

FROM EMERGENCY RELIEF TO LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY: LESSONS LEARNT FROM POST-TSUNAMI EXPERIENCES IN INDONESIA AND INDIA

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Summary

Post-disaster economic security and livelihood recovery are on the forefront of current international policy research in humanitarian and development cooperation circles. However, documented case studies and lessons to be learnt are still scarce to feed possible best practices.

The paper examines two field case studies, in Aceh (Indonesia) and Tamil Nadu (India), where a well-established European NGO carried economic relief and micro-entrepreneurship rehabilitation from 2005 to 2007. These field case studies are used to investigate the issue of post-disaster livelihood recovery through economic rehabilitation, with the illustration of post-tsunami promotion of micro-entrepreneurship activities generating employment and income among the affected populations.

Despite unlimited trust in rapid reconstruction capacity, post-tsunami livelihood recovery has been chaotic and uncoordinated. Contrary to humanitarian agencies in charge of emergency relief, only few development agencies and NGOs were able to deliver a rapid rehabilitation of microeconomic activities existing locally before the disaster.

There are values but also obvious limits to comparing the micro-level experiences of a major European NGO in two different locations such as Aceh and Tamil Nadu, and to deducing macro- and meso-level lessons to be learnt. The practical implication is the difficulty in benchmarking the division of labour, but which is necessary for coordination among development agencies and their humanitarian counterparts in the field of post-disaster sustainable economic rehabilitation.

