# SDI RESPONSE TO TSUNAMI





Prepared by Janarukula

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**1st Report**
27th January 2005:
Yakkala, Gampaha - The Municipal Council Area
Janarukula Federation Office:

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The Women's Development Bank Federation (WDBF) work in 9 different districts in Sri Lanka with the support of a very small NGO, Janarukula, which means: "Bringing People Together."

A process report on the work and activities that the WDBF and Janarukula have been involved in, since the Tsunami tragedy on the 26th December 2004:

Present:
Mr. Upali Sumithre (Coordinator of Janarukula), Mrs. Miurin Fernando (Federation leader), Mrs. Irangani Tilakarathna (Federation leader) and Miss Zoë Templeton (SDI field worker)

## 26th December 2004: Sri Lanka – Tsunami

- About 1 million people were affected (1/5 of the population)
- Not much was left of the east and southeast coastal towns.
- People displaced in temporary camps.
- People lost their livelihoods.
- New settlements/houses, water supply, roads, drains, electricity,community centers, etc. still have to be rebuilt.
- The majority of people affected were the poor.

WDBF and Janarukula have used the savings and loan schemes to organize communities since 1999.

Today, 30 000 members of the WDBF in Sri Lanka save regularly.

Two Savings and Credit Groups were established in Lansiyawattha - a coastal slum settlement in Moratuwa, Colombo:
1. Diriya
2. Picncha

- Both these groups started savings programmes where 5 rupees, from each member, were collected weekly. This is the most basic and essential building block of the entire structure of the SDI mobilization strategy. Women federation leaders collect the money and this strengthens the federation because of the bond it creates between them and the community members.
- Members receive loans from the group as the money accumulates.
- These two savings groups had been running for 2 months before the Tsunami tragedy.

### 27th December 2004:

The Federation leaders went to visit the settlements that had been devastated or damaged by the Tsunami.

- The leaders could not find any of the inhabitants of these affected areas because they had been moved and split up in various refugee/rehabilitation/relief camps. The leaders started to search for federation members.
- The Municipal Council wanted to know where all the people were so that discussions could begin. These discussions would be based around questions such as: What is the extent of the damage? What the community member's main concerns are? What their needs are? What next steps should be taken?
- They distributed 1000 rupees to each of the 10 families of the federation from the federation fund.

### 28th December 2004:

The Federation leaders visited Moratuwa and found 3 of their members displaced in the various refugee/relief/rehabilitation camps. They were informed about a gathering that would be happening at their settlement on the following day (29th). They were told to spread the word to all the community and federation members in the various camps so that everyone, who had been affected in one way or another by the Tsunami, could be helped immediately in some way.

There was a desperate need, expressed by the people, for: clothes,underwear and babies food. The Federation leaders then spread the word to other federation members in all the 9 districts that they work in to please collect food (rice), clothes, supplies, or anything that may be of some help to these affected people in order to provide some immediate relief. They were asked to bring these to the settlement the next day to be distributed.There was a very good response and a lot of collections were made from those members not affected by the tsunami.

### 29th December 2004:

The Federation leaders gave 250 rupees to each of their members and distributed the packets of food and clothes that they had accumulated,amongst those in need. Tea, rice, biscuits, soyabeans, coconut, spices,mugs, plates, toothpaste, brushes and matchboxes, were handed out tofederation families.

The aim of the gathering was to discuss the future plans that members of the affected community had, for their settlement. But this discussion was not achieved because the people in the community were still traumatized by the recent events and were finding it extremely difficult to cope emotionally and come to terms with the still very raw reality of the situation. Families
had lost relatives, houses were devastated and belongings damaged and washed away. Many people had been left with nothing. There was an overwhelming feeling of sadness amongst the people.



The leaders of the Federation really listened to them. The community members were told to come to the settlement every day and together, as a community united in grief, they could tell their stories of anguish, pain and suffering. It is in desperate times like these that one can see communities really pulling together and supporting each other. So from that day, members of the community came together, told their stories and started making plans to rebuild their community.

### 30th December 2004:

A federation meeting was held to discuss:

1. Supporting the rebuilding of houses, primary savings groups should make money available for those house repairs.
2. Handling the large amount of collections. Need a method in place to control the flow of distribution.

