

Disaster Seminar in Phuket

A regional seminar held in Phuket, Thailand

October 30 - November 3, 2006

- "People's Leadership in Disaster Recovery: Rights, Resilience and Empowerment"
- the seminar was jointly organized by CODI, Chumchon Thai Foundation, ACHR, UN-Habitat and UNDP
- These rough notes on the meeting and field visits were written by Thomas Kerr at the ACHR

Who attended the seminar?

There were about **200 people** in this large gathering, most of whom were community members from areas that had experienced serious disasters in the past few years, including tsunamis, floods, earthquakes, storms, landslides and droughts.

- **42 disaster community survivors** and their NGO supporters from 8 Asian countries (including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Maldives, India, Philippines, Japan, Nepal and Vietnam)
- **10 community leaders** from Hurricane Katrina-hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast of USA (*Biographies of these 10 are given in Appendix 3, at the end of the report*)
- **38 community leaders** from 8 flood and landslide-affected provinces in Northern Thailand
- **60 community leaders** from 10 tsunami and flood-affected provinces in Southern Thailand
- **15 Thai government officials**, from national, provincial, district and local administration levels.
- **14 representatives from UNDP** and UN-Habitat and other UN-affiliated organizations
- **19 representatives from Thai NGOs**, foundations, academic institutions and donors

Full Meeting schedule : *In APPENDIX 2, at end of these notes.*



FIRST DAY : October 30, 2006

Speeches in the introductory session :

1. **Welcome speech by Mr. Udomsak Asavarangkoul**, *Provincial Governor of Phuket*
2. **Welcoming remarks by Ms. Somsook Boonyabanha**, *Director of the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) and Secretary General of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)*. (FULL TEXT OF THIS SPEECH IN **APPENDIX 4** at end of report)
3. **Keynote speech by Mr. Paiboon Watanasiritam**, *Minister of Social Development and Human Security, Government of Thailand*. (FULL TEXT OF THIS SPEECH IN **APPENDIX 5** at end of report)
4. **Message from Ms. Joana Merlin-Scholtes**, UNDP by UN Resident Coordinator.
5. **Speech by Dr. Pichit Ratakul** : (Executive Director, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center) "*People know best. They know every corner and every detail of their community best. They also know their weak points...*" Suggests that people prepare escape routes and identify high-risk areas, rescue plans, who will take care of who.

Field Visit to Ban Tung Wah, in Phangnga Province : (Monday, October 30)

The village's tenure struggle is not over yet: The District Authority, which is still claiming ownership of the village's ancestral land, has really played hard-ball with this community. After failing to get the villagers to vacate the land after the tsunami (using their bogus plans to construct a hospital as an excuse) they agreed to the community's land sharing plan, in which the community rebuilt on part of the original land and returned about one-third of the land to the District. But the District has only given the community a 5-year lease on their land. So the community is now submitting a request for a longer-term lease – or for communal land title – for the land upon which they have totally rebuilt their beautiful village.

- **As all these bus-loads of disaster survivors from 10 countries converge on Tung Wah and gather under the awnings that have been set up**, the community uses the occasion to publicly read and submit their petition to General Surin, the Chairman of the National Sub-Committee on Land Tenure. (he sent his representative to receive the community's petition)
- **In their letter, they say that we have lived on this land for more than 100 years.** Our ancestors are buried here. But we have no land title papers. The tsunami destroyed 71 houses and killed 34 community people. We ask for your help in securing a long-term lease agreement or land-title which allows us to stay here permanently.

This gathering is also a formal negotiation :

The decision by the community people at Tung Wah to use the big occasion of this regional disaster seminar and this big visit of all the 300 meeting delegates to Tung Wah – and their inauguration of the new Moken Culture Center - to submit their petition for long-term secure land tenure is no coincidence.

- **Using big public events like this as an opportunity to negotiate is a time-tested strategy** which the Thai community networks (as well as community networks and federations around Asia and Africa) have honed to a fine art.
- **Creating milestones** : With high-level UNDP officials, a host of local and national government officials, press and media people, and 300 disaster survivors from Thailand and 13 other Asian countries (plus USA!) visiting this community, there is naturally a great deal of high-profile, public attention focused on this tiny village.
- **So it's a good chance to showcase the work they've done** to rebuild their tsunami-flattened village, to promote the new "Moken pride" they have consolidated during the recovery process, and to highlight their struggle to prevent the District Authorities from grabbing their ancestral land.
- Submitting their petition to General Surin's representative in the midst of this big public event is a way of putting their struggle on record and into the public realm, and it does so in the context of a friendly, up-beat, proactive and uplifting occasion which highlights all the positive steps they've taken, instead of negative protesting or fighting abstractly for their "housing rights" . . .

