

# DECENT WORK for POST DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Briefing Note No. 1 - ILO Response to the Tsunami and the South Asia Earthquake  
ILO/CRISIS, May 2007

## Decent Work in Action After Disasters

Decent Work is at the core of ILO's mandate in its worldwide activities. Putting Decent Work in action entails promoting opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive employment opportunities in conditions of freedom, human dignity and security.

Crises constitute a major threat to Decent Work: they generate massive unemployment and loss of livelihoods, they disrupt soft and hard infrastructure supporting economic activities, they reduce security and they undermine ongoing development efforts and achievements.

On the other hand, the pre-existence of Decent Work conditions contributes to reducing the negative impact and the economic loss deriving from a crisis. It also speeds up and ensures the good quality of the recovery process, since appropriate attitudes, institutions, procedures and frameworks are already in place.

Through the promotion of Decent Work, ILO ensures a concrete contribution to the reduction of socio-economic vulnerabilities, which represent the building blocks of disaster risk and exacerbate the impact of natural hazards in terms of human and

physical losses. Vulnerable actors have reduced capacities to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the consequences of natural hazards.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 had massive effects on livelihoods throughout the region. The economic sectors that paid most of the cost of the Tsunami in terms of productive assets, jobs, investments, networks and economic opportunities were sectors largely dependent on access to and use of natural resources, micro and small businesses operating the hardest hit sectors, self-employed people, employers and workers engaged in the informal sector.

## ILO's Approaches and Practices

The ILO Decent Work agenda comprises the four major pillars of ILO's mandate: the promotion of Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Social Protection, Social Dialogue and Employment. Policies and interventions aimed at realizing Decent Work play a key role in rebuilding economic structures damaged by a disaster and in alleviating the burden of poverty.

Enabling the economically active population to access the labour market is one of ILO's major concerns when it comes to promoting the generation of **employment** and livelihood opportunities, especially in the aftermath of a disaster. Through the establishment of Emergency Employment Service Centres and the implementation of ad hoc vocational skills training programmes, ILO assists its partners in allowing people to enhance and develop their productive skills and meet labour demand. Short-term



employment opportunities offer a valuable means of injecting cash into the local markets and contribute to reducing the frustration and dependency of local communities on external assistance, thus speeding up the restoration of normalcy.

The attention to **labour standards** and the introduction of ad hoc social protection measures throughout the recovery process make employment and livelihood opportunities decent and sustainable in the long run.

**Social protection**, in particular, is a basic human right and a fundamental means of fostering social cohesion and ensuring social stability and peace. In addition to that, it is particularly appropriate in

addressing the needs of those who cannot work because of disabilities or other impediments.

As regards **social dialogue**, in post-disaster situations participatory processes are needed to better target the recovery and increase local ownership. To that end, Local Economic Recovery and Development processes generate an environment where all parties that are actively involved acknowledge that they have a stake and something concrete to gain by being in the picture.

This note reviews major elements of the ILO's Tsunami and earthquake response, highlighting some of the approaches and practices used to promote livelihood recovery in various affected countries.

## ***Integrated approach to socio-economic recovery***

The ILO Programme in Aceh and Nias approached the socio-economic recovery needs of the crisis-affected areas in an integrated manner. This was done by providing tools and assistance in a number of core areas of ILO expertise. The programme: supported entrepreneurs through training in business start-up and management skills and through access to capital and productive assets; strengthened microfinance institutions and providers of business development services through ad hoc training and technical as-

sistance; promoted gender equality through targeted capacity building for women entrepreneurs; worked to prevent child labour through awareness campaigns in communities and educational institutions; enhanced workers' employability through vocational skills training and employment services; involved communities, local authorities, workers and entrepreneurs in participatory mechanisms throughout the decision-making process; and improved infrastructure to better support economic activities.

## ***Participatory planning and capacity building for livelihood recovery***

In Sri Lanka, the Income Recovery Technical Assistance Programme (IRTAP) has assisted the government's Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) in setting up a planning mechanism to optimize the recovery process and the allocation of resources and efforts in the areas worst hit by the Tsunami. Besides offering a substantial contribution in introducing a bottom-up approach sensitive to community needs, IRTAP generates self-confidence, ownership over the processes launched and commitment from local counterparts. Among the programme's key achievements are 35 Divisional Livelihoods Development Plans, which identify potential projects in social protection, com-



©International Labour Organization/Crozet M.

munity infrastructure reconstruction, and Local Economic Development for the most affected divisions in Sri Lanka. Local government livelihood teams that produced the plans were supported with ILO expertise.

## Back to business

ILO's post-tsunami recovery project in Thailand, implemented in the provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, and Ranong, was aimed at helping workers and employers affected by the disaster to increase employability and income generation. The needs of both the formal and informal economies were addressed. Interventions undertaken to achieve this goal included: 1) Training of employers and workers in the formal tourism sector; 2) Facilitation of access to commercial financial services for micro and small

businesses; 3) Support for informal sector enterprises and self-employment; 4) HIV/AIDS prevention.

