

## Sri Lanka

In many cases, while tsunami-affected persons were in the welfare centres set up immediately after the tsunami, women complained of domestic violence and pressure to engage in sexual relations by husbands. Alcoholism, male irresponsibility towards their families and insensitivity to the lack of privacy (in demanding sex) were cited as being some of the causes that led to violence.

Single women, including those widowed by the tsunami, complained of a range of sexual advances made by men in the camps as well as by officials. In the transitional housing the situation was not that much better because people continued to live in very close proximity to one another, there was no privacy and women were vulnerable to harassment and abuse. In Batticaloa and in Galle, two women complained of attempted sexual abuse; they had both made complaints to the Police officers in charge of security but they had not received adequate response. In Hambantota, one young woman had been sexually abused and abandoned by the perpetrator who fled the shelter when she became pregnant. Today she is subject to marginalisation because of the child.

In the transitional housing settlements, domestic disputes including violence were reported. These primarily related to tensions within families because the male family members tended to use the money received as compensation for liquor and gambling. Men would also sell the rations for money, often disregarding their family's needs. As Kottegoda points out, 'Domestic conflict has arisen because women are not directly given monetary relief handouts which could then help better management of household expenditures on food and other family needs. This is because men tend to receive relief and rehabilitation grants as head of the household, which is based on a preconceived assumption that it is men who provide for the family.'

Tsunami Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in  
Sri Lanka

## India

The government's announcement of financial assistance to "sterilised" women of reproductive age to undergo recanalisation surgery caused additional pain and trauma to the surviving women who had lost their children in the tsunami. They were forced by their husbands to undergo recanalisation operation, which reverses sterilisation by reconnecting the fallopian tubes. The fact that many women had previously been encouraged by the government to go through sterilisation operations makes the situation all the more tragic. Some women had undergone sterilisation because the family desperately needed the Rs. 200 (USD 4.5) offered under the government family planning scheme.

At least, 14 cases of forced recanalisation were reported in the five surveyed districts of Tamil Nadu. "My husband threatened me that if I do not go for recanalisation he will not live with me. So I decided to risk recanalisation even if I die," said Radhika from Kalkuttam village, Kanyakumari district.

The government's well-intended policy of providing financial assistance to the survivors, who had planned their marriages before the tsunami gave rise to a new phenomenon of "tsunami marriages". An additional incentive was a promise of a permanent housing to newlyweds. 21 "tsunami" marriages were reported in the surveyed areas but only two couples received the promised compensation of Rs. 25,000 (USD 562).

There were many instances of forced marriages against the will of girls below 18 years (minimum legal age for marriage in India) triggered by another "well-intended" government policy. The government announced that girls in the age group of 14 to 18 and young single women above 18 who had lost their parents in the tsunami were eligible for cash compensation. In Sothikuppam village only, Cuddalore district, four girls under 18 year had been forced into marriage.

Tsunami Aftermath: Violations of Human Rights of Dalit Women

## Ensure Women's Access to Psycho-Social Counselling

Ensure that:

- psychological counselling for post traumatic stress is provided for women and children, widows, elderly and disabled women
- female counsellors are at hand to provide counselling services
- psycho-social counselling facilities should be set up at camps and temporary shelters
- psychological care should not focus on prescribing anti-depressants, but on trauma healing and support
- self-help groups among the affected women should be formed to give emotional support to each other. Women can heal themselves in the long term when they are involved in helping each other overcome suffering.
- psychological support and assistance in finding/ identifying dead or missing family members should be provided



## India

Ananthi's 5 month old baby sleeping in the cradle was washed away into the sea. She has been using herbal treatment to relieve the physical pain in her milk clotted breasts but she cannot deal with the unbearable mental pain of losing her baby. There are thousands of women like Ananthi who have to live with such pain. And most of them are not receiving any psychological counselling. Some of them are on the verge of insanity. 24 year old Minn, who lost her 4 month old baby, was admitted to hospital as a mentally disturbed patient. Rosemary, a widow, who lost her two sons, faces abuse from the society because she was not able to save her children. (Tamil Nadu, India)

Women's Human Rights Concerns in Tsunami Affected Countries, March 2005, APWLD

## Aceh (Indonesia)

Balai Inong ('Women's Houses')

Villages in Aceh have women's houses where women meet and exchange views, network and work together on various projects. Having these safe houses would provide a place for women to voice their concerns and also be a place in which they can share their experiences, share their grief and develop their skills in different fields.

