BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE AND PARTICIPATORY POST-TSUNAMI REBUILDING

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Abstract:

Past experience has shown that through the need for swiftness of response, agendas in post disaster situations have tended to be driven by governments, donors and implementing agencies. Though acknowledging the need to contribute towards sustainable development through community involvement and processes of empowerment, programmes have tended to be delivered with a top-down and short-term approach.

Practical Action that has set examples of the feasibility of sustainable development initiatives believes that recovery and reconstruction plans need to result in sustainable environmental and human development and be inclusive of marginalised sections of the society.

Practical Action with its rebuilding objectives to inform and influence the rebuilding policy makers and planners and to build capacity of implementers, developed and disseminated information on the technologies and approaches, offered training for the professionals in rebuilding, provided on site technical assistance, and influenced the planners thus creating awareness.

During the first year of reconstruction Practical Action has been able to introduce participatory approaches and community specific technologies that ensure environmental, conflict, gender and disability sensitivity, include disaster preparedness, build capacity at the local, and level leads to sustainable development. Namely they are community based boat building, road construction, and waste management approaches, decentralised disaster preparedness planning, disaster resistant housing, and sustainable livelihood development.

Keywords: Disaster preparedness; environmentally sensitive; Conflict sensitive; Gender sensitive; Disability sensitive

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INTRODUCTION

The damage

In Sri Lanka, the tsunami that struck on the morning of December 26, 2004 left behind widespread destruction and killed over 35,000 people, completely destroyed over 50,000 homes, and damaged natural ecosystems, and coastal infrastructure. The North East region was worst affected by the tsunami.

The percentage of the coastal population affected ranges from an estimated 35 percent in Kilinochi to 80 percent in Mullaitivu and 78 percent in Amparai coastal district divisions compared to the southern districts of Galle, Matara, and Hambantota with less than 20 percent of the coastal population affected, albeit with scattered pockets of severe damage.

The waves penetrated inland areas up to 500 meters in many places, leaving behind few intact structures and killing or injuring tens of thousands of people. Coastal Infrastructure systems, including roads and railways, power, communications, water supply and sanitation facilities and fishing ports were severely damaged.

Official figures indicated that more than 35,000 people in SriLanka were dead and approximately 6,300 were reported missing; Displaced person estimates stand at 443,000, while the affected population is estimated between one and two million, out of a total population of approximately 19 million people. Estimates show the number of damaged houses at more than 85,000, of which more than 50,000 have been completely destroyed. The tsunami also damaged 24,000 boats (about 70% of the fishing fleet), and 11,000 businesses.

The damage to Sri Lanka's infrastructure is estimated to be over $1.7 billon dollars.

Problem

Globally Practical Action has witnessed that due to the urgency and scale of relief and reconstruction operations, the special needs of particularly vulnerable groups are often overlooked and participation in general can be minimal. In planning and implementing relief and reconstruction activities, it is vital to consider the needs of differing groups (e.g. of women and men and of ethnic and religious groups). Practical Action believes it is essential to ensure the needs of highly vulnerable people such as very poor households/communities, female-headed households, the elderly, orphans and people with disabilities.

Poor people are the most vulnerable to disasters and while this is understood by many agencies and relief practitioners, many programmes lack the practical approaches

required to operate these concepts. In this light Practical Action recognised the need for practical demonstration of activities and support literature outlining processes in capacity building, along with supporting advocacy and influencing activities aimed at supporting these and achieving lasting change.

Agencies frequently overlook locally available resources, both human and physical ~~has~~ within relief and reconstruction operations in the region, with inappropriate materials and technologies and regionally inexperienced staff being used by many agencies. Within its own work Practical Action has also seen the direct correlation between community participation and the long term acceptance and sustainability of interventions across a broad range of disciplines and sectors.

This is the first national scale emergency response programme in which Practical Action Sri Lanka has been involved, previous interventions have been on a much smaller geographic level, affecting small population groups. In the Tsunami relief operations, we planned to gain greater insight in to the impact and appropriateness of its approaches at this larger level/scale of operation and also its capacity to influence the mode of operation of a range of actors with whom it does not routinely operate (i.e. expatriate heavy humanitarian organisations and wholly operational relief NGOs). We also are open to learning new approaches to advocacy and information exchange within this different operational environment.

