

THE TSUNAMI AND ITS AFTERMATH

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On Boxing Day, 26th December 2004, coastal areas of countries around the Indian Ocean, including Sri Lanka were hit by a tsunami, caused by an earthquake off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

The tsunami killed over 200,000 people in Asia and Africa, over 30,000 in Sri Lanka alone. It destroyed homes and buildings, roads, railways and other infrastructure facilities. Millions of people who were not directly affected by the tsunami found themselves without food and health care because of the breakdown in infrastructure.

It was the worst disaster to affect Sri Lanka in living memory. The Malaria epidemic of the late 1930s, was of course of much greater consequence, killing hundreds of thousands; however, it was very much a man-made disaster, due as much to malnutrition caused by colonialism as to the spread of the anopheles mosquito.

What follows is an assessment of the damage caused by the Boxing Day Tsunami and of the efforts at rebuilding in its aftermath, in Sri Lanka. Much of it is based on personal observation by the writer or on personal communications from other observers.

THE DAMAGE

The Tsunami hit a long, thin coastal strip stretching from Jaffna in the north, along the entire east and south coasts, and up the west coast as far north as Chilaw, over a thousand kilometres in length (two thirds of Sri Lanka's coastline). It engulfed buildings over 1 km from the shore in several places. Many people saved their lives by running as fast as they could to high ground [1]. They later congregated in makeshift refugee camps in Schools, Buddhist Monasteries, Hindu Temples, Churches and Mosques.

About 31,000 people were killed and a further 6,000 went missing [2]. The casualties were made worse by the fact that housing and hotel development had taken place on the seashore. Whereas buildings inland were relatively unaffected, there was considerable damage to dwellings, shops, factories and hotels on the shore.

Over 500,000 people were displaced following the tidal waves, according to the National Disaster Management Centre set-up by the United Nations (see Table I). 798 camps were set up to house the displaced persons temporarily. A total of 244 schools were used to accommodate the internally displaced persons.

Table I: Displaced
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District	Affected Families	Displaced Persons
Jaffna	14,767	41,006
Killinochchi	2,754	1,603

Mullaitivu	6,745	22,557
Trincomalee	30,547	72,986
Batticaloa	63,717	55,935
Ampara	58,616	103,949
Hambantota	13,493	14,165
Matara	19,744	9,493
Galle	24,583	121,934
Kalutara	9,752	34,947
Colombo	9,647	36,060
Gampaha	6,827	1,449
Puttlam	222	66
Total	261,414	516,150

*Note: highlighted areas are in the North-East
Source: National Disaster Management Centre*

North and East

The coastal areas of the North and East were the hardest hit. The people here were already in difficulty due to the civil war that had raged for nearly 20 years.

The Kalladi beach area in the Eastern Province town of Batticaloa was reported to look like a bombsite. Further north, landmines laid in the course of the war were washed up and became a danger to the people in the area. By the next Thursday, very little government assistance had reached the refugee camps in Batticaloa, most aid coming from non-governmental organisations [3].

The area worst affected was the Amparai district. According to the Government, over 10,000 people were killed there and more than ten times that number made homeless. Their problems were compounded when flooding caused by heavy rains affected the area. Supplies could not get through. The more accessible Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts, further north, obtained the lion's share of relief supplies to the East.

Thousands of fishing boats (mainly made from Glass Reinforced Plastic) were lost in the Amparai district and shore-fishers lost their nets (a considerable investment for poor fisher folk). Some 50 schools were destroyed, as well as several hospitals. Apart from fishing, people there were employed in the tourist industry: in the surfing resort of Arugam Bay, which lies just south of Pothuvil town the hotels were all destroyed. These people faced a bleak future, with no prospect of earning a living and depending on handouts to survive [4].

South

The Southern Province, which had been relatively untouched by war, experienced disaster. The water reached far inland, and there was devastation close to the beach. Entire villages were destroyed; in the Galle District a maternity hospital went under the waves. In the cities of Galle and Hambantota, the town centres were devastated. Cars, vans and buses ended up inside gardens and even inside houses. The railway track was ripped up. At Pereliya, near the tourist resort of Hikkaduwa, a train was destroyed, together with many of its passengers, in what was reportedly the worst train disaster in history [5]. In the village of Seenigama, next to Hikkaduwa,

bodies lay everywhere, and the area was permeated with a terrible stench. The ground was covered with black mud.