## MID-TERM RESPONSES DURING THE RECOVERY PHASE

Till the tsunami struck nobody ever realised to what extent male domination prevailed in these communities. Nobody asked why women were not consulted. Even if one had asked the fisher men folk they would have replied, "our women will go by what we decide". The men in charge of camps were shown a choice of shelters and their decision was taken and women were not consulted nor taken into the decision making process of choosing the design of shelters. (Tamil Nadu, India)

*Tsunami Aftermath: Human Rights Violations of Dalit Women*

Women's participation in management of camps and temporary shelters is important to ensure that women's needs are met. When women's voices are not heard, it results in lack of separate toilets and bathrooms for women leading to sexual harassment and violence and lack of kitchens forcing women to cook in unsafe make-shift facilities resulting in fires.





To ensure women's equal access to compensation payments and rehabilitation measures, head of household concept should be eliminated as it discriminates against women in societies when men are normally registered as heads of households. Information on relief assistance, including clear procedures on applying for such assistance, should be disseminated to all disaster affected people in camps, temporary shelters and those outside camps and temporary shelters, including those in hospitals and remote islands, forests and mountainous areas.

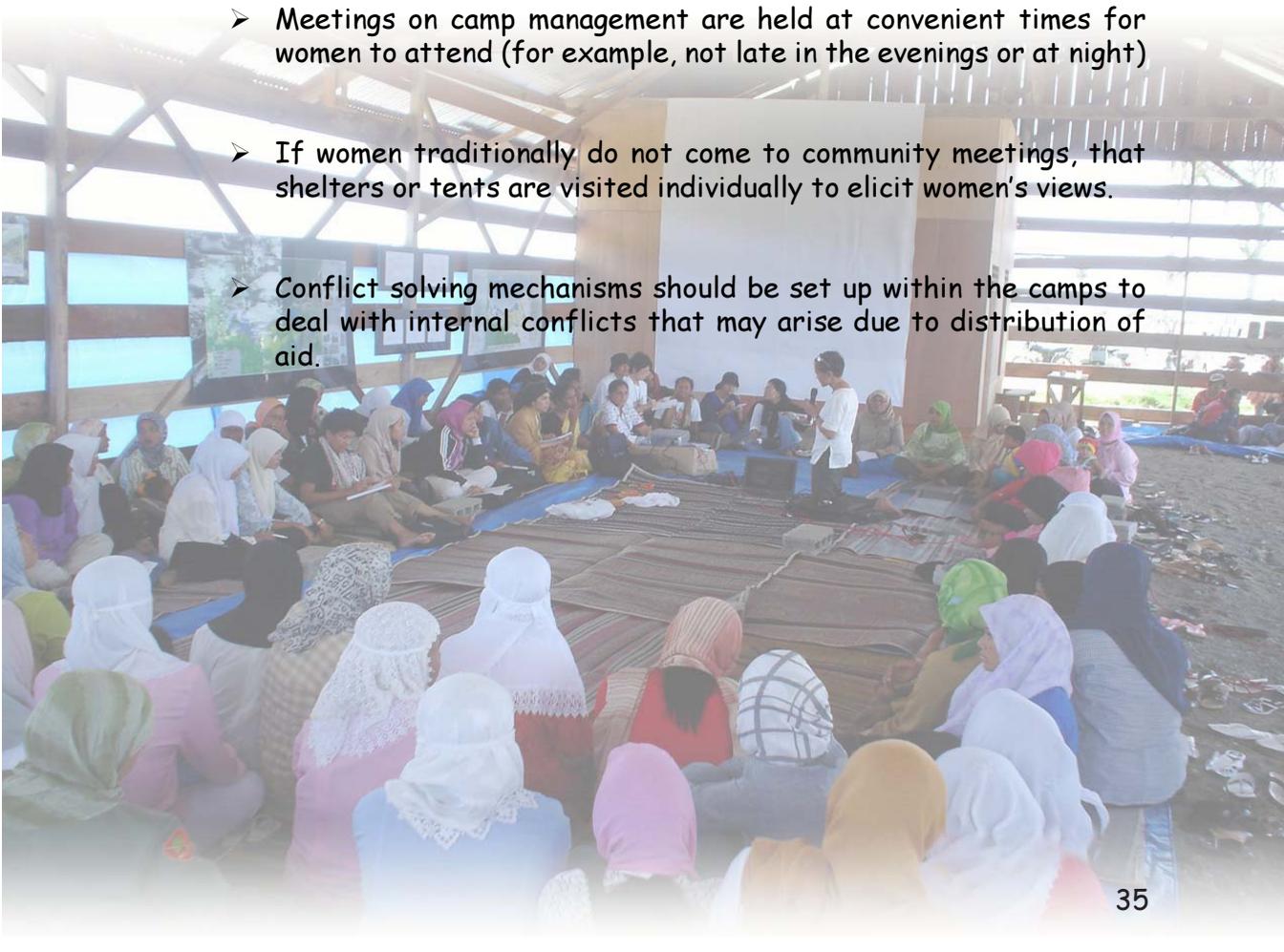


Temporary shelters for Dalits in Tamil Nadu, India

## Ensure Women's Participation in Management of Camps and Temporary Shelters

Ensure that:

- Women are elected to camp management teams/committees.
- Women are encouraged to participate in camp decision making.
- Women are consulted in the design and lay out of camps and shelters.
- Women are not represented by male family members in camp management.
- Meetings on camp management are held at convenient times for women to attend (for example, not late in the evenings or at night)
- If women traditionally do not come to community meetings, that shelters or tents are visited individually to elicit women's views.
- Conflict solving mechanisms should be set up within the camps to deal with internal conflicts that may arise due to distribution of aid.



## Ensure Women's Equal Access to Compensation Payments and Rehabilitation Measures

Ensure that:

- Compensation schemes are equitable and transparent. Compensation benefits must be provided to everyone affected by a disaster, directly or indirectly: those who lost livelihoods and jobs as a result of a disaster, not only those who lost assets.
- Government and aid agencies should ensure that relief and rehabilitation measures are provided equitably and impartially by adopting clear and transparent targeting mechanisms and criteria such as making public the list of disaster victims and the list of beneficiaries.
- Compensation payment should be made on individual basis, not to head of household.
- Cash compensation payments should be made to both spouses. Reports indicate men tend to spend compensation money on alcohol and other things not related to family needs.
- Compensation should be paid to joint bank accounts, in case of married couples.