The scale of the international response to the Tsunami disaster means there will be a large number of organisations implementing hands on programmes of relief and rehabilitation in Sri Lanka for some time. These range from large donors/implementers to government authorities, NGOs (both national and international), CBOs, individuals, private companies, religious institutions and community groups. These come with differing agendas, modes of operation, commitments (in regards to their time and duration of operation), technical capacity, outlook and previous in-country experience. Many were here for the relief phase only so could not be expected to have the long term impacts of their interventions foremost in their plans, whilst the vast majority (numerically) has no previous experience of working in Sri Lanka.

Due to the vast influx of organisations in to the country and the poor and deteriorating coordination offered by the government, standards and practices, both in terms of technical implementation and the level of involvement of communities affected in relief and reconstruction programmes, have been poor.

The exceptional financial response to the tsunami has also meant financial resource considerations have been less restrictive to the actions of implementing agencies than would be ‘normal’, a factor which may not necessarily be to the long term benefit of those affected, unless well managed.

Practical Action believes unless top down planning and resource intense approaches are changed, the long term recovery and sustainability of communities affected will be greatly harmed. It believes unless genuinely participatory processes, both in planning and implementation, are institutionalised within all implementing agencies, policies and programmes will both fail and fail those communities they aim to assist.

PROJECT

The objective of Practical Action rebuilding programme was to influence the plans and practical implementation of reconstruction activities in Sri Lanka (and South Asia more generally), so that integrated, sustainable and participatory approaches to reconstruction are practiced and promoted.

Practical action planned to achieve this through enhancing implementation capacity of a broad range of actors and dissemination and promotion of knowledge on the use of technology and participatory approaches to poverty reduction and disaster risk management.

More specifically practical action set up targets to ensure re-construction in Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee Hamabantota, and Matara are disaster resistant, community based and participatory, ensuring social inclusion of people with disabilities and addressing, gender, environmental and conflict sensitive concerns for sustainable development of the affected areas.

Building capacities of a range of implementation organisations, including NGOs, Provincial and Local Authorities, Community Leaders and the Government agencies engaged in the implementation of the re-construction programme, for adopting/adapting pro-poor sustainable technologies and approaches was the key strategy for achieving these targets.

To take the messages across and to enrich the information base for rebuilding, information on pro-poor sustainable approaches were made available by Practical Action for appropriate use by relevant Government, Local NGOs and other Partner Organisations such as UN system Organisations and stakeholders in the areas of road, housing, coastal resource management, fisheries, livelihoods, solid waste management and Disaster Responsive Development.

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION

Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) was set up in the mid nineteen sixties, in Britain, by E.F Schumacher, economist and the author of the book “Small is Beautiful”. After 40 years in 2006, ITDG changed its name to **Practical Action**. Today,

Practical Action has widened its reach and works with communities in 7 countries – Bangladesh, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Nepal, Peru and Zimbabwe with the head office in UK.

Practical Action is concerned about people whose needs often remain unheard or ignored. Practical Action uses technology that is people centred, to bring about positive changes to the lives and livelihoods of the poor and marginalised majorities. Our definition of technology is not confined to hardware; it takes into account skills, processes and relationships. We innovate and introduce technologies to help reduce people's vulnerability and increase their self-reliance.

To make informed technological choices, people need to understand their options, know what is possible, and choose - or create - what suits them best. ITDG facilitates access to the knowledge and experience needed to make these decisions.

To be effective facilitators, we learn from people, and share with them what we know. We find out what people are doing; and help them do it better.

We help local groups to strengthen their institutional capacities. We exchange views with professionals and academics involved in our areas of work. We work in partnership with people to stimulate imagination and creativity. This process helps to increase our knowledge and experience and to design technologies with a human face.