Hong Klatalay, one of the leaders in Ban Tung Wah, speaks : Welcomes everyone, especially friends from other countries who face disasters as we did. He tells the story of the community, their losses in the tsunami, and their decision to "re-invade" their own land after the tsunami, when the Provincial Authority tried to grab the land from them. Describes the village's determination to stay here permanently, their hard work in rebuilding their houses and redesigning their community, with children's playgrounds, youth centers, and the Moken Cultural Center at the front. He says, our ancestors created this community.

- **The new Moken "Sea Gypsy" Cultural Center has been built here to show the story of our own Moken people.** He says there are about 10,000 Moken people living along the Andaman coastline of Thailand. Their livelihoods might have changed a bit (from only subsistence fishing to now also doing construction labor, fishing labor, etc.) but they want to keep their culture in tact.

Woman from the Northern Region Community Networks speaks : She comes from the areas in the north that were hit by floods, storms and land-slides recently, and is astonished by their togetherness here in Tung Wah, and amongst all the Moken communities in southern Thailand, and wishes them luck in their struggle to get their land permanently.

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Mr. Hakan Bjorkman) speaks :

"You are the teachers and we are your students!"

Inauguration of the Moken Cultural Center : With beautiful mud-plastered walls and paintings depicting Moken mythological stories on the walls inside, painted by local people and artists from the region, using coffee and other natural materials. We talk to a young American guy who runs an NGO which has been supporting Burmese Migrant workers in southern Thailand. This NGO helped the Tung Wah villagers to design and build this center – especially the mud plastering, which is stabilized with tapioca, beeswax and linseed oil! They have a website: www.whisperingseed.org

- The curtain across the sign-board is symbolically opened by strings looped around the whole crowd, so everyone is included in the unveiling!

BACKGROUND on the project at BAN TUNG WAH :

Ban Tung Wah is a village of indigenous *Moken* sea gypsies in Kao Lak, a badly-hit area of Phangnga. The village is on public land, but its proximity to the coastal highway and a big tourist hub made it prime real-estate. All 70 houses in the village were swept away by the tsunami and 42 people were killed. A few weeks later, Tung Wah survivors staying at the nearby Kuk Khak relief camp were shocked to find a big sign-board on their old land announcing the construction of a German-financed public hospital. A few phone calls to the German Embassy in Bangkok revealed the project was bogus and the sign board was a crude attempt to seize the land. Though they had no title deeds, these fisher folk had lived there for generations and considered the land their own. They were certainly not interested in the government resettlement sites being offered.

So without waiting for anyone's permission, they gathered themselves together and marched right back home, where they encircled their wrecked village with rope, in a symbolic gesture to mark their land ownership. With the entire community camping out there, it became difficult for the authorities to chase them away, especially given the intense media attention being focused on tsunami rehabilitation and the plight of such poor Andaman fishing communities. With help from a few architects and the Community Planning Network, the people immediately set to work, designing a wooden house model, securing donor funds and starting to build permanent houses. Within days, Ban Tung Wah had become a lightning rod for the land rights struggles of many similar villages, and visitors started flowing in.

The district officials and the provincial governor, meanwhile, continued intimidating the villagers and eventually the land tenure committee got involved. It was the land committee which first suggested a land-sharing option for Tung Wah, in which the people would keep part of the land for redeveloping their settlement, and give part to the province, supposedly for "public use". At first, the people were indignant at the idea of giving up a single bit of their ancestral land. But they came around when faced with the prospect of years lost in legal battles and the possibility that the courts might eventually rule against them, leaving them homeless. So the negotiations about how to divide the land began.

- **The land sharing deal :** The original village occupied 4.16 hectares of land. Initially, the provincial governor wanted at least half this land, but after some tough haggling and many tense meetings, it was agreed that the villagers would keep 2.56 hectares and give 1.6 hectares to the province. As part of the agreement, the villagers can now regularize their tenure status under a communal land-lease, given by the province for three years, initially, and later upped to 5-years, as a first step towards permanent tenure.
- **Project inauguration :** On February 27th 2005, the people invited the Deputy Prime Minister to inaugurate their first ten permanent houses. He spent over an hour in Ban Tung Wah, talking with the people, listening to their stories and climbing up to see how cool the new houses were inside. It was a friendly, human occasion, but also an important acknowledgement, from the highest level of government, that what these people were doing was right. Hundreds of fisher folk from other communities had also come to join the celebration and to see for themselves what was possible.
- **The impact of the case at Ban Tung Wah :** Once the land-sharing agreement had been made, the villagers at Tung Wah were able to get back to the reconstruction of their houses and community in earnest. Almost all the houses are finished now and many have gone back to sea to fish. The impact of this case, and of what these determined people are building into their community, is much stronger and more valuable

than all the months and years they might have spent haggling with the land authorities about who really has the right to this land. Once the people went ahead, many other communities started coming to see what they were doing and to learn from their example. In this way, Tung Wah has become an important model for how to resolve land-conflict cases. Now, officials from the sub-district come to Ban Tung Wah to learn about "people-managed tsunami rehabilitation" while researchers and university students turn up there by the bus-full to study "indigenous people's wisdom."