- Compensation for loss of assets such as houses/boats/equipment should be adequate and sufficient to replace lost assets. Adequate compensation is important to help people to restore their livelihoods and start earning income for the families.
- In disaster situations, death certificates should not be the main eligibility criteria for compensation for loss of a family member. In India, with thousands of people missing after the tsunami, women who could not present dead bodies of their husbands were not eligible for compensation for loss of a husband.
- If married sons are given the right to claim access to benefits (the right to claim house damages), married daughters living with their parents should also be given the same rights.

- Government agencies should not set a short period limit to apply for relief assistance and compensations as disaster victims may have failed to apply within the given period because they were in hospital, observing mourning rituals or in remote areas without access to information on relief assistance.
- Recognise the right of persons living in rented accommodation or engaging in business in rented premises to receive compensation for their losses.

### Pakistan

Compensatory policies were male biased. Only married males were eligible for compensatory cheques for the loss of a home. A widowed woman mentioned that her married daughter, who had been living with her, was denied access to compensation although thousands of similar claims by sons were immediately honoured by the government officials.

Earthquake Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights  
in Pakistan

### Sri Lanka

The Tsunami Housing Policy states that cash grants are supposed to go to the owner of the previous land/house. In practice the cash allocations have been deposited into **existing** bank accounts which were used earlier to deposit tsunami assistance grants of Rupees 5000 (about \$49). In most cases these bank accounts are in the name of the male head of the household. Although the banks were instructed to make these accounts joint accounts, often this did not happen.

The District Secretaries or the relevant authorities should make sure that the housing cash grants go into bank accounts owned by the previous land/house owner, especially when the previous owner was the woman of the household, or go into joint accounts.  
(Sri Lanka)

Gender Sensitive Guidelines on Implementing the  
Tsunami Housing Policy, COHRE

Muslim women could not access most of the relief available during the first weeks after the tsunami because they had gone into the 40 day period of mourning required by their religion. They also had to encounter many obstacles in trying to register for long-term benefits after the lists prepared by government officials for relocation, for example, had been closed. A woman from Galle who had been hospitalised after the tsunami due to injuries said that she could not make proper applications for relief and therefore had trouble finding allocation of space in a camp. Some had received the outright grant of Rs. 5000/ per month for a period of between two to four months. There were some who had not received this at all. Again, this seemed to depend on how successful the women were in getting access to government officials.