IMPACTS

Influencing for community centered approach to housing reconstructions

An analysis undertaken by Practical Action to understand the perspectives and issues in the housing reconstruction sector revealed certain gaps: inadequate community participation and consultation in the overall rebuilding process, lack of strategies to adopt participatory methods during planning and implementation, negative public perception on the progress of reconstruction efforts, with more emphasis on rebuilding fast, rather than rebuilding efficiently in a sustainable manner, lack of public awareness on technical aspects, such as the real time needed for constructing a house, and inadequate collaboration and coordination among and within the key stakeholders in the implementing and monitoring process.

Given this context the following mechanisms were introduced to the implementing organisations to integrate community participation in the planning process:

- Include both women and men from the community in the assessment, planning and implementing of housing programmes.

- Invite women and men who are leaders in the community to strategic planning meetings and discussion, to enable a better focus on ground realities, leading to more targeted strategies.
- Identify and plan out the most useful forms of communication that can highlight and address the needs and concerns of women, men, and marginalised communities such as people with disabilities.
- Bring together the different village-level organizations working in the area and share the focus / mandate of these organizations and
- Make sure that community-level practitioners/CBOs secure the involvement of both women and men in the community in local organisations.

The approach promoted included the introduction of sustainable building material, disaster sensitive approaches to planning the reconstruction of devastated homes, how to minimize future disaster risk in housing design & construction, quality assurance measures of the construction process, and various cost effective construction technologies & options of providing access to basic services (roads, bridges, culverts, water, electricity, waste management, recycling etc.).

The technological options provided by Practical Action are Foundations using dry rubbles, stabilized soil in-situ formed walling, walls using interlocking stabilized blocks, walls using rap trap bond, arches technology, filler slab roofing options, timber "I" channels for roofing, Ferro cement shelving, and finishes to exposed brick walls, filler slabs, & floors.

The advocacy, awareness creation and capacity building efforts of Practical Action have been able to convince more than 16 organizations including the National Housing Development Authority and the Tsunami Housing Reconstruction Unit (THRU), the institute set up to coordinate post Tsunami house reconstruction, to adopt technology options and approaches that respond to community specific needs based on the community's own analysis, and respecting the community's rights.

Advocating for accessing community knowledge and skills for rebuilding fisheries

After the disaster, several government and non governmental organisations and individuals initiated the replacement of damaged boats, in particular, small and medium pelagic (sea-going) fishing vessels. These organisations used the standard designs of boats and fabricated in large quantities in existing boat yards mostly situated in major cities (Colombo, Negombo, Baticaloa, and Jaffna) transported to rural locations and distributed among the communities. Most of the organisations purchased boats and the other fishing gears and distributed among the affected communities based on the beneficiary lists that is prepared by themselves based on the surfacing factors or influenced by the powerful figures. This has resulted in real beneficiaries not getting

what they lost, some getting more than what they had and many not getting what they need allowed by the local rules. However, it soon became apparent that in many cases the well meaning gestures were not of practical use to the fishermen, because the boats donated were mostly of a fixed design and not suited to the specific location. The designs differ from landing site to landing site in Sri Lanka based on many factors including the terrain and the types of fishing done in a given stretch of water. In a typical coastal fisheries village in Sri Lanka there are different types of fishing practices by community members agreed among them and in practise for generations.

The following gaps were identified in the replacement programmes:

- Beneficiary selection process was unsatisfactory due to disputable nature and lack of transparency.
- Lack of community participation in the rehabilitation process, leading to a mismatch of needs with supplied resources.
- Potential and existing capacity of affected fishermen to contribute towards rebuilding their livelihoods was completely ignored.
- Oversupply of fishing vessels, hence potential danger of over fishing.
- Un seaworthy vessels being manufactured and delivered (poor quality).
- Fishermen lacking confidence to resume their livelihood, due to the receipt of inappropriate gear.
- Lack of attention on quality control support to industries (eg. Boat yards).
- Communities lacking confidence in certain rehabilitation programmes due to lack of transparency and due to not meeting the community needs.

In order to avoid further aggravating the above problems, an alternative approach to rebuilding fishery livelihood was needed. Practical Action believes that communities affected are not just victims that they also have capacity and knowledge that should be taken into account in rebuilding programmes. Therefore Practical Action adopted and advocated a community based approach to repairing and building boats damaged and lost. Understanding the specifications of the type of craft fishermen need helped to modify standard designs of craft, to suit fishermen's requirement that varies based on the location. The specification of a craft that is used in a location will depend on, local sea conditions, wind speeds, fishing methods, etc. The process of participation also allows understanding the likes and dislikes of communities and specificities that will make the outcomes of the programmes sustainable.