A meeting was held with all the National Leaders who wanted to know what steps the Federation had taken in order to help these affected communities and in what ways can they offer support.

<u>The initial response of the women:</u>

- Many would like to continue staying where their house used to be.
- Some were frightened to go back and wanted alternative places to stay.
- Most of the families wanted to continue to live in their settlement.

The initial response of the Federation was to only help the areas that had savings groups. However the federation soon realized the enormity of the situation and realised they had to support more than just the affected members and so decided to respond to the larger community of non-members too.

### 30th/31st December and 1st January 2005:

The Federation continued visits to Colombo, Kalutara and Moratuwa looking for affected community members and listening to them.

### 5th January 2005:

- Celine (SPARC and SDI) arrives from Mumbai to Sri Lanka. Offered support with land and housing issues.
- The Municipality started clearing away the rubble in the settlements.

### 6th January 2005:

- Somsook (ACHR) arrives from Bangkok to Sri Lanka Discussions about the future planning took place and with the help of Celine and Samsook, a clearer vision was created as to what needed to be done.
- The government was keen to re-enforce a law stating that on one can build shelters 100m from the tide line.
- There was talk of building multistory buildings, along the coast, to house the families.

### 7th January 2005:



<u>The Shramadhna Campaign was held:</u>

- 200 Federation members participated.
- 'Shramadhna' = 'volunteering the labour' to help clear drains, roads and houses.
- Members brought food, rice, pans, and utensils and cooked a big lunch for the community.

- The Federation members and the settlement people all cooked lunch together. This

meal united and intensified the strength of the community and was an indication to them how the federation leaders and members were keen to help and work with them through their hardship.

- The Federation teams discussed what the best ways were to find out information about families that had been affected. They needed to find a means of obtaining and ordering information about each family: how many people there were, how many houses were destroyed, etc. They would obtain their information using **surveys.**

Activities/Steps taken by the Federation to help the affected communities:

2. Immediate relief aid - food, utensils, clothing and supplies.
3. Have worked to safeguard the tenure right of victimized people.
4. Actions to push the political authority for quick remedies to bring the people back to normal living.
5. Listening to all the people's concerns and grievances and addressing there immediate needs where possible.
6. Actions taken to facilitate and encourage the people to become engaged again in income generating activities.
7. The Federation wants to use this crisis as an opportunity for creating new relationships between the urban poor settlements and the district/city officials.
8. To use this opportunity to begin talks on land and housing with the city.

### 9th January 2005:

The surveys were implemented. They were distributed amongst members and non-members of the Federation.

An example of some of the questions on the survey:

1. Name of district area? Name of Local Authority? Name of the Village Level Head of Government office in the area?
2. Name of the head of the household? Number of the house and the address? Are you a member of the Federation Bank?
3. How many people working in one house? What job? What is your monthly income? How many women working in the house? How many members in your family? How many families in one house? A graph then is shown to indicate what the ages and sex the members of the household are.
4. Can you still live in your house or not? If you can't, why? What has been destroyed? If your house is still in good condition, when will you return? If your house is still there but you do not want to return, tell us why?

5. There are then some general questions on the structure of the house before the Tsunami occurred.

- Did you have a roof? Wall? Floor?
- Did you have access to toilet facilities?
- The number of rooms in the house?
- How many feet long and wide was the house?
- Was drinking water available?
- Other?

6. Do you hope to live back in this settlement or not? Why? What would your dream house be like? What do you wish you had? How big in square meters would you like your house? Do you know about any land for housing projects in other areas? If we were to rebuild a community again, what would you like to be in that community? For example: community hall, a chemist, shops, etc
   After the surveys were completed all house members planted a board in the ground, in the area where their house used to be and where they wanted their new house to be built. This board was an indication of the area of land where construction of their new house would take place. On the board would be written vital information such as: the house number, who the head of the family was, the groups name, federation name and the member's name. Photos of each of the families, next to their board, were then taken by the federation leaders and attached to their survey sheet.

Six settlements have been involved in this survey. Surveys have been completed in two of the settlements already: 1.) Lansiyawattha and 2.) Jayagathpura.

## Before the 9th January 2005:

The methodology used when working with communities:
Communities need to unite and work in partnership.