Field visit to Ruam Sook, the first new housing project for landless renters from Baan Nam Khem (Monday, October 30)

BACKGROUND on the RENTERS HOUSING at BAN NAM KHEM :

What about renters and landless tsunami victims? This special land and housing project allows 105 poor, landless tsunami-hit households to escape the cycle of exploitative rents with a place of their own. Ban Nam Khem, the worst-hit settlement of Thailand's worst-hit province, is a maze of unclear and overlapping tenure claims and dicey land status, with disputes and court cases abounding. There is one group of survivors, though, who had no claim to anything, since they'd been living in cheap rental rooms when the waves hit. Among the village's poorest residents, they lost loved-ones, jobs and possessions like everyone else, but because they did not qualify for the government's housing compensation or relocation schemes, and are not part of any village reconstruction projects, there was no place for them. They had been organized into a group, though, and had begun to discuss possibilities.

In April 2005, families in this situation got an unexpected boost when a US\$300,000 donation from Denmark's Crown Prince was used to set up a special fund to assist Ban Nam Khem's poorest survivors. With support from CODI and NGOs, 105 renter families staying in the Bang Muang relief camp organized themselves and began discussing what to do. After forming a cooperative and identifying two plots of land just a half-kilometer down the road from Ban Nam Khem, the group bought the land and worked with architects to design houses and community layouts.

- 50 houses on the first site are now nearly finished, and work on the remaining 56 houses on the second site is just now beginning. The new community used the Danish fund and some other donations to pay for the new land, which was purchased collectively through their new cooperative, and to subsidize their community labor. They then took out a CODI loan (also a collective loan to the new cooperative) to pay for the new houses. The roads, drains and basic services in the two settlements are being developed by the people, using the Baan Mankong Program's US\$625 per-family infrastructure subsidy.
- All these activities have been deliberately organized to get people to work together, plan together, build together - and forge ties where there had been none before.

Palm is a young guy who grew up in a fishing village in southern Thailand. He has been working with CODI on the tsunami rehabilitation work since the day after the tsunami hit. When the first New Orleans group visited southern Thailand, Palm was our enthusiastic guide. Here are Palm's comments on this community :

"These people had no house, no land! Before they were scattered renters, not a community, did not know each other. The tsunami brought them together in the relief camp. Good involvement of this new community, and establishing of a new community comprising homeless and landless. House design very nice. Good story because the affected people did it all their own way, didn't wait for hand-outs or for someone else to offer them a solution."

"Ruam Sook" is the name this new community has chosen for their new housing colony. It means "happiness together" in Thai. We all arrive by bus and van at the community, which is nearing completion. They have set up a big marquee to give shade from the hot sun, but by the time we arrive in the late afternoon, heavy clouds have gathered and it's started to sprinkle. Mr.

Mr. Prajak and a few other community committee members tell about the background of the Ruam Sook Community : (Prajak is a self-employed tailor who is the leader in this new community of people who used to be landless renters in Ban Nam Khem). Explains how all the members of this new community were homeless after the tsunami, having lost their cheap rental rooms in the waves.

- ***These were some of the poorest and worst-off and most vulnerable of the tsunami victims from this area, having no land or houses or assets or jobs or even community! They didn't even have house registration papers, so their kids could not enroll in local schools!*** They didn't know each other before the tsunami, but were living in scattered rental rooms around the town of Ban Nam Khem, most working as laborers, fishing boat assistants, and small vendors.
- ***Organized themselves around their common problem of landlessness :*** In the Bang Muang Relief camp, which is close to Ban Nam Khem, they started to organize themselves, with support from CODI and the Chumchon Thai Foundation, around the issue of their landlessness.