The pilot demonstration of the community based boat building process and the awareness it created managed to convince the leading fisheries organisations such as Ministry of Fisheries and the FAO, the organisation mandated for coordination of fisheries rebuilding, to review the factory based boat building and distribution process and advocate ceasing that practice and adopting community based approach. FAO in collaboration with Ministry of fisheries also started off a post Tsunami recovery

assessment on the fisheries sector, to find out how many fishing vessels were being used by fishermen, and if they are not used then the reasons that they are not being used.

Advocating for better coordination and sustainable livelihood development

It is estimated that almost 60,000 micro enterprises, employing approximately 275,000 people were totally destroyed by the tsunami disaster. The government introduced a three phase strategy to guide the implementing agencies: 1) immediate cash transfers to the affected communities; 2) cash for work programmes; 3) livelihoods rebuilding and economic activities.

However the livelihood rebuilding efforts by these organizations has the following short comings

- Confusion of the three instruments mentioned above, that are used in livelihood development and their use in different time frames.
- Less attention on knowledge transferring, more focus on donation of physical assets.
- Less attention on value chain development, mostly concentrating on superficial aspects.
- Less consideration on inclusion of disabled, gender sensitivity, conflict sensitivity, etc.
- Low awareness of the disaster resistance sustainable livelihood approaches.
- Lack of coordination between livelihood rebuilding agencies and duplications of efforts.
- Lack of experiences and know-how of agencies that are rebuilding livelihood.
- Lack of consideration on participatory approaches.

In this context Practical Action proposed a post-disaster livelihood development programme that focuses on long term economic development of the affected communities through building human capacity & infrastructure, proper natural resource management, and building sustainable linkages that finally reduce vulnerability to future disasters. Disaster resistance sustainable livelihood (DRSL) development approach that was developed by Practical Action through more than 10 years experience working with communities in disaster prone areas in the south Asian region was then adapted to the post tsunami context. The DRSL framework focuses on securing what has remained from the asset base and generating lost assets in a sustainable manner which is fundamental to livelihood rebuilding of affected communities. A community owned rural business incubation model has been suggested as a way of increasing access to asset bases that have been lost by the disaster.

The community owned rural business incubators designed to provide necessary infrastructure on shared basis, to coordinate livelihood development interventions within the village, to mobilise resources, to provide information to its members, to build entrepreneurial capacity, and to facilitate linkages.

Practical Action's role in the rebuilding was mainly on training of the livelihood rebuilding persons employed by NGO's and government organisations, lobby for coordinated livelihood development and advocating for disaster resistance livelihood rebuilding. Our efforts soon started having an impact on the livelihood development committees comprised of government and national/international NGO's requested Practical Action to facilitate development of district level strategies and plans for the livelihood rebuilding in Matara and Hambantota in the South. The approach was further recognised at national level by the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA), the new organisation established directly under the president of the country for coordination of the post Tsunami rebuilding. RADA requested Practical Action's assistance to formulate divisional level livelihood development plans initially in the districts of Hambantota and Ampara, the worst hit districts by the Tsunami in the South and the East. This will be replicated in total of 37 divisions along the Tsunami hit coast.

Influencing and capacity building on community based rural roads building approach and the technology

The tsunami caused serious damage to rural roads, including feeder roads, bridges, culverts, footbridges and access roads, in the Western, Southern, Eastern and Northern Provinces. Difficulty of access to some of the affected areas delayed rehabilitation activities including urgent construction work and distribution of relief and humanitarian assistance. This followed the destruction of linkages with service centres that served the coastal area communities.

Transport undoubtedly plays a positive role in the overall development of the affected areas. Re-building of rural regions has to be a major planning issue as a large proportion of the population still live in rural areas that are plagued by inadequate services and facilities and limited scope for improving living standards. Many research studies have well established the potential role of rural transport infrastructure including roads, bridges & culverts in facilitating flows of people, goods, services and information to villages to promote development.