In India, ILO launched pilot activities in collaboration with the employers' organizations in the affected areas. In particular, entrepreneurs were assisted through several training initiatives involving the use of the ILO training package *Start and Improve Your Business*. The ILO also helped upgrade the skills and tools of local providers of business development services.

## Enhancing workers' employability

After the tsunami hit Sri Lankan coasts, the ILO extended the reach and services provided by the pre-existing JobsNet programme. This is aimed at addressing the needs of workers and employers through a modern, technology-based system set up as a public-private partnership facilitating the match between demand and supply of labour. In the disaster-affected areas the programme worked to meet the need for temporary employment in those economic sectors that were particularly linked to recovery and reconstruction. A survey of competency requirements for skilled and unskilled workers was conducted with a focus on the most severely affected sectors. The findings of this analysis were used in the design and enhancement of vocational skills training programmes

to address the shortage of skilled labour. Besides serving as labour-market intermediary and coordinating the delivery of training, JobsNet set up innovative measures (mobile units) to reach isolated communities in affected areas.

In India ILO's intervention was focused on providing vocational training to around 3,000 tsunami-affected people in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts, Tamil Nadu state. Training needs were identified together with the communities; courses were then offered to targeted male and female beneficiaries in a variety of professional activities, such as PC use, vehicle repair and maintenance, and handicrafts. This was expected to help the tsunami-affected groups (fishermen, youth and women) improve their livelihoods and incomes.

## Generation of short-term income opportunities

After the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, ILO activated a response aimed at getting people back to work as quickly as possible. In order to contribute to the total estimated loss of over 1 million livelihoods and jobs, ILO launched and implemented the Rapid Income Support through Employment (RISE) programme. This consisted of introducing cash-for-work schemes that provided temporary employment to jobseekers, including from vulnerable groups affected by the earthquake. Workers were engaged in labour-intensive activities related to the relief and rehabilitation efforts, such as debris removal and critical community infrastructure repair. The project also included the activation of Emergency Employment Information Centres and skills development programmes. Women were given particular attention and a significant

number of those who participated in the implementation of the project were women. The RISE programme has employed 60,000 men and women in cash-for-work activities.



©International Labour Organization/Crozet M.

## Private-public sector partnerships

Through the ILO vocational skills training project implemented in India after the Tsunami, trade unions have expanded their dialogue with industrial training centres and institutes, community colleges, academic institutions, NGOs, and private training providers such as computer institutes, arts and crafts centres, tailoring institutes, and driving schools. This has given them the platform to learn the best practices and different community approaches. The local administration in the targeted districts now recognizes trade unions as development organizations.

In Thailand similar benefits were achieved by promoting the participation of twelve local and national

entities including trade unions, employers' representatives, governmental bodies, NGOs, cooperatives, and associations. Each of them plays a specific role within the tourism sector, including setting policies, providing financial services, and offering business support services and counseling. This proved to be a winning strategy as each participating institution was able to share expertise and services to the benefit of the affected groups. Throughout the project, the ILO encouraged its twelve partners to network among themselves and to share their expertise in order to provide tsunami victims with more and better services.

## Recovering together through social dialogue

Through social dialogue, social partners and constituents (governments and workers' and employers' organizations) collaborate and discuss win-win approaches for building back better. ILO's project in Thailand has helped improve relations between workers and employers by encouraging them to work together towards the recovery of livelihoods and economic activities. The recognition of shared problems and objectives is a key element in this process. The project

organized meetings and offered a forum where issues were addressed by all three parties. Both in the planning and in the implementation phases, ILO worked closely with trade unions officials and local implementing partners. Their capacities were strengthened; they learned about participatory methods and their concrete application; and they had the chance to expand their networks and collaborations.

## Human rights aspects of post-disaster reconstruction

Vulnerable groups are the ones that most need attention and specific measures when a crisis strikes, since its consequences are likely to worsen the already precarious situation in which they live. Among the most vulnerable people are certainly children, who are especially susceptible to trafficking and exploitation in the labour market. The ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), which was already operating in Sri Lanka and Indonesia before the Tsunami, expanded its activities to some

of the affected areas and adjusted its plan of action to address post-Tsunami needs. In Sri Lanka children were provided with training and with a referral system to access social services such as health and education. ILO also promoted access to local and national safety nets for families and guardians who care for children.

For more information, please visit the following websites:

ILO Crisis Response and Reconstruction Programme (ILO/CRISIS)

<http://www.ilo.org/crisis>

ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok>

ILO Subregional Office for South Asia

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi>

ILO Office in Indonesia

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/jakarta>

ILO Office in Sri Lanka

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/colombo/index.htm>



©International Labour Organization/Crozet M.