- **First formed a special "landless renters" savings group:** They soon formed their own "renters" savings group and started saving to buy land collectively. At first, they saved only about 100 Baht per family per month (which isn't much!) but began in earnest to plan and learn and start formulating their ideas.
- **Visited other community-managed housing projects to get ideas :** They went to see housing projects under the Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program in Bangkok and in other areas of the country.
- **New land :** Everyone thought it would take years to save enough to buy new land of their own, but when a donation from the Danish Crown Prince came, it allowed them to speed up their planning. After finding two pieces of good, cheap, safe land within 1 km of Ban Nam Khem (and a short walk to the sea, where they keep their boats) and haggling down good prices for the land, they decided to use the Danish money to partially buy these two pieces of land collectively, through the cooperative they had set up. But the Danish money was enough to buy only one of the plots, so in order to include more landless renter families, the group took a collective decision to supplement the Danish grant with a CODI land loan, so they could buy both plots of land, and accommodate 106 families (50 on this first plot and 56 on the second).
- **Developed their own community layout plans - "Not just houses!"** Then they worked with young architects from CODI to design a layout for their new community layout of 50 house plots (120 sq.mt. each), with a community center and a "central house" for housing elderly people without families to take care of them – all part of the community's plan.
- **Houses :** The houses, which are mostly built according to the standard design which people designed together (each family can do its own variations on this basic house, though, with finishes, porch arrangement and interior spaces, according to their financial ability).
- **Using community labor is a way to "get to know each other"** No contractors were involved in the project, which used mostly community labor. Only a few skilled masons hired to help with the project.
- **Revolving Fund and housewives occupation groups :** The community savings group also manages a revolving loan fund which emerged out of the boat-building process after the tsunami. This revolving fund is used to help people build and repair fishing boats and fishing equipment and to start small livelihood projects. In the Bang Muang Relief camp, many women joined the occupation groups making batik and tailoring and souvenir production, while their husbands returned to fishing.
- **Rules for community set by consensus, but even these rules are flexible :** So everyone can live together happily. But Prajak stresses that even the rules set by the community are not like a law, but are flexible! There is lots of courtesy and compromise and bending of these rules! *"That's our way here in Thailand!" [So human this whole approach!]*

Sub-District Chief of Bang Muang Sub-District speaks : He repeats that these people were renters in the town of Ban Nam Khem, mostly fishermen and laborers who had no house registration, and so had many problems after the tsunami. None of the government compensation and rehabilitation aid schemes were available to them, since they had no land or houses of their own, nothing to be compensated for.

- **There were three villages in this sub-district affected by the tsunami.** About 2,000 people were killed by the waves in this sub-district alone, which is the worst-affected area in all of Thailand. This number includes an estimated 300 Burmese migrant workers.
- **Lots of land conflict cases in Ban Nam Khem after the tsunami,** where private land-owners have showed up claiming to own land that had been occupied by others for years and years. Over 80 court cases in process in Ban Nam Khem alone!

Somsook speaks : These homeless renters from Ban Nam Khem village were the poorest and most vulnerable of Thailand's tsunami victims. They lost everything but were eligible for no official aid of any sort.

- **So in the relief camp, 180 homeless families with the same problem organized themselves into a network and started saving.** Later, the Danish Crown Prince visited and decided to contribute something to help them. So the idea came up of developing two projects, on two pieces of land, to include more people.
- **Collective everything :** Using a collective process all along the way, they designed their layout and set rules for their cooperative ownership of the new housing colony. They have decided that during the 15 years it will take to pay off the CODI land and housing loans, they will maintain the collective ownership and management of the project. When the land is paid off, they will again evaluate whether people want to stay with the collective ownership or divide the community into individual land title – it's up to them.
- **The housing process was a process to build a new community :** They never knew each other before, but their common land problem drew them together and their struggle to develop a solution to that problem made them into a strong community.

QUESTION from South India participant : *All the houses here are different colors, and many have slightly different designs in the front. Why are they not all the same, as we do in India?* Prajak answers that building a house for these people – who have never had a place of their own - is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and they all want to choose their own style and colors and tiles. Each family's needs are different,

too, with different sized families and some families running a business out of their house, or needing different storage facilities, etc. But all the houses occupy the same land area (125 square meters).

QUESTION - Indian guy asks about electricity and water supply? The Bang Muang Sub-District contributed 250,000 Baht and the Phangnga Provincial Administration contributed 1 million Baht to bring power to the new village. Families had to pay for their own electric meters and house wiring, as part of their house costs – but the community managed all this collectively. Water? Prajak explains that now they are working on developing a system to treat their sewage and waste-water right inside the community, in a sustainable way.

QUESTION from Maldives group : Are you prepared for another disaster? How are you going to transfer knowledge about the tsunami to your kids?

Prajak says we cannot guess when the next tsunami will be! But there is one thing we are certain about: **that we want to preserve our fishing way of life in this same place, tsunami or no!** And yes, we are teaching our kids about reading the signals in the sea, the tides and in the behavior of fish and about what to do if another tsunami comes – run for the hills as fast as you can! This is all "local wisdom" which we are collecting and will transfer to our kids.

