy. The first draft was released on 17 January 2005.
- Extensive dialog with all stakeholders has resulted in wide ranging consultations with Donors, INGO s, NGO s, District Administrations and Beneficiaries.
- Attracting and matching donor pledges to specific projects and finalizing commitments in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and relevant line ministries.
- Assisting the Ministries of Urban Development and Housing, Health, and Education to finalize policies for Tsunami Reconstruction, Donor MOU's and commence construction of the new facilities.

TAFREN is now focusing on:

- Harmonizing, Fine tuning and Finalizing the Reconstruction Plan, complete with Donor Commitments Governing Principles and Implementation Guidelines etc., by the 15th Many 2005.
- Coordinating the implementation of the approved Action Plan via the relevant state agencies at all levels, private sector & NGO's.
- Coordination of all Donor Assistance, Fund raising and other financing aspects in relation to implementing the Action Plan in consultation with the Ministry Finance & Planning, Ministry Foreign Affairs and relevant line Ministries.
- Submitting a draft bill to set up the Authority for Rebuilding the Nation (Successor to TAFREN) to Parliament by 31st May 2005.

The Medium to Long Term role of Tafren will be to serve relevant implementing by: Co- coordinating

- ✓ Provide Frameworks and Guidelines
- ✓ Facilitating, Enabling and Empowering
- ✓ Monitoring Progress
- ✓ thereby, providing leadership to all beneficiaries, in the combined effort of restoring and improving their livelihoods.

The Challenge for TAFREN

TAFREN has been tasked with ensuring effective reconstruction after the Tsunami by facilitating and assisting government institutions, and also ensuring that the benefits of the government's response and international aid reach the affected people. To achieve this, TAFREN works with the relevant line ministries, allied agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and donors.

Four and a half months after the Tsunami disaster, considerable progress has been made. The damage and needs assessment was effectively carried out by the government of Sri Lanka, in close cooperation with donors. Significant assistance in the form of in-kind and in-cash transfers has been received from governments, NGOs and individuals around the world, and these funds have been matched with specific projects. Tsunami-specific policies and guidelines have been developed in important areas, such as housing and livelihood restoration, and reconstruction has started in all Districts. TAFREN has played an important role in ensuring progress in all of these areas.

Yet, as we move further into the implementation phase, the needs are changing, and TAFREN must reflect this. At this stage, what is increasingly needed is operational and decision making capacity on the ground, supported by national structures to resolve policy issues, ensure consistency across affected communities, and monitor progress. At the same time, work remains to be done in providing sufficiently clear frameworks and guidelines to the relevant implementing authorities and agencies, and targets in some areas may need further refining and verification, especially at the local level. TAFREN must also address the concerns raised by stakeholders as to how it operates, and particularly the need to better engage stakeholders, provide greater transparency around information and decision processes, and ensure that the issues raised are effectively processed and resolved.

TAFREN's Role

At its core, TAFREN's role to facilitate and assist, centers around four elements. First, TAFREN must ensure *coordination* among the relevant stakeholders by providing forums to make decisions in a timely manner, and by ensuring that the information necessary to do so, is available. In many areas there are several ministries and agencies involved with overlapping jurisdiction. For example, in housing alone at least 10 ministries and agencies must act. Despite this complexity, TAFREN must leverage existing structures without creating parallel organizations and information systems, since TAFREN should not duplicate existing technical expertise. Thus, TAFREN's added value lies not in instructing implementing agencies, but rather in ensuring timely and coordinated decision making by the relevant authorities, on both a national and local level.

Second, TAFREN can help ensure accelerated and coherent reconstruction by providing stakeholders with the necessary *frameworks and guidelines*. An unclear operating environment is likely to create confusion for all involved parties and delay implementation. TAFREN plays a pivotal role in providing a predictable environment. For example, TAFREN is currently developing District implementation plan templates together with the Government Agents (GA's).

Third, TAFREN plays a key *facilitating, enabling and empowering* role in ensuring that the conditions are in place for effective implementation. Governments on both national and local level often do not have the resources, nor the systems and skills, to handle a task of this magnitude and urgency. TAFREN needs urgently to identify capacity gaps and secure resources where necessary. Furthermore, TAFREN can also help identify and resolve bottlenecks that prevent progress, such as lack of authority by GA's to instruct local government officials.

Lastly, TAFREN's role is to *monitor* that progress is being made, and that the benefits of all investments reach the beneficiaries in an equitable and sustainable manner. Indeed, TAFREN needs also to make sure that consultation mechanisms are in place for beneficiaries to express their needs and concerns to the relevant government authorities.