- There used to be no savings groups in Jayagathpura and now people have caught on to the idea that saving just a little every day/week can be enormously helpful and can go a long way. The idea of helping each other financially seems to work well.
- In Lansiyawattha there are already two savings groups in the informal settlements.

There was a call for all group leaders to come together and discuss what to do in these two areas. The Federation agreed to collaborate with the group leaders and offer their support and assistance where possible. The Federation leaders then showed the community leaders how to do the survey. The Community leaders in turn would demonstrate to their community members
what was required and how to fill out the questionnaire.





The boards were then discussed and community leaders shared with the members what the boards were, what to write on them and how they would be used. The members then relayed this information

to the other community members.In one night, all boards in these two communities were completed and erected.

This was a great mobilization starter. As the communities gathered the relevant information and learnt how to process and use it, they became better equipped with the knowledge and the understanding required for their resettlement. This was a crucial step for these affected communities. They moved away from being the victims, wanted to be *involved* and were becoming *direct actors* in change.

So now, with the surveys, boards and photos completed, discussions around the planning of the house needed to take place.



The Federation talked to the leaders and the leaders spoke to and worked together with the community members. Household members in affected settlements needed to come together to plan their settlements and design their houses. A lot of families were split up in different camps after the Tsunami. It was essential that they all be informed and encouraged to join in and together plan their future.

The Federation asked the community what their proposal was. What they wanted to happen to their land next. It was a unanimous decision on behalf of all the community members that they wanted temporary houses to be built on the settlement.

<u>A Temporary Housing Programme was then distributed to all the families. It had the:</u>

- Name of the settlement?
- Village division?
- Group name?
- Leader of groups' name and address?
- Then there was a list of the group members, their house numbers and a box that you had to tick if you wanted a temporary shelter or cross if you still have a house and don't need a temporary shelter. If you did want a temporary shelter then you had to state

why. This list went to all the people in the settlement, whether they wanted housing or not.

The Federation then wrote to Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) and Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and explained the situation in these settlements and what the community themselves had proposed. The Federation asked for any kind of help or support. SDI and ACHR offered their support in the form of building and housing materials.

The next step was to get a permit from the government to build the temporary houses.





**23rd January 2005:**

A meeting was arranged in Jayagathpura settlement. The Minister of Urban Development and Water Supply, the Deputy Mayor were just two of the significant members that attended that day. The community members showed them around the devastated site. The Federation leader then made a proposal to the Ministers asking for permission to build temporary houses for the Tsunami affected communities.

- By the 25th January, the Federation received word that permission had been granted for temporary houses to be built on that land.
- The Deputy Mayor offered his support in the form of provision of toilet facilities. for the temporary houses.
- The government promised to provide electricity and water.

The group leaders then had to discuss with the members what the criteria would be for selecting the first families to settle in the temporary houses. The plan is to build 400 houses altogether, spread out across the six settlements along the coast. Community members will build their own houses in their own settlements.

<u>To summarize the process of organizing temporary shelters:</u>

1. Federation helped the community by organizing them into groups to discuss what the real concerns are. The group leaders then report back to the federation.
2. Surveys are conducted as a means of obtaining information regarding the number of houses there were and how many of them were destroyed.
3. The boards were explained to the community members
4. Photos of the families next to their boards were taken.
5. The community wanted temporary houses put up

6. A temporary housing programme was then distributed to all the members. This form was then attached the photos and the survey.
7. Discussions around what materials are needed for the building, where to build the houses, and the size of the house.

### 26th January 2005:

The Urban Development Authority, Municipal Council Officers and Moratuwa University Students (Architects) all came to meet at the Federation Centre in Jayagathpura. After the tsunami, the leaders of the Federation needed a place where they could meet with the community members and hold meetings/discussions. With the help of Somsook (ACHR) in Bangkok, funds were provided for a hut to be constructed in Jayagathpura, which formed the WDBF Centre where people could congregate and community and official meetings could be held.

All the activities and processes that had taken place thus far were explained. The emphasis and overall message that came out of this meeting was that the community members wanted to build a community, not just to have concrete houses built on empty land. They wanted the settlement to feel like a home not just a place to take shelter and sleep. The community is filled with people who have feelings, concerns, ideas and dreams. They wanted their settlement to symbolise community togetherness. The government supported this idea and a permit to build houses on the land, in both settlements, was approved.