QUESTION about loans repayment – How do you make sure everyone repays their land and housing loans? We have a system here where everyone has to guarantee each other. If someone can't make their monthly repayment, we all have to help make up for it when we make our collective monthly repayment to CODI. We reach a consensus to grant loans to each other. But Prajak stresses that money is not the important thing – money and loans are only a mechanism to get us through this hard time and to bring us together, through the process of managing our new housing project. The savings idea is much more important, and this is the thing we are trying to pass on to our kids.

Somsook clarifies about the loan system : There are two systems to guarantee the loans made to this community – the personal guarantee and the land guarantee. Both systems are designed to build security against repayment problems, but also to build a collective sense of ownership of the project and to safeguard against gentrification and market forces, which can be powerful community-busters, especially as tourism greed expands in the area.

- **Personal guarantee :** All the members of the community have to sign the loan application, which includes all the families taking loans. So in a way, everyone in the community is guarantor for everyone else!
- **Land guarantee :** The CODI loans for land and houses are made to the group, which then uses the land as collateral. Until the land loan is paid off, the land can only be held by the cooperative, but once the loan is fully repaid, the cooperative will be free to decide whether to keep on with the collective ownership, or divide the community up into individual plots with individual land title for each plot.
- **Also 10% "down payment"** - most CODI loans also require that communities keep 10% of the total loan amount in their own savings – this is called a "down payment" and is required to get a loan, but it also works as a kind of back-up guarantee against repayment problems.

Evening : Visit, dinner and cultural program at the Tsunami Memorial at Ban Nam Khem (Monday evening, October 30)

Discussion at dinner with Lisa, from the Thai Volunteer Center :

- they have a website: www.tsunamivolunteer.net
- Lisa is a young American woman from San Francisco who came to Thailand a few days after the tsunami, wanting to help. With a little support from her USA-based Mirror Foundation, she helped to set up the Tsunami Volunteer Center in Kao Lak, which has acted as a clearinghouse for volunteers from all over the world who have come to help in the relief and rehabilitation work in the worst-hit areas of Thailand. Lisa says that since January 2005, there have been almost 5,000 people, from 50 countries, who have come to volunteer their time here.
- **What they do :** At first, their work was mainly with relief operations, helping out with the identification of corpses, then later helping build temporary housing and set up the relief camps. Later, the volunteers have helped villagers build their permanent houses (as in Ban Laem Pom, and Ban Nam Khem Renters' housing). They have also set up an after-school English school for local children and tourism workers in the Kao Lak and Ban Nam Khem area, and developed an interesting project to build school desks and benches using the leftover plywood that was donated for coffins! They also helped set up a concrete block-making unit, as an income generation project, which sells blocks at cost (4 Baht per block) to the tsunami community rebuilding projects (compare to market rate price of 8 Baht per block).
 - **All their projects come as requests from affected communities :** This must be one of the most humble of all the overseas aid groups working in the tsunami areas! They very soon linked with CODI and

Chumchon Thai Foundation and worked to dovetail their assistance where the communities and local groups felt it was most needed. When they work on helping villagers rebuild houses, they set their weekly work plans with the village committee, and only enter when village's request their help.

New Orleans / Gulf Coast group sings : (led by Reverend DeJean) : "Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!"

SECOND DAY : October 31 (back at the Hotel in Phuket)

Panel Discussions :

- First panel discussion with **Thai** survivors of tsunami, floods and landslides
- Second panel discussion with the **international** disaster survivor groups

1. Thai Panel Discussion on people-driven disaster rehabilitation :

- 1. Mr. Maitree (Community leader from Ban Nam Khem, tsunami) :** Describes how they used the putting up of tents and building of temporary houses in the Bang Muang Relief camp to build people together.
- **The management of the relief and rehabilitation process in the camp was by people, from the very beginning.** They appointed community leaders to be in charge of cooking, security, camp layout, toilets, dealing with donations, coordinating with outside aid groups, information, community radio, etc. Private donations can be distributed very unequally, so they decided to put all the donations together, and manage their distribution as a community, so everyone gets what they need.
 - **Collected money together also, into a common revolving fund:** Instead of distributing aid money to individual families (which they would only spend in a few days!), they decided to set up a common revolving fund to help people get back on their feet by setting up small businesses and starting occupation groups. Eventually, there were 14 occupation groups at work in the Bang Muang camp. Already, 50% of all the loans made by this revolving fund have been paid back!
 - **50% of the interest earned on loans from this revolving fund goes into a special welfare fund for the members of the occupation groups.**
 - **214 families in the camp were originally informal vendors in Ban Nam Khem before the waves struck, but they were only room-renters and had no rights to any formal government compensation schemes.** On the other hand, some unscrupulous people took advantage of government's compensation process and got more than one free house!