In the rebuilding process priority has been given to the urban transport infrastructure, highways, railways and the bridges & culverts associated with those. Only few NGOs paid attention to the rural transport infrastructure. These organisations with good intentions immediately attended and started repairing the roads through contracting firms but these projects resulted in poor quality and wrong designs. This was mainly due to two reasons: in comparison with the rebuilding of houses or fisheries there was

no coordinating body to look into the rural transport infrastructure and the organisations who came forward to rebuild rural roads handled the reconstruction the way they saw fit. Secondly due to no consultation from the communities living in the area who had been using these roads, the implementers or the contractors did not get any understanding of the local conditions. For example some roads flood and erode during the rainy season if not properly designed. Unless the implementers allow the communities to participate in the designing stage this aspect wouldn't have incorporated into the designs and thereby constructions.

In response to this situation, Practical Action focussed mainly on creating a system that coordinated rural roads rebuilding and supported rebuilding plans and implementation programmes to adopt community-centred transport infrastructure and transport modes to affected communities in the East and the South.

To date we have been able to set up coordination committees for rural roads (grade D and E roads under the roads classification system in the country) Baticaloa, Ampara districts in the East and Hambatota, Matara districts in the South. These committees are comprised of the Pradeshiya sabas; the village level administration unit, Assistant commissioner of Local government office and NGO's involved in the subject.

Through these coordination systems, the concept of community based earth road building approach and the technology was introduced. By now 37 km of damaged road strips in the costal villages of Baticaloa, Ampara and Hambantota districts were rebuilt using proper technology and with community participation by 10 government and non government organisations with Practical Action technical guidance.

The guiding principles advocated by the programme for the restoration of the rural transport infrastructure ravaged by the Tsunami were as follows:

- Transport infrastructure provision should be location specific.
- Designs should be appropriate to the traffic, climate, terrain and environment.
- Local construction materials should be used where ever possible.
- Construction techniques should be appropriate for small contractors and local employment.
- Maintenance requirements must be in line with local government authority and Community resources.
- Connectivity provided should be reliable.

Advocating for decentralised disaster preparedness planning

Practical Action through its experience in the South Asian region has shown that without incorporating disaster sensitivity into development planning, desired impact can not be achieved from any development activity. One important precursor for this is the

availability of an officially recognized, appropriate disaster management plan for any given area. As a response to the lessons learnt during the floods in May 2003, Hambantota district administration started to develop a district level disaster management plan. To strengthen the process with divisional level disaster management plans (not just disaster response plans but comprehensive disaster management plans which includes various mitigation, preparedness and response plans to minimize the impact of socio natural disasters on humans), Practical Action started to facilitate the divisional level disaster preparedness plan preparation process in Hambantota prior to December Tsunami. In this exercise the National Disaster Management Centre and the office of District Secretariat of Hambantota took the leading role while offices of Divisional Secretariats were assisting. The exercise facilitated by Practical Action covers 11 divisional secretariat divisions in Hamabantota while a disaster management plan is being developed for the remaining one division in Hambantota with the facilitation of UNDP. As a response to tsunami in December 2004, the same process was started in Ampara district as well. In Ampara plans are being developed for all the 20 Divisional Secretariat divisions in the district.

To develop a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan for any given divisional secretariat division requires a large amount of data. As this plan develops in line with the Disaster Management Act of Sri Lanka (No 13th of 2005), the services of village level officers (Grama Sevakas) were obtained. In addition to that other village level government officers like Samurdhi animators, Agricultural Research and Production Assistants were also consulted when collecting relevant data.

The information that were collected at village level covered the broad range of village administrative, weather and climate, natural disasters, safety infrastructure (in a disaster), natural resources, human resources, institutional strengths etc. This information is useful in conducting the necessary analysis for disaster management strategy and plans development so as to understand and establish inter linkages between poverty, vulnerability, disaster and development.