Federation's work with children affected by the Tsunami:



The Federation has also been doing work with the children affected by the Tsunami. Emotionally, the children are wrought with grief, many don't even understand the full significance and scale of the disaster, and all they know is that relatives and people they know and love aren't with them

anymore. Since the disaster the Federation has organized activities and groups, with the children, using mediums such as drawing pictures, playing games and dancing as an outlet for feelings and emotions. The children have responded well to this and it's been a useful tool for coping with the events that have occurred.

### 17th January 2005:

The handouts of food parcels:

Gift bags, made up by the federation leaders, have also been distributed to households. In each bag there is: tea, sugar, dhal, 2kg of rice and soap. These bags are distributed to the affected families every fortnight. If the families have children a special bag of milk and bottles is made up for them. The Federation has this family composition on record from the surveys and photos. These bags are given to the group leaders who then distribute them to the group members in the group meetings.

What is also discussed in the group meetings, are the concerns of the members in the community. For example: there was a genuine concern by a number of women who desperately needed underwear. This concern was then taken up by the group leaders and reported back to the Federation. The Federation then was able to buy underwear, which could be distributed to those who were in need.

### 26th January 2005:

- 200 families were selected for the first houses to be built, the priority being those families who were closest to the ocean.
- The Federation will support the construction by providing the building materials.
- The Municipal Council agreed to clear the dumping ground so that the houses could be built.
- The government did send the minutes of the meeting to all significant members in Moratuwa: the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, the member of Parliament in Moratuwa and to the Minister of Urban Development and Water Supply.

The government promised to give 50 rupees for each person that was staying in the refugee camps, but they did not do this. They gave the money to the refugee committee in the camps. The committee then decided to take the money and make one big meal a day for everyone in the camp to have. The Federation spoke to the people living in the refugee camps and concern arose around only getting fed one meal a day, which was just not adequate. They were unhappy at how the meals were being managed.

The Federation then asked the Secretary of Moratuwa if each of the families could receive a food voucher/token to buy their own food. This matter is still, at present, under discussion.

### 27th January 2005:

The Federation received a fax today from the Urban Development and Water Supply to say that they have given permission and will support the people of Moratuwa with temporary houses, water and

toilet facilities. They will also provide 5000 rupees to each affected family for income generating and rehabilitation activities. Now that they have this permission, work can start immediately.

The steps ahead:

- The plan so far is to start with the construction of temporary houses on the 1st Feb 2005.
- The Federation leaders will discuss with the carpenters in the settlements; the size of the house, the design and the materials needed.
- A management committee will then be elected and they'll be in charge of:
    1. Overseeing the building of the temporary structures.
    2. Selecting the first 200 families that they feel are the most deserving and needy. All families have to be approved by the committee.
    3. Working out some kind of safety and security system for all the houses being built and the materials being used.
    4. Organising the labour to build the temporary houses.
    5. Organising the preparation of meals for the labourers.
    6. Organising the 5000 rupees from the government and distributing it to the families for income generation.

### 28th January 2005:

The Federation leaders start drawing up a map and numbering the houses in the area where all the settlements will be built. A map of the area was given to the Federation by the National Housing Development Authority, which clearly showed all the settlements that had been wiped out by the tsunami.

Drawing up settlements helps people get a visual fix on the physical situation, helps them to plan the settlement and assess the development interventions that the community members propose. These maps are powerful planning and mobilizing tools and effective for bargaining when it comes to negotiations with government for secure tenure. The numbers of the houses on the map will correspond to the numbers on the survey, together with the photo. Therefore all information is collected and drawn up in a very systematic and orderly fashion.

### 29th January 2005:



A meeting regarding the issue of income generation and rehabilitation will be held. Here the community members will be given the chance to talk about how they used to make money but cant anymore as a result of the Tsunami. Many members, as a means of earning an income, used to: play instruments, ride bicycles and fish with nets, but now they are unable to do so. This meeting is to discuss how we can help these people rebuild something important in their lives that has been destroyed, get them on their feet again and start earning some income. The discussions and outcome from this meeting will be collected and given to the government to rally support.