People-to-people help : Maitree tells how when the floods happened in the Northern Provinces of Thailand earlier this year, tsunami survivors from Ban Nam Khem and other communities from the Tsunami network rushed up there to help. They also loaned money to the Northern People's Flood Relief Center for immediate relief needs! This kind of direct, immediate and well-organized grassroots relief and rehabilitation assistance has now become a regular feature of disaster response in Thailand.

2. Ms. Paisan, community leader from Koh Lanta Island (tsunami) speaks : She explains how after the tsunami, a lot of problems emerged about land, and people's rights to continue to occupy their traditional villages on the island. In a few cases, the government said the people have to leave their place – even those which had lived in that place for many generations.

- **In Ban Hualaam,** we agreed to move up from the beach and onto the hillside. But we are fishermen and it is not our way of life to live away from their boats, away from the sea. So with some support from the National Human Rights Commission, we moved back. Then, with help and support and encouragement from our new friends in the tsunami network in Phangnga, we began rebuilding our houses. We made visits to other tsunami-hit communities and saw how they organized themselves to manage their own rebuilding and developed their support networks. Many businessmen want to grab our land, which is very beautiful, but we will stay and will preserve the environment and revive our traditional culture.
- **A new network of traditional villages on Koh Lanta is now very active, with 15 communities in the network** (both tsunami affected and not). We started with only the 4 communities which were affected by the tsunami, and then the process grew quickly to include all the vulnerable traditional communities on the island.
- **The tsunami opened up these deep problems with land** – problems which were already there before the waves hit, but now they are exposed and we have to deal with them. Our goal is to be in charge of our own development and be able to manage our own lands and revive our own culture and customs and way of life, which are unique in all the world.
- **Many problems beside land :** For example, the government is trying to impose this new "Seafood Bank" policy, in which areas of the sea are leased out to private sector interests. The sea doesn't belong to

anyone, it belongs to all of us, so communities have to work together to take care of the sea and to oppose such bad policies.

- **Many activities within the Lanta community network now :** Housewives occupation groups, "sleep on the beach" ceremonies, traditional music and dancing, making a new history museum, restoring many of the beautiful wooden "long houses", building a Lanta Cultural Center. Our culture and customs in Lanta are hundreds of years old and we don't want them to get lost with all the influx of tourism.

3. Mr. (name?) from Ban Tap Tawan (in Phangnga Province) : We Moken (Sea Gypsy) people have been forgotten, we don't read and write, we can only speak. After the tsunami wiped out our village at Tap Tawan, we had to move to safety inland. We stayed in the forest for 15 days without any shelter at all, were afraid to return to the sea. On 25 January, about a month after the tsunami, we moved to a camp within a rubber plantation closer to our old community, where we stayed another two months. It took us three months before about 200 of us moved back to our village and began building temporary houses there. All our original houses were washed away by the tsunami, but many of our coconut trees survived. But for many villagers, there were new problems about the land, and with rich businessmen who came claiming to own parts of our village land. We have stayed in this village for more than 200 years – it is our land, our ancestors are buried here and we cannot live anywhere else.

4. Mr. Supin, Vice President of the Network of Stateless Thai People ("Thai Tap-teem") (the Thai speaking people whose land became part of Burma during an earlier treaty the Thai government signed with Britain, which re-drew the borders between Thailand and Burma) :

- **There are about 20,000 Thai people living in three southern provinces without any citizenship papers,** because they were born in Burma, but are culturally and ethnically Thai. Nobody accepts them as their citizens – neither Myanmar nor Thailand, so they are stateless. They don't have ID cards so cannot get government help. This is another long-time, deep problem that the tsunami brought up to the surface – the plight of these stateless people.
- **Many of these stateless Thais were tsunami victims,** were working and living in the affected areas. On the day after the tsunami, I drove down from Rayong to Phangnga to see how the tsunami had affected these displaced Thai people living without citizenship papers in Phangnga and other southern provinces.
- **Our network has helped to build a new community of these stateless Thais at Pak Kriem,** where stateless Thai victims from seven areas in two provinces have now gathered. Then began setting up a network, to link these people together and to help find solutions to their problems. Later, 20 more areas were added to the network, mostly on small islands near Burma.
- **Many of these people have applied to become Thai citizens, but have been arrested and deported to Burma,** where many are punished and even deported back to Thailand!
- **The Chumchon Thai Foundation and the "Livable Cities Program" supports this new network** of stateless Thai people. These people cannot legally own land, so have to get the title of their land in the name of friends. Most are now staying on public land and in wetlands areas illegally.
- **Now we are proposing to the government to revoke the cabinet resolution** which earlier declared all of us to be Burmese citizens. We are not Burmese, we are Thai! We want to be Thai citizens!