There were many attempts from various organizations to develop ‘isolated’ disaster preparedness plans or disaster response plans in Sri Lanka. They were not widely accepted by the government or by the district administrations of respective districts as many of them were of ‘project focused’ and planned and implemented by NGOs without proper consultation of government mechanisms. The other gap in these plans is that they are very high focus on disaster response rather than other disaster management. As current exercise has taken steps to rectify these problems, for the first time the district administration has a uniform data base giving all information relevant to disaster management at their finger tips. The demand for this data alone is very high as at now but we hope once the disaster management plans are developed those will be a rich resource for any development organisations to design their interventions.

Advocating for adherence to the guiding principals of rebuilding and reconstruction

When the grief and horror of tsunami devastation seeped in, the concerned, and more than willing individuals, and organisations, helping the affected rebuild, found solace in the idea of 'building back better'. But, as focus shifted from rescue and relief to reconstruction, it became more than obvious that it is difficult to translate these ideas into reality. Some humanitarian agencies and professionals, who really understood the importance of the qualitative aspects in the process of building back better, raised this issue at first at the national level, making the government, with the support of UN agencies, set up guiding principles to oversee the recovery plans. These were:

- The allocation of resources based on identified needs and local priorities.
- The principle of subsidiarity (decentralized approach)
- Consultation with affected communities and stakeholders.
- Communications and transparency in decision making and implementation.
- Reconstruction processes should reduce future vulnerabilities to natural hazards.
- Analysis of individual interventions.
- A co-ordinated approach to recovery.

Civil society organizations (CSO), in a statement to coincide with the Donor Forum in mid-May, strongly supported these guiding principles but expressed concern that 'in practice the almost complete opposite is happening'. The CSOs called for 'the Government to take action to ensure that mechanisms are immediately established to put into practice the guiding principles'.

Practical Action, as an organization that has set examples of the feasibility of sustainable development initiatives, believes that recovery and reconstruction plans need to be met if they are to result in sustainable environmental and human development and to be inclusive of marginalised sections of society. Our position is that reconstruction activities should be:

- Participatory/consultative.
- Include disaster preparedness.
- Community specific.
- Environmentally sensitive.
- Conflict sensitive.
- Gender sensitive and
- Disability sensitive.

There is similarity between Practical Action and the Government's guiding principles. We give higher and explicit priority to the inclusion of marginalised groups, to the environmental impacts and to conflict sensitivity. Both sets of principles provide a sound

basis for assessing the development effectiveness of reconstruction and to hold Government, donors and INGOs/NGOs accountable. However, very often there are many instances of CSOs & NGOs frequently not adhering to these principles. The gaps and issues which have surfaced in the tsunami recovery efforts is an example where the guiding principles have not been adhered.

In one way Practical Action throughout its interventions made an effort to conform to the guiding principles set out by it. The approaches promoted by Practical Action always made sure that those guiding principals are base for rebuilding. The approaches promoted by Practical Action such as community based boat building; the community based rural roads construction, Community centered house reconstruction, disaster resistant livelihood rebuilding, community based waste management and village level disaster preparedness planning well adhered to the above guiding principals. This has allowed us to influence large number of organisations to adopt approaches that are within the frame work of the guiding principals.

One year after the start of the recovery programme, Practical Action identified the need to review the extent to which the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes complied with these principles. Accordingly a workshop named “Building Back Better” was conducted in collaboration with the Disaster Response Monitoring Unit of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka with the objectives of: establishing the extent of compliance with the principles during the past year, identifying problems and issues in applying the principles in real life, devising measures to overcome the problems and address the issues, and modifying the monitoring system to capture future compliance.

The workshop was well attended by more than 150 participants from government institutions, international NGO’s UN agencies, local organisations and selected community representatives. The workshop deliberations which recommended means and ways of conforming to the guiding principals and further strengthening adaptation and monitoring of adherence were highly appreciated by the rebuilding agencies. Practical Action believes that this a great achievement in terms of our advocacy efforts to ensure building back better the lives of communities affected by the 2004 December Tsunami.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

Practical Action set up its core principals of rebuilding based on our experience on community based approaches that builds on the local capacities and strengthening village level systems. Through our experience we have validated that these approaches lead to sustainable development. The seven core principals for rebuilding adopted and promoted by Practical Action has now impacted the rebuilding process in Sri Lanka to a greater extent. Therefore the key lessons drawn from Practical Action rebuilding programme are that the rebuilding of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure of communities

affected by a disaster should be **consultative, community specific, environmentally, conflict & disability sensitive, and includes disaster preparedness**.

