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Six years on

'Many victims have not yet been rehabilitated.'

Six years after the giant Indian Ocean tsunami killed hundreds of thousands of people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India, many of those who lost their homes and livelihood are yet to be rehabilitated. Over 8,000 people were killed in Tamil Nadu, which bore the brunt of the tsunami in India. Over a lakh were rendered homeless in Nagapattinam district alone. Relief and reconstruction work in Cuddalore has been widely lauded. The government and NGOs here worked well to provide accommodation to the homeless and to help rebuild livelihoods. Around 40 per cent of the women who were affected by the tsunami are said to have become entrepreneurs. However, there are sections that failed to receive adequate support.

It is well-known that caste considerations played an important role in distribution of aid. Relief was provided to dominant caste people in the affected villages, ignoring Dalits and others lower down in the social hierarchy. This discrimination persisted in the provision of housing and assistance for rebuilding livelihoods as well.

Consequently, in the tsunami-hit districts Dalits either live in temporary shelters or in hutments located in areas that suffer annual flooding. It is time the government intervened to set right the discrimination that has denied them support for six years.

Is the world better prepared to face a tsunami than it was six years ago? Marginally better, it seems. People are more aware today of the devastation a tsunami can bring. However, alert systems have rarely worked when tsunamis struck Indonesia in more recent years. Equipment has been put in place at enormous cost. But in several instances, crucial parts were found to be not working, thus failing to alert when crisis struck. An important shortcoming in the alert system has been the dissemination of information. In Indonesia, authorities have not been able to spread the word about an impending tsunami to remote

India has been spared major tsunamis since 2004. A tsunami warning centre has been up and running since 2007. Alerts have been issued and villages even evacuated when tsunamis have struck Indonesia. However, disaster experts say that evacuation is not fast enough. A part of the reason is that the public does not co-operate. Many villagers are reportedly reluctant to leave behind their cattle. This is foolhardy. A sustained public awareness campaign needs to be undertaken.

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By: Raghavendra r pawar On: 29 Dec 2010 02:17 pm

Relief distribution on caste based is illogical and unacceptable. Everyone is lost everything in nature furry why distributing authority/agencies doing the same. Certainly politics is involved and at least TN government if reads this piece of information make sure that everything is placed in spot and executing according to damages regardless of caste. IN our nation making promise is so easy and government expert in doing so. Two years back North-Karnatak first time experienced heavy flood and few district washed away with that. Till date things have not been changes as per the promise made during first visit apart from some Mutt's.NGO†S/Corporates built some houses.

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