5. Mr. (name?) from Phuket Community Network : Phuket is one of Thailand's most booming tourism and business growth areas. *Phuket receives 4.8 million tourists every year!* The problems of land and the clash with tourism, which traditional villages and poor communities in Phuket Province are facing, happened long before the tsunami. Especially the problems of land and housing. The tsunami just brought these problems out and made them worse, lots of accumulated problems that had been getting worse and worse.

- **Three communities in Phuket were severely affected by the tsunami** – a few others lost boats and fishing equipment, but were not otherwise too much affected.
- **Now, there are about 20 communities in Phuket with serious land tenure problems,** even though many have occupied their land traditionally for a long time. Five of these communities are Moken (Sea Gypsy) communities. After the tsunami, we used the momentum from the relief and rehabilitation process to form a network, and to expand that network to include all the vulnerable communities in the province – not just those affected by the tsunami.
- **But all these communities share similar problems and are now beginning to fight together as a united force to solve them.** We are also collaborating with our local authorities and with NGOs (especially Chumchon Thai Foundation) to find solutions to these land and housing problems. Many of these communities occupy land under the control of the Department of Forests or National Parks. Many of these communities are embroiled in court cases because of the land conflicts with businessmen who claim to own their land.
- **All these 20 communities now have savings groups and their own revolving loan funds.** All have conducted social surveys and mapped their settlements and examined their land tenure status – we have a clear process as a network of poor communities.

- **So far, three of these 20 communities have solved their land problems and five communities are in the process of planning and implementing community upgrading projects**, with support from CODI's Baan Mankong Program.
- There are still 12 communities in Phuket facing serious land conflicts.

6. Mr. (name?) from the network of communities affected by floods in Southern Thailand : This year, Thailand's three southern-most provinces were affected by severe rainfall and flooding. In the past, floods were something natural, that happened every year and nobody paid much attention. It was part of the natural weather cycle. But in Narathiwat Province, in the hilly areas where there had been such a lot of deforestation and over-development, this year's heavy rains caused a lot of floods. This year the rains and flooding were really extreme, but nobody came to help with rice or assistance of any sort, partly because this has been a conflict area, and the government and the local people have been in conflict for some time.

"But this is not a problem of government officials, this is our problem! So we have to solve it ourselves!"

Disaster leads to other good developments : CODI came and helped organize people's groups to survey the damage and to support us to start rebuilding our houses ourselves. After the tragedy happened, we started to help ourselves and learned to work together. Distrust turned into collaboration and mutual support. Later we used this collective spirit to request for land title to our village land. And that is now our main task – to get our secure land rights.

7. Mr. Shinawatra, from a flood-affected community in Nakhon Si Thammarat (Southern Thailand) : The Four-Regions Slum Network helped us to repair our communities after the floods, and helped us to go up to flood-affected areas in northern Thailand (Uttaradit and Chainat Provinces) to help the people there. After the floods in southern Thailand, we were all so confused, didn't know where to start, what to do. Most of us are either fishermen or rice farmers. Our fish ponds usually get flooded every year, but this year it was very bad, and even our rice fields got spoiled by too much water. The floods are getting worse and worse every year, lasting longer and the water level is getting higher and higher.

- In my sub-district, 44 houses needed to be repaired, and CODI provided the budget to our community (380,000 Baht from CODI + 90,000 Baht from the local authority) to fix these houses collectively. We also set up a special fund to help the whole district, and did a survey of the 15 flood-affected villages in the sub-district to see what are the problems, who needs what kind of assistance, what the community network can do, and to develop a short and long-term recovery plan.

8. Ms. (Name?) from one of the flood-hit provinces in Northern Thailand : The North of Thailand was especially lucky this year: we got storms, land-slides and floods all at the same time! We lost a lot, but we also gained a lot, because the floods gave us a way to start working together and organize ourselves like never before. We used the community networks to solve the problems that came with these disasters.

- **It will take a long time to revive the areas that were so badly destroyed** by this year's flooding and landslides in the 4 or 5 affected northern provinces, so we have to think long-term.
- **We also have to think about the land problem**, because in most of these affected villages – even those that were quite prosperous fruit-growing communities – people do not have any formal ownership papers for their land.
- **We have built many temporary houses for flood and landslide victims**, and also many permanent houses to replace those that were destroyed.
- We have received lots of care and love and support from other communities and community networks around the country.
- **Before the floods, we tried to live our lives in the western style, where you do your own thing and I do my own thing.** Now after the disaster, we live together and work together and realize we can only survive by being together and helping each other.