Apart from the above key recommendations that one should follow in any development intervention including post disaster rebuilding there are other best practises that could be drawn from the Practical Action experience.

Conforming to the rules that govern local lives

In a panic situation after a major disaster organisations and individuals coming forward to help rebuild the community lives act in urgency not respecting to the rules govern the local lives such as interrelationships between the communities and the cultural/local values, ecosystems, frequent disasters, power structures and local administration systems. Therefore the interventions made in good faith can most of the time make the communities further vulnerable to complex environment they are pushed towards. Replacing of boats and fishing gears of fisheries communities is a good example of such situation. The case as explained in page 6 the fisheries rebuilding ended up in distributing inappropriate boats and fishing gears among affected fishing communities. The District Fisheries Office (DFO - government service providing and regulatory body) had a record of the boats that are licensed under it (after the Tsunami it was found that all the boats and traditional crafts are not registered) and had information about the different government approved types of fishing gears for the area. But the organisation did not refer to these practices, regulations and information has created greater conflict among the communities as well as between the communities and the local authorities. The process promoted by Practical Action well referred to these information and community self governed regulations and government regulations in place through community meetings, getting approval from the DFO and public hearing at village level. It has resulted in 100% accurate replacements of boats and fishing gears. It has given the lesson of the need to follow and conform to those rules and regulations that are practised within the communities as well as the local administration.

Inter agency coordination

The community based damaged rural roads rebuilding exercise can be used to draw another important lesson. In absence of a plan or a place to discuss the issue of rural roads infrastructure rebuilding many NGOs came forward to rebuild the village level infrastructure particularly roads rebuilding. Within weeks, their interventions faced many difficulties either due to inappropriate designs/construction or lack of permission from the local authorities. There were also situations where NGOs competed for roads that they wanted to build.

Understanding this context Practical Action first intervened to establish a system that coordinates this aspect of the Post Tsunami rebuilding. Practical Action knew through

its experience in the rural roads sector that the Pradesiya Sabas and the Office of the Assistant Commissioner of Local Government jointly share the responsibility of construction and maintenance of rural roads classified as grade D & E. Therefore Practical Action invited these organisations and organisations interested in rebuilding these roads to come to one table, discuss, plan and implement the rebuilding. This resulted in greater coordination between the organisations through monthly meetings and frequent dialogue. This example highlights the need for coordination between the relevant administration authorities, line ministries, implementing organisations and the communities.

Need for guidance and capacity building

The rebuilding programme of Practical Action during its first 9 months of implementation has build capacities of 114 professionals of 39 organisations, 5081 technicians/craftsmen, and 2805 Community leaders on various aspects of rebuilding explained in the paper above who are now engaged in rebuilding work satisfactorily. The requests for similar capacity building programme have ever been increasing. The programme also have shared on request 20 copies of the Video “Facing Disasters Making Decisions; Gender Dimensions in Disaster Management”, 14 copies of the book “Disaster Communication” and 17 copies of the book “Gender Dimensions in Disaster Management; A Guide for South Asia” with different audiences. This shows that there is a great need for information, capacity building, and guidance among the implementing organisations in a rebuilding context.

The ‘Building Back Better’ workshop has got the attention of almost all the leading INGOs and the government rebuilding agencies (150 attended).All the participating organisations are in consensus that guiding principles and implementing mechanisms plays an important role in effective and sustainable rebuilding. They are also on the agreement that constant monitoring and evaluation of adherence to guiding principals should be an essential part of the rebuilding. The interest shown by these organisations on the consequent discussions and implementation of the recommendations of the workshop further confirms the need for proper guidance.

In a post disaster situation it is a fact that a country receives fairly large response from foreign agencies new to the country context. It is also clear that a post disaster rebuilding efforts create much higher demand for professionals and construction technicians to be within a very short period. It is therefore can conclude that the rebuilding policy makers should ensure capacity building and guiding plans are in place for the benefit of the organisations coming forward to assist rebuilding.