The Minister of Finance announced on TV that they had agreed to donate 5000 rupees to each family who had lost materials that were needed for income generation. That's all very well in theory but in practice everyone knows how long the government take for processes to be put in place and intervention to begin: The decision would then have to go through the District Office, then down to the Regional Office, then to the Head of the Village Division and so on. The people knew that this would take forever. There is such a huge gap between the government and the urban poor. The government can take long to implement decisions and promises made to the poor, and the poor feel that their needs are not really understood by the government.

So this is where the federation intervenes, they offer immediate support. The Federation supports and links the government to the community. They help to narrow the gap through supporting the poor communities' ideas, needs and wishes and negotiating with the government suitable and appropriate processes of change.

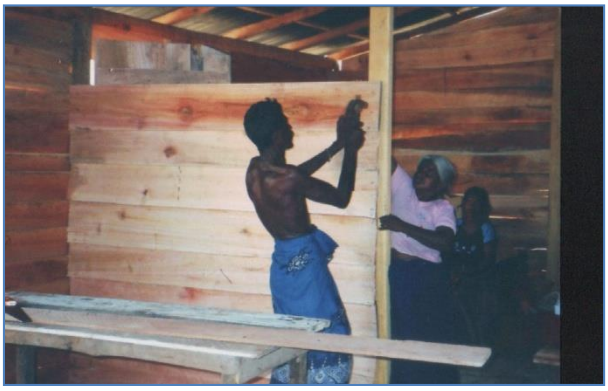
**30th January 2005:**

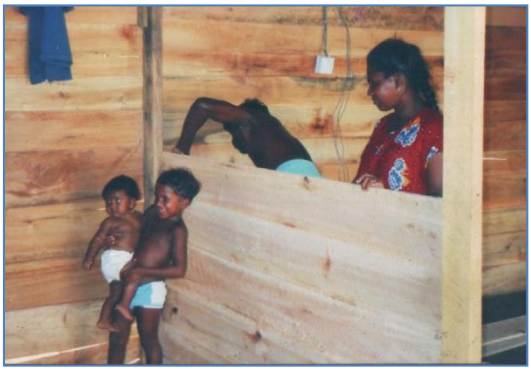
A workshop will be held in the Municipal Council Hall. The Federation leaders meet with the group leaders and elect a Management Committee that will represent the community. This newly elected committee will discuss and finalize the criteria for which of the first 200 families will be chosen, for the first stage of the temporary housing construction.

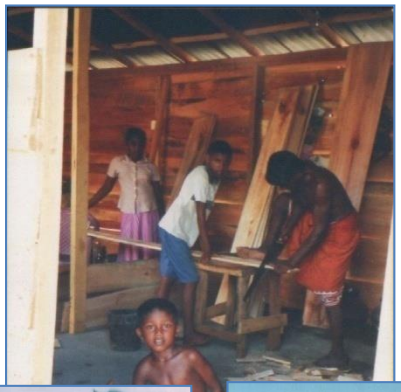
### 1st February 2005:

The Minister of Urban Development and Water Supply, the Mayor of Moratuwa and Government Officials, Moratuwa University Architectural lecturers, along with leaders and members of the Federation, will be present at Jayagathpura settlement for the launch of the first stage of rebuilding this community: *Constructing 200 temporary houses for the tsunami affected families.*









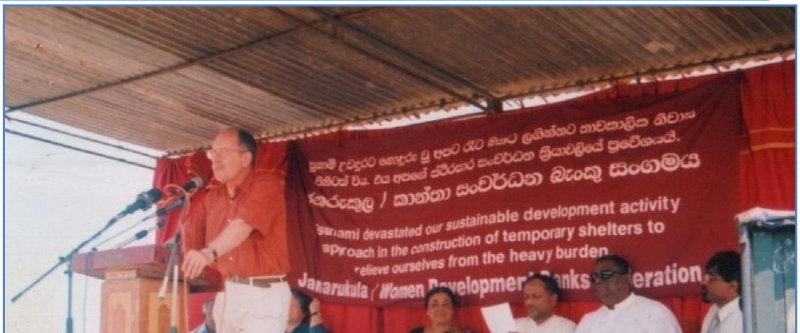











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Tsunami devastated our sustainable development activity
approach in the construction of temporary shelters to
relieve ourselves from the heavy burden.













