

Problems in relocating the tsunami affected people in Ampara District

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The massive tsunami waves had destroyed the highest number of lives in the east coast of Sri Lanka. Ampara District was the worst hit area according to official sources available. The loss of family member was larger in some cases. Losses to house and property in Islamabad, Kulavelikandam and Ayurveda Hospital were higher than all other sites. The total number of deaths in the sample families selected were 72 persons. Out of that, 49 persons (68%) were female victims. By age categories the highest percentage was in the 5-19 age group. This amounts to 40 % of the total death count in the sample. The next age category that had more impact on life was elderly population over 55 years of age. This indicates that women were more susceptible to death due to multiplicity of reasons.

Destruction of property was substantial in this area. Nearly 96% of the respondents had their houses partially or completely damaged, while the remaining 4% did not suffer house damage but lost their belongings. About 60% of the fully damaged houses were located within the buffer zone, while only 23% outside the buffer zone. A similar relationship between the intensity of damage and the distance from the shoreline was found in the southern coast as well.

The majority of the settlers had a variety of issues related to livelihood. Some of them had been the distance from their source of employment, loss of equipments, boats, nets or places required to maintain their livelihood. Almost all who lived near the coast have lost their boats, nets, and other equipments.

The impact of the tsunami on land is mainly related to the salinity intrusion, which causes dying of many types of trees. This has seriously impacted their livelihood activities. In Ampara the number of households involved in poultry, keeping animals like goats, buffaloes or cattle have been reduced considerably. People affected by tsunami in the Ampara district had been involved in livelihood activities such as fishing, agriculture, some industries and services before the tsunami. One clear fact that can be established was that after resettlement cooli or labor category has exceeded the number of fisherman. But still fishing dominates in the coastline as the main employment compared to other categories. The main reason highlighted, in all sites, as cause for the reduction of income has been unemployment. The other reasons given are lack of resources, distance to workplaces, or the sea, transport issues, less opportunity for self employment, mental disturbance, security threat, changing entrance to lagoons, landlessness, quality of land, quality of house and environmental issues, community-caste-ethnic issues, inaccessibility common grazing, or forestlands, buffer or coastline issue and ownership issues are some of them.