The Western Province got off relatively lightly, except for the Kalutara District; the Paiyagala area in particular was very badly hit. In the Colombo District, only Moratuwa and Mutwal were affected. However, the population densities in these areas meant that the number of people displaced was the same as in the Kalutara District.

Environmental Damage

The tsunami had comparatively less impact on the coral reefs in the Southern areas than had past human depredation. Most of the damage seemed to be caused by movements of rubble and debris, but was patchy. Turbidity was within normal limits and, while some corals were found to be buried due to sand accumulation, sea grasses seemed virtually undamaged. In the Southwestern areas, damage to the shore was found to correlate to previous artificial damage to the coral reefs. The situation was found to be far worse in the Eastern Reefs, with extensive damage to the reef bases and to live corals, with damaged areas being covered with layers of sediment and sand [6].

On the other hand, beaches in both the South and the East lost a lot of sand and width. The beaches were relatively more contaminated in the East than the South; the chief causes of pollution being rubble washed ashore and, from inland, sewage and artificial materials, as well as plant matter [7].

Sand dunes acted as a protective barrier, and the impact of the tsunami was greater in areas where the dunes were disturbed or where the beach was low and narrow. Vegetative cover helped act as a brake: pandanus stands on beachfronts took a hammering while casuarina plantations acted as effective buffers. Mangrove forests also reduced the force of the tsunami, although thinner mangrove strips were devastated. Sand deposited by the tsunami impacted on salt marsh and mangrove ecosystems, while aquatic life in estuarine habitats was affected by increased salinity levels – which could aid in the spread of invasive species [8].

The black mud deposited by the Tsunami had a fatal effect on plant life. It also killed aquatic life in smaller bodies of water.

Economic Damage

The Asian Development Bank [9] estimates that the overall damage to Sri Lanka was US\$1 billion, most losses being in housing, tourism, fisheries and transportation. About 150,000 vehicles were completely destroyed. Coastal infrastructure (roads, railway, power, telecommunication, water supply, fishing ports) was also significantly affected. Fortunately, the port of Colombo sustained only light damage.

According to the ADB's Asian Development Outlook [10], none of the key economic infrastructure was damaged by the Tsunami and rebuilding the destroyed harbours and infrastructure may prove a blessing in disguise to the construction sector. The impact of the Tsunami on the national economy is likely to be less than 0.5% of GDP, trimming growth to 5.2% in 2005 year. The economy is likely to bounce back to 5.8% in 2006 and 5.9% in 2007.

Indeed the inflow of foreign funds caused a minor boom, with the value of the Sri Lanka Rupee shooting up. However, this did not reflect the reality of the damage caused to productive assets, most importantly paddy fields in the Eastern Province. It may take some time to restore the jobs lost due to the Tsunami.

Poor people suffered the most as a result of the Tsunami and desperately poor people have been made poorer still by it. Survey data shows that in one village, villagers who lost their homes suffered an average 94% drop in income from 64 to 4 US cents per head of household per day [11].

An avoidable disaster?

Although the Tsunami was a natural disaster, it need not have become the cataclysm that it did. Because people had no housing, they squatted on the beach and in the adjacent areas and build flimsy shacks and shanties. It is these squatters who were most affected by the Tsunami: the main damage in the Colombo area was to buildings like these in the shanty-towns of Mutwal and Moratuwa.

People living in small, jerry-built houses were easy victims of the waves – but larger, two-storey structures survived. In one instance, in the Ambalangoda area, only the ground floor of a four-storey block of fishermen's flats was affected.

In Seenigama, single-storey houses next to the beach were destroyed, but the shrine of the god Devol, which is on a small off-shore island, survived. This experience was repeated all over the island, with religious establishments of all denominations surviving the onslaught of the tidal waves. For example, at Jaladeen Square in Pothuvil, whereas the Madrasa (or Islamic School) stood intact, houses and buildings (including the Meteorological Department office) inland of it were demolished. While several hypotheses were put forward to account for this, the probable truth was that these places of worship were constructed sturdily using time-tested traditional architectural techniques.