Tsunami Aftermath: Women's Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka

### Thailand

The government provided higher compensation payments for damaged or lost boats which had been registered prior to the tsunami. Many tsunami affected fisher families had not registered boats because they were unaware of registration requirements. Even if the boats were registered, the compensation amount was insufficient for fisherwomen to recover their livelihoods. This is a critical problem in situations where women have lost their husbands/ breadwinners. The women have additional household burdens where they have the responsibility to earn a sufficient income to support the family.

Tsunami Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in Thailand

## Eliminate Head of Household Concept

Ensure that:

- Support, including financial compensation, is provided on an individual basis, rather than based on 'head of household' concept. In Thailand, the government paid twice as much to families for the funeral expenses of men than for those of women based on the assumption that men are heads of households.
- Government and aid agencies should not identify the 'head of the household' as the main claim holder. In India, compensation for loss of children was given only to the hands of the men unless the husband died in the tsunami. This resulted in some men spending compensation money on alcohol on other things not related to family needs.
- 'Head of household' concept should be removed from legislation and government policy implementation acts, including official documentation.

### Sri Lanka

Government compensation for loss often completely excludes women in societies where only males are recognised as heads of households. The Sri Lankan government offered 5,000 rupees (about \$49) to families affected by the tsunami, but in Batticaloa, the regional capital of the eastern coastal area, authorities recognised only male headed households, so women whose husbands had died could not claim the money.

Sarala Emmanuel, Suriya Women's Development Centre, Sri Lanka

## Thailand

The Thai government made a policy that as long as the name of the head of the household appears on the form or document, full compensation can be paid. Such regulations have been difficult to follow in some households where the head of the household has been unable to perform the role of a breadwinner. For example, the head of the household is ill and the responsibility has fallen on a daughter. Adopted measures do not take into consideration the actual situation where women perform the tasks of a head of the household. Government officials refuse to recognise such situations and there is no mechanism to ensure that women who have been the breadwinners of the household receive equitable assistance.

Tsunami Aftermath: Women's Human Rights Violations in Thailand



## Ensure Women's Access to Information on Relief and Rehabilitation Measures

Ensure that:

- Information on relief assistance, including clear procedures on applying for such assistance, is disseminated to all disaster affected people in camps, temporary shelters and those outside camps and temporary shelters, including those in hospitals and remote islands, forests and mountainous areas.
- Special efforts are made to reach out to women in their shelters within the camps as in some cultures women do not participate in public meetings where information is normally announced.
- Information is in reader friendly simple language and can be understood by all.
- Special efforts should be made to disseminate information to illiterate communities.
- Women officials are involved in the dissemination of information.
- the dissemination of information which provides information on facilities/ loans/ grants available for women to start on livelihoods such as coir work, pottery, and other small and medium enterprises
- All information is shared with women who cannot access information easily due to cultural and religious constraints and that assistance to those who failed to apply for assistance due to lack of access to information is provided.

## Thailand

*'I was in the hospital so I did not hear or receive any information about government assistance for children. By the time I came out of the hospital and applied three times for the assistance, there was no response from the government. I found out from the government official later that I had missed the deadline and that the fund for this had already finished,' said Nu Lee, tsunami survivor in Thailand.*

Tsunami Aftermath: Women's Human Rights Violations in Thailand



## Ensure Children's Access to Education

Ensure that:

- Halls or community centres are provided so that educational activities can resume as soon as possible
- Food, school uniforms, books and other stationery items are provided for children free of charge
- Schools are relocated and rebuilt as soon as possible
- Temporary housing is located close to schools
- Free transport facilities are provided for children to travel to school

### Aceh (Indonesia)

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami hardly anyone paid attention to schooling of children. Later, when public transport services resumed, they were limited to certain hours. This caused difficulties for many school children who had to go to school outside the village. Meanwhile, school cost became nearly unaffordable as there was an extraordinary post tsunami price hike. To cover the cost of schooling, mothers had to divert funds from other needs, in particular, money for nutritious food. Many children in Lham Lhom resumed schooling, but later quitted due to their school being far away and absence of transportation. The school lacked equipment and the school fee was too high. Several families decided to stop education for their girls and give opportunity for the boys to continue school.