In sum, TAFREN's role is both to *serve* the different authorities and implementing agencies, but also to provide the *leadership* required on behalf of the beneficiaries.

Managing the reconstruction effort

TAFREN has identified four program areas that encompass the entire reconstruction effort: 'Get people back into homes'; 'Get people back to work'; 'Provide education, health and protection for all'; 'Upgrade national infrastructure'. TAFREN believes introduction of the following components will facilitate more effective implementation:

- *Leadership Committee and an Operating Committee to ensure alignment at national level.* The Leadership Committee is intended to secure broad political and societal involvement in the reconstruction, and is tasked with providing overall guidance and direction. The Operating Committee activates the guidance from the Leadership Committee, and also supports the four Programs and monitors their progress.
- *Four Program committees.* Key decision makers (including line Ministries) are invited to coordinate their activities and make necessary decisions on a regular basis in the Program committees. These are responsible to define / refine targets in their Program area, and ensure delivery against targets.
- *Donor coordinating committee.* This includes, among others, donors / NGOs / INGOs, as well as the chairs of the Program committees, in order to ensure coordination, communication and joint problem solving
- *Small central staff.* TAFREN staff will provide decision support and systems to the four Program committees through dedicated Program teams. Additional functions include Administration & Finance, Information systems support, PR and also necessary administrative support.
- *Encourage District Tsunami reconstruction teams.* At the district level, representatives across the relevant line Ministries and agencies should operate in teams that mirror the national programs. The exact composition of the teams will vary, of course, based on local needs and conditions. TAFREN will support the teams with capacity-building resources and frameworks,

including guidelines and mechanisms for beneficiary consultation. Temporary mobile teams to support the District teams will be considered.

- *Data collection and monitoring systems to track progress overall and within each of the four Programs.* In order to monitor progress against targets (and sustainability) TAFREN will support the development of information systems that link local and national levels. The systems must be feasible to implement and maintain, and, to the extent possible, standardized across the Programs and Districts.
- *Task forces where necessary to resolve cross-cutting bottlenecks.* Temporary task forces will be established (within TAFREN) to resolve cross-cutting issues, on an as-needed basis. The task forces will be staffed with personnel with relevant expertise and decision making responsibility.

Guiding Principles and Way Forward

The recent Tsunami Disaster has created an excellent opportunity to address and put into practice a comprehensive reconstruction and development strategy and action plan to re create and re build, destroyed, but once vibrant and progressive communities, in a more modern and efficient manner.

The disaster has also thrown into sharp focus, seething issues such as gender inequalities and social injustices that have always been some of the more insidious setbacks facing true development in these areas. It appears that the Tsunami had sought out and wrecked havoc amongst some of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable populations, who have been either affected by long standing poverty and/or conflict.

In this context the Government has recognized that a far reaching reconstruction and development plan must not only be launched rapidly, but must be implemented on a equitable basis ensuring that all affected persons benefit in a timely and suitable manner, so that they could quickly, not only resume their position in Sri Lanka's social and development fabric but also contribute and uplift the lifestyles of their neighbours, who were not directly affected by the Tsunami.

Government has been conscious about the disparities in development and infrastructure that may be created between development of Tsunami affected and non affected regions and populations. In this context, some key national

development programs are being refocused to ensure the minimization of these disparities and new programs are being launched in non Tsunami affected areas to alleviate this potential problem.

In addition, all new infrastructure must take into account the needs of the differently able population in Sri Lanka. Though funding limitations may initially inhibit the implementation of this initiative to its full extent, all efforts are being made to recognize these special needs and provide the space for development in the near future.

The physical and psychological impact of the Tsunami disaster on children has been devastating. Despite an outpouring of sympathy and many well intentioned initiatives, both from the Government and the public at large, a significant amount of carefully planned work has still to be done. If more priority is not attached to this area, the long term consequences can be similar to the devastation caused to the war traumatized childhood population in the country.

It is vital that existing delivery mechanisms be strengthened further and new mechanisms incorporated to deal with this massive development and rebuilding task. It is also important that the nation recognizes the need for capacity building and implement a truly sustainable structure to minimize delays and maximize the benefits to the affected population. These structures, if found to be successful, could be then emulated in carrying the country's development drive forward in all other areas.

Taking all these factors into account, the Government has included the following basic "Guiding Principles" into its Tsunami Reconstruction program. Consequently all Tsunami Reconstruction work will be based on;

1. Equity
2. Needs Assessment without Discrimination (gender, political, religious, ethnic or other)
3. Empowerment and Subsidiarity
4. Consultation and Communication
5. Transparency and Zero tolerance of Corruption
6. Accountability and Good Governance
7. Sensitivity to Disparities and future vulnerabilities
8. Coordination and Efficiency

The allocation of resources both domestic and international should be strictly guided by the identified needs and local priorities, without discrimination on the basis of political, religious, ethnic or gender considerations. The recovery strategy should take into account the extent of progress in Sri Lanka since the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), after a long period of conflict, and seek to strengthen the peace process. Reconstruction interventions should be done in such a way as to build confidence between different actors in the process. Reconstruction should similarly be sensitive to the impact on neighbouring but unaffected communities.