In some areas, the situation was exacerbated by the deprivations of humans against nature. For example, there has been extensive coral mining in the South-West, for lime production for the construction industry. In Seenigama, Telwatte, Pereliya and the other villages to the north of Hikkaduwa the main industry is coral mining (to make lime for buildings). People continue mining the coral reefs because they are poor – it is back-breaking work, diving and bringing up chunks of coral – even though it is illegal. The profits are made by the transporters and wholesalers, a tightly-knit mafia. The coral reef has been destroyed, so the beach was quite badly eroded – in Seenigama bodies in the public cemetery had been exposed by the waves. The Tsunami swept up unhindered through the breach in the coral reef and gouged out large sections of the shoreline.

THE AFTERMATH

The damage caused by the Tsunami was immense. However, there appeared to be a risk that the disaster might be transformed to one of even greater proportions, if the hundreds of thousands affected by it were not given speedy succour. There were dire forecasts of starvation due to a shortage of food and of epidemics because of unsanitary living conditions and shortages of medical supplies. These fears led to other problems; for example, to the disposal of dead bodies before many had been identified [12].

Immediate aftermath

Immediately following the disaster, the Government was almost paralysed. The people in the towns and villages inland from the disaster areas looked after the displaced people, sharing their food and clothing with them. There were no police to be seen, and the traffic that built up was directed by volunteer traffic militias.

The Galle Road, the main coastal highway was damaged, so vehicles going south from Colombo had to go far inland to Pelawatte to get across the Bentota River. The area is poverty-stricken and

the road is so narrow that two lorries cannot pass each other on it. As vehicles started finding their way through these hitherto less used inland roads, the people signposted them. Despite their poverty, people set up makeshift refreshment stalls for people fleeing the devastation and for relief workers [13].

There was no petrol (gasoline) or diesel available after Pelawatte, so queues of trishaws (three-wheel-scooter-taxis), scooters and motorcycles built up outside petrol stations. Food and essential supplies were getting through, but distribution was not good. The authorities in charge of monasteries and other religious establishments housing displaced people often had no idea how many they were accommodating. There were shortages of food, since the people from the unaffected areas did not have anything to eat either.

During this period, the activities of non-governmental organisations and even ad-hoc volunteer groups were highly productive, as they brought badly needed food and supplies to the makeshift refuges in schools and places of worship.

However, the Government machinery slowly ground into action, overcoming many difficulties. By 29th December the authorities had begun registering displaced people at refuge centres in schools and places of worship. People who were staying at relatives' homes trekked out to the refuge centres to register themselves.

Electricity supplies to inland areas were restored within three days. Water took a little longer, perhaps three weeks. Until that time, it was impossible for people to return to those houses still standing. Although toilets, being built on top of concrete septic tanks, survived quite well, there was a dire need for sanitary facilities, which took a long time to come.

The clearing of debris and the burial of bodies was undertaken by the Government and by volunteers from among the local people and from political parties. The roads to the South were repaired within two weeks. However, the same was not true in the East, particularly in Amparai district. There, areas south of the Arugam Bay Bridge could only be reached by boat or by tractor for several weeks.

Present situation

The South, particularly the town of Galle, was the recipient of much of the reconstruction aid given to Sri Lanka. Food was plentiful, and each tsunami-affected family received welfare payments. However, many people remain unemployed, particularly those who worked in fishing and tourism. The replacement of fishing boats and fishing nets destroyed or damaged by the tsunami is slow.

Because the railway was wrecked, most government employees found travelling to work a major problem. However, the railway line on the southwest coast was restored within two months, enabling people to go to work at affordable fares.

Hotels are being renovated in expectation of the return of the tourists in the winter. Some hotels pay a small skeleton staff to serve the small number of tourists in the Tsunami affected areas.

The Government started enforcing the regulation prohibiting house building within 100 metres of the sea. Those people with relatives or friends having land more than 100 metres from the sea, and willing to share it, were given planking for huts; this may cause problems later if permanent houses are not built for them.

However, most of the affected people have been given tents or temporary shelters (mainly by the Red Cross or non-governmental organisations) and have pitched them on the shore, inside the

100-metre limit, because of the lack of land identified for building. Unless proper houses are provided, this could lead to repeat of the pre-tsunami position, with thousands of temporary dwellings and shanties crowded onto the beach, making the inhabitants as vulnerable as before to another tsunami.

Nevertheless, there is widespread apprehension about the future. What happens when the welfare payments stop? And what happens if the promised houses are not built? The Government announced plans for reconstruction. However, there was perturbation about some of the issues that were being avoided, particularly the defence of the coastal environment as laid down in the provisions of the Coast Conservation Act [14].