The Indonesian government did not have a clear plan for reconstruction of the education facilities in the tsunami affected areas. A year after the tsunami, there were still many school-aged children facing difficulty in reaching schools located far from their settlements. In addition, there were no serious efforts to bring new teachers in to replace many teachers who had died during the tsunami. The government also did not provide financial aid to help families to send their children back to school.

Tsunami Aftermath: Women's Human Rights Violations in  
Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam



## LONG TERM RESPONSES DURING RECONSTRUCTION PHASE

To ensure women's needs are addressed, government and aid agencies should involve women in the consultative and decision making processes: from camp administration and disaster management committees to policy making bodies for reconstruction efforts.

*"Women must be at the heart of all recovery and reconstruction processes. For decades, they have been the lifeline of their communities, leading survival systems and mutual aid networks, including among the internally displaced and refugee communities. Women are not just victims, they are survivors, and they need to be part of the solution. The reweaving of the social fabric of life is the foundation for reconstruction and a necessary part of the healing process. It is women, in their families and their communities, who are playing this role."*

Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM



Dalit women received fishing nets from SRED, a local NGO

## Ensure Women's Participation in Decision Making Processes for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

Participation of disaster affected women at local and national levels in all aspects of recovery and reconstruction is important. Women must actively contribute not only to matters concerning women, but also be involved in issues concerning the community side by side with male members of the community. Aid agencies must make special efforts to reach out to women because in some cultures gender segregation and women's seclusion norms restrain women even from accessing food aid, let alone participating in community meetings to voice their concerns.

Ensure that:

- Women are included in all decision making structures at every level: national, local and village governments, aid agencies, international and local NGOs and community based groups.
- To ensure that government policies, procedures and practices are gender sensitive,

Coordination between the different relief agencies in the disaster affected areas that relief measures are applied to all irrespective of official procedures (registered and non registered migrants, registered and non registered fishermen, ethnic groups)

A unit that deals specifically with the concerns of women post disaster must be established within institutional structures set up to deal with post tsunami reconstruction.

- All decision making processes concerning affected communities are transparent, just, equitable and fair.
- Government and aid agencies should consult with the affected people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their assistance programmes.
- Affected communities, especially women, are consulted about decisions concerning their lives: from closure of camps and temporary shelters, relocation and design of houses to employment generation and livelihoods opportunities.

- Relocation of affected communities must be implemented with community's consent and should not be linked to compensation conditions such as if people do not relocate they will not receive compensations for lost/damaged houses.
- Women should be consulted in important decisions such as relocation and closure of camps and temporary shelters. Women should have ample information and time to move. The burden of packing and getting organised is the basic responsibility of women and they need time to plan according to the needs of their families.
- Women's involvement in decision making in conservative societies should be facilitated through affirmative action approach to assist in overcoming resistance from various stakeholders in every level of decision making.
- Women's empowerment in conservative societies, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, requires special process to overcome numerous obstacles in policy making and legislation, especially removing Shariah laws restricting women's movement and conduct.

### Thailand

The government did not provide permanent houses to those who refused to relocate from villages where they used to live before the tsunami to "safer" areas away from the seashore. The government claimed the relocation was necessary for 'safety' of the people concerned. However, relocation without community's consultation and consent is a violation of their rights to housing and participation and not sustainable. Most of the affected people earned their living from fishing and related activities and relocation meant losing their jobs and livelihoods so they refused to move away from the sea. Forced relocation was a "second tsunami blow" for these people. For many women fisherfolk, relocation away from the sea meant a change of livelihood strategy that they were not prepared for.

Tsunami Aftermath: Violations of Women's Human Rights in  
Thailand

## Pakistan

In the aftermath of the October 2005 earthquake, the most outrageous government policy was the arbitrary closing of the tent camps by March 31, 2006, just six months after the disaster. The earthquake survivors had been forced to come down to the valleys from the mountainous areas to go through the winter. In March when it was still cold and raining causing landslides in the mountains, the camp residents were ordered to evacuate. Transporters were charging an arm and a leg to get people to their villages from the tent cities. The army was ordering truck drivers to take people from the tent villages to their points of destination. However, truck drivers were dumping people in the middle of the way, leaving them high and dry on the roadside. In many cases, there were no roads right up to the village; hence people had to trek through treacherous mountainous paths, in freezing rain, carrying not only their tents and belongings but also the weak and frail members of their family.

Earthquake Aftermath: Women's Human Rights Violations in Pakistan