The strategy should be based on the principle of subsidiarity, meaning each reconstruction activity should be designed and implemented at the lowest competent tier of government. While the Central Government should play the lead role in setting standards, policies and principles, subsidiarity allows for locally appropriate solutions and enables a range of sub-national structures and organizations to be directly engaged in the process. The recovery plan which disaggregated to District level, would provide for capacity building and strengthening at various levels of governance, but especially District and *Pradeshiya Sabhas*, as well as local civil society organizations.

The recovery strategy should focus on the medium and long-term needs of the victims themselves. Therefore, enhanced and solid consultation with local affected communities and stakeholders is essential, and local communities should be empowered to make their own decisions during recovery, and participate fully in reconstruction activities. All interventions need to respond to clearly identified and articulated needs of local communities, respecting local religion, culture, structures and customs. This is especially important with respect to the policies related to shelter and relocation, which should not proceed without such full consultation. Communities should be assisted to return to their original homes as swiftly as possible wherever possible. In order to maximize the speed of recovery, local capacities should be harnessed as far as possible.

There needs to be better communication and transparency in decision-making and implementation. Mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure access to information regarding policies, entitlements, and implementation procedures, and to permit more regular feedback to implementing authorities, as well as grievance redress. Similarly, mechanisms to ensure transparency in resource use and comprehensive accounting need to be enhanced at the aggregate, program and beneficiary levels, accompanied by more effective monitoring and evaluation systems, to permit a full accounting to parliament, development partners, civil society, and the affected communities themselves of resources deployed from all sources. All parties should reaffirm their policy of zero tolerance for corruption in this joint effort.

Reconstruction processes should reduce future vulnerabilities to natural hazards, including floods, cyclones and landslides. A multi-hazard risk approach should be used during the recovery phase to ensure that communities and assets are less vulnerable to impacts of future disasters, while balancing the social costs of excessive resettlement. It should be guided by international standards and best practices in design and asset management.

All the above considerations suggest a number of factors that will need to be built into the analysis of individual interventions. They should be analyzed for their potential impact on the cease-fire and the prospects for peace and, for long-term sustainability, such interventions should also incorporate considerations such as governance, gender-sensitivity, environment, resettlement/land issues and human rights concerns. The process should be guided by international standards and best practice for protection, with special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups.

If debt relief is granted to Sri Lanka as part of the financing package, it would be especially important to deploy the resources so released in a transparent way for the benefit of the victims, and for such resource use to be carefully monitored.

A coordinated approach is critical to ensure that the above principles are followed and to prevent duplication or overlap in activities. Development partners should adopt behavior that will minimize the burden on stretched Government administration, not least by maximizing their own coordination. Coordination should not just be between Government and donors, but involve all stakeholders including civil society, the business community and international NGOs, who have resources that will not pass through Government. Capacity would need to be created at the local level for such coordination.

This is what TAFREN has been about, not only planning, enabling and facilitating, but, ensuring that the above guiding principles are being carried out.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following aspects will receive the Governments full attention in order to deliver a credible reconstruction effort on the ground in a transparent, efficient and tangible manner;

- Need for Coordination
- Donors (Multi-lateral, bilateral, INGOs, NGOs etc.) to be development partners with Government
- Multi-Lateral and Bi-Lateral Donor and NGO cohesiveness and cooperation
- Donors to pay attention to
 - ✓ Speed of response
 - ✓ National capacity building

- ✓ Cost benefit ratio
 - ✓ Accountability
 - ✓ Transparency
 - ✓ The Guiding Principles to be adopted jointly by Donors as well as Government
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- Effective coordination between Planning and Implementation Agencies
 - Best International Governance Practices to be adopted viz a viz:
 - ✓ equitability,
 - ✓ accountability,
 - ✓ transparency etc.
 - Speed of delivery
 - Overall Macro Economic impact to be planned for and carefully monitored by the Treasury, Central Bank and other relevant agencies.

The Tsunami reconstruction effort will be ultimately judged not by the infrastructure that it will put in to the affected areas, but, by the effect it will have on rebuilding the lives of the affected persons. This objective will never be achieved if all of the above aspects are not implemented in accordance with the guiding principles referred to above, based on equity and fairness.