There is also a fear that the Governments of the rich nations will renege on the promises made by them of billions of pounds as reconstruction aid. The money already promised may anyway be insufficient to complete reconstruction, especially with large percentages being skimmed off through corruption. So any cutback in aid could prove disastrous to the victims of the tsunami.

REBUILDING

In Tsunami-affected areas all over the country, the priority is to provide the Tsunami-affected people with houses, hospitals, schools and jobs. Sri Lanka will need about US\$1.5 billion to effectively implement a recovery and reconstruction strategy according to a damage and needs assessment released by ADB, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the World Bank on 2 February [15].

Rebuilding housing

The biggest problem is housing. For many of the victims of the Tsunami their houses, now destroyed, represent years of toil. Even before the tsunami, there was a shortage of over half a million houses throughout the country, and to this must be added the needs of the 500,000 people who became homeless on Boxing Day. Hundreds of thousands of people have had their homes destroyed completely. According to the National Disaster Management Centre (see Table II) 63,000 dwellings were completely destroyed.

Table II: Houses Affected Issued Date :05/04/2005

District	Houses Damaged	
	Completely	Partially
Jaffna	6,084	1,114
Killinochchi	246	-
Mullaitivu	5,033	424
Trincomalee	4,830	3,835
Batticaloa	12,232	5,376
Ampara	17,117	10,455
Hambantota	2,303	1,744
Matara	2,223	6,075
Galle	7,032	7,680
Kalutara	2,683	3,835
Colombo	3,388	2,210
Gampaha	278	414

Puttlam	23	72
Total	63,472	43,234

Source: National Disaster Management Centre

These people need to have new accommodation built for them. In many cases, a home represents the investment of a lifetime, and a new house is a virtual impossibility.

There seems to be very little sign of the large-scale housing projects that were announced in mid-January. Foundation stones have been laid for several housing schemes, but no further work has been done except in a very few areas.

The National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) made a decision to build terraces of 'townhouses' on the Australian model to replace the huts, shanties and houses that were lost. However, Local Government officers collecting data on people's preferences in housing only ask them if they want individual houses or flats, indicating that the Government is still very confused in its policy. Only a few properly planned housing schemes, with proper waste disposal and water supply, have been started.

In most cases, housing construction is done by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This has been taking place in an anarchic manner, with many NGOs duplicating the work of others. In some villages, NGOs provide more housing than necessary, whereas other villages close by desperately need dwellings. In the case of the Amparai district, the NHDA has been entrusted with overall control of the construction of dwellings, possessing as it does immense experience in the field; it is therefore expected that there will be less chaos in this area [16].

Some of the houses that have been constructed are of shoddy workmanship. Recipients complained of cracking walls and leaking roofs. In most cases, building contractors were blamed; however, it seems that there has been insufficient supervision by the agencies constructing the dwellings.

There appears to have been very little consultation with the villagers on what their housing requirements were. Many women complained that the kitchens provided were too small and that chimneys were not provided to extract the smoke from wood fires; in many cases cadjan [17] outside kitchens were built by the occupants. In some cases, concrete grills were provided instead of windows, enabling the ingress of mosquitoes as well as a lack of privacy at night. Unfortunately, this type of top down approach has characterised reconstruction efforts after the Tsunami; it mirrors a similar attitude to development on the part of government agencies and NGOs alike.

The problem of provision of housing for poor people is compounded by the fact that, before the tsunami, many of the most marginalized people were not landowners. Even those who had land now often find themselves unable to prove it as they have lost the official documents or because land rights formerly rested with men (where women are now the heads of households). Without a land title, these families risk being dispossessed of their land, marginalizing them even further [18].

The building of new homes would have to be in keeping with justice and equity. If just those who are able to afford new housing manage to build in a short period, this would tend to cause societal tensions. Hence, it is vital that a housing reconstruction programme be started to give the less well off dwellings in as short a time as possible. The quality of the housing too should not be too low.

Housing needs to be kept as far from the beaches as possible, so that a coastal strip can be maintained. The new housing should therefore be built inland from where it is now. Land would have to be acquired at market rates, so that unnecessary problems do not occur. Housing development should be on a sustainable basis. The concentration of population in coastal areas has been such that villages have been transformed into urban slums and shanty-towns. In order to ease space requirements and to facilitate waste disposal, multi-storey construction should be favoured. This would allow greater public open space, including communal play areas for children.

According to one NGO [19], about Rs 350,000 is required for each fisher family, to bring them back to the standard of living they enjoyed prior to the tsunami. This does not take into account the cost of proper housing. The fisher folk must be relocated away from the beach, to where they will be safe from future Tsunamis and hurricanes; to where they will not be tormented by sand flies or see their metal goods corrode due to the salt; but where they have easy access to the sea.

It was noted above that a fishermen's multi-storey apartment block in the Ambalangoda area withstood quite heavy punishment from the Tsunami, whereas more flimsy single-storey buildings were swept away. Sturdiness in construction, which is necessitated in multi-storey buildings - would help mitigate the effects of future disasters.

The tsunami-resistance of buildings could also be improved by correct siting, e.g. by aligning them at right-angles to the shoreline so that the smallest possible profile is presented to oncoming waves. However, this does not appear to have been done.

The Government

The central government has been accused of incompetence and an excess of red tape in dealing with the post-tsunami reconstruction effort [20]. According to RecoverLanka/GeoLanka,

the government of Sri Lanka and its creditors has fared distressingly poorly in aiding the afflicted, ensuring that tensions are not raised and that fair play is respected. The government went through too many changes in terms of task forces, organizations that were responsible and to this day have done poorly in including representatives of the affected. There were multiple agencies that were competing with each other to harvest the funds coming in.[21]

A report by the Auditor General drew attention to misapplication of funds, attributing it to confusion stemming from multiple instructions issued by different government departments [22]. It highlighted a case of 73.395 million rupees (\$723,460) worth of aid being paid out to nearly 16,000 families in the divisional secretariat of Negombo, which was relatively unscathed by the Tsunami, although only 599 families in Negombo were directly affected. There were others displaced by the tsunami who did not get the rations they were entitled to.

By the end of July, hundreds of millions of rupees worth of aid collected locally by government agencies were still sitting in bank accounts, and in some cases had been invested in fixed deposits. Only 8.2 % of the US\$120.5 million pledged as aid for the fisheries sector and only 11.2 % of \$311.5 million for housing and urban development had been used [23].

The author came across many reports of corruption and nepotism by Government Officials. However, most Divisional Secretaries and lower ranks of government officers remained true to their purpose. For example, a Grama Niladhari [24] in Seenigama lost most of his family but continued with his duties, making sure that the people in his area received food and supplies. RecoverLanka/GeoLanka had a report of a Grama Niladhari in the Ampara district, a refugee himself, make government work for the rest [25].

The Government has come in for flak from many sides, in some cases uninformed. For example, the Sri Lanka Government was criticised for charging the usual duty for SUVs imported by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). However, according to one report: There are reports of the proliferation of new \$50,000 SUV's after the Tsunami all bearing the brand of one or the other of the INGO.[26]

Another instance was a BBC news report [27], which quoted an aid worker as saying that the ban on rebuilding within 100 metres of the sea was causing huge delays – ignoring the fact that there was considerable justification for the ban.

This report further quoted a Government official as admitting that while 6,000 houses were needed, construction had started for only 200; however, he qualified this by saying that This is the initial stages. When you take the initial stages, it takes time - then only it gathers momentum.[28]

The Government has been concerned with not replicating the seaside slums that existed prior to the Tsunami, one of the main reasons for its lack of haste in rebuilding. It has also been slow in other respects, but this has been due mainly to bureaucratic necessity.

The government apparatus did take a long time to get moving. However, when it did, it probably addressed the problems it faced far better than in most other countries.

Civil Society

The efforts of NGOs were vital in distributing supplies in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami, until the Government machinery started working properly.

The tragedy garnered greater media attention and fund raising than anticipated. The attention on the disaster stayed longer than expected. Savvy fund raisers garnered much. There was a reorganization of many foreign agencies who work in Sri Lanka - they retooled to raise funds and disburse them[29].

However, there was an unprecedented influx of NGOs into the country thereafter. Many new NGOs were also started locally. Many of these were spurious, intended merely to reap part of the harvest of Tsunami aid funds.

INGOs persisted in employing foreign personnel, whose upkeep costs far more than for local or regional employees and whose knowledge of local conditions was virtually nonexistent. Some of these INGOs sent in relief workers with very little experience of working in South Asia, or indeed in tropical countries. This led to the distribution of items such as woollen blankets (in areas where the night temperature seldom goes below 25 Celsius) and toilet paper (in a region in which it is rarely used).

In one instance, an International NGO dismissed a local official coordinating local staff and replaced her with a foreigner at a salary of \$7000 a month (far higher than the rate for locals), claiming that local labour laws did not apply [30].

As well as the more traditional charities, the rebuilding process here has been characterised by small independent organisations. The advantage is they can sidestep the red tape that has paralysed the larger agencies. According to one such body, Things are improving here. It is taking time and there are a variety of factors causing that - some of them governmental, some of them just the lack of co-ordination between the groups, because there are a lot of groups working here. Many are doing similar things. The fact of the matter is, that as a charitable trust, we don't have the same constraints as the NGOs. We can actually just identify a problem and go on to solve it. [31]

The contribution made by religious organisations was immense. However, there have been several reports of missionaries taking advantage of this opportunity to collect funds and to proselytise [32]. In one incident reported to this writer, a religious organisation gifted a house to a Tsunami survivor; she was told that if she were baptised, she would be able to get electricity and water for her house as well.

The activities of various INGOs and local NGOs caused the Ministry of Social Services to stop registering NGOs until further notice. However, there remains poor monitoring of the work of the NGO's and a lack of transparency in public accounting of the funds [33].

Funding Agencies

International donors pledged over \$3 billion in aid to Sri Lanka, around a third of which has been firmly committed so far according to TAFREN, the country's tsunami reconstruction body [34]. However, in some cases, this aid came with strings attached.

According to RecoverLanka/Geolanka:

The debtor organizations have used the funds they have to require changes in administrative structure, relinquishment of sovereign control over administration, over access to relief planning and by their very dominance have ensured that local and particularly regional expertise has been marginalized[35].

Debts have been postponed but no relief has been provided. Although the donors offered to mobilise funds, often only a small fraction of these funds reached the beneficiaries [36]. Many nations providing aid require that up to 75% of it be spent locally or on local resources, but there is no verification of whether this is done [37].

The larger share of the funds appears to have been spent on salaries, hotels, perks and travel. Indeed, the tourist sector in Colombo reported a minor boom, as officials of donor agencies occupied the best hotel space – so that finding a hotel room became almost impossible.

Meaningful reconstruction?

Those who were affected by the Tsunami were largely the poor, the marginalised and those already suffering from extended conflict. Many gave their all to bury those who died, and to provide succour to those who survived [38]. In Sri Lanka up to one-third of the population in the areas affected by the tsunami live below the poverty line, with the situation particularly bad in the conflict hit North and East [39]. It should be vital that these people are the first to be looked after.

However, it appears that a lot of government aid has so far been targeted at registered businesses. For example, the owners of coir [40] mills are being compensated for damage but the poor coir workers who struggle to make a living will not benefit [41].

The reconstruction effort in many cases is effectively helping poor people, in some cases there has been a tendency to focus on landowners, business people and the most high profile cases, rather than prioritise aid to poor communities. The aid effort must now increase its emphasis on targeting poor people, marginalised groups and women to ensure they are not excluded from the reconstruction efforts, according to the international agency Oxfam [42].

What has become clear is that all agencies concerned with the relief and reconstruction effort need to be more broad-based in their approach. The attitude of both Government and Civil Society has been 'top down' and patronising.

This has been especially true of foreign NGOs, who seem to share the colonialist attitude of the donor agencies. They need to rethink their positions and to start employing more people from the Third World, especially from the South Asia region.

The sheer scale of the effort being made to rebuild after the Tsunami is such that, whatever the drawbacks and shortcomings of the agencies concerned with it, there is bound to be a positive result. The victims of the Tsunami will bear the scars of both the disaster and of the recovery, but there is no doubt that they will be able to look forward to a better future.

The most important lesson of the foregoing is that it is fundamental that, in future Disaster Management Programmes are formulated so that all agencies, both State and Civil Society, can effectively cope with such emergencies. Here it should be mentioned, parenthetically that the Divisional Secretaries in several areas have initiated action towards devising such plans, in conjunction with grass roots organisations and NGOs.

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NOTES

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