9. Mr. (name?) from Naan Province (in flood and landslide-affected northern Thailand) : In our area of Naan Province, we have formed a network of five communities that are in danger of landslides and need urgently to relocate to safer land. Now we are working together to find good alternative land nearby and solve these land problems.

10. General Surin, Chairman of the National Committee to Solve Land Conflicts, under the National Government's Poverty Reduction Program : Buddha taught us 2,500 years ago to be self-reliant, to depend on ourselves. That's the way to solve problems. Public organizations are only facilitators – people and communities themselves have to find the answers and solve the problems in ways that meet their needs and match their abilities. And then it is the job of public authorities to support people. The success depends on the people.

- ***I believe it is possible for us to solve these land problems within the next two years.*** We have to follow the law, which guarantees that people have the rights to the land they have traditionally occupied. But these rights must be secure.
- ***Wherever communities have control over their own land, the environment is good.*** Like the Moken people, for example: wherever they have their villages, the mangrove forests are carefully preserved, because the Moken know they are the breeding grounds for fish. The shrimp farmers, who cut down these mangroves and evict the Moken, they are the ones destroying the environment. Similarly, where the hill-tribe people live, the forests are well taken care of, but where the government gives the forest land to private sector interests on concession, the trees are cut down and we have serious deforestation problems.
- ***Community Land Title :*** We need to do our homework and draft a law to propose to the cabinet which allows for community land title in Thailand, in both rural and urban areas. Otherwise, all of Thailand's land resources will fall into the hands of private sector.
- ***People's leadership in tackling natural disasters :*** In Thailand now, there are more than 1,000 villages (out of a total 75,000) where this concept is being applied, and communities themselves are managing the short and long-term rehabilitation of their areas after severe natural disasters. This includes villages beside the sea, right up to the tops of mountains.

2. International Groups Discussion on people-driven disaster rehabilitation :

1. **SSP in India** (working in earthquake-affected Maharashtra, and Tsunami-affected Tamil Nadu)
2. **Indonesia :** The Udeep Beusaree Community Network in Aceh, with support from Uplink and UPC.
3. **Sri Lanka :** Sevanatha, Women's Bank and Help-O's work in tsunami rehabilitation.
4. **Maldives :** There are 1,192 islands in the Maldives archipelago, of which 200 are inhabited with about 300,000 people.

5. **USA :** Group from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast areas, talk about the Hurricane Katrina. (*Sharda Sekaran and Reverend Dejean speaks on behalf of the group, recounting the problems after Katrina...*)

Reverend Lois Dejean : My name is Reverend Lois Dejean, and I'm from the United States of America, New Orleans Louisiana. Sharda is going to give you an overview on the things that communities are facing, not only in New Orleans but in the Mississippi region.

Sharda Sekaran : We don't have a powerpoint prepared, but if people look in their packets, there is a summary of some of the situations that people are facing in New Orleans – though it doesn't include everything about Mississippi and Alabama, but it has does have a lot of really good notes about the visit when representatives from ACHR came to the region in June. It's very difficult to talk about how our communities are responding after Hurricane Katrina, because we're not quite at the stage of people at this gathering, as far as having a developed infrastructure of networking and organizing that is very collaborative. There are a number of reasons for that.

- ***Failure of the government's response :*** Probably the biggest reason is that we never expected to have the level of government failure that we experienced, and so we didn't have an immediate response to that. Now, a year later, it's obvious that we can't rely on the US government to do very much for the survivors and for the recovery process, or to provide much relief. People are still struggling, they are scattered around the country and not getting much support. There are a lot of services that people have relied on for housing that are going to be cut off soon. So now we know that we really do need to engage with a participatory model of people's reconstruction.
- ***So we're here to learn from what you all have done.*** But we haven't come that far, and we're realizing that we need that, after a year's gone by since the storm, recognizing the lack of government action.
- ***A lot of people are very disillusioned, and a lot of survivors are very frustrated. Many people have given up hope*** – there is a lot of hopelessness.
- ***People are still scattered all around the country, and they're trying to come back home,*** but they're not getting much support to do that.
- ***People were very aggressively organizing in the beginning, right after the disaster,*** but that organizing was focused on the lack of government response, and when it became obvious that there wasn't going to be much change, many became frustrated and dropped out, and there wasn't the same energy as came right after the disaster.
- ***There are also some small groups that are trying very hard to do some things at the community level*** – things like providing health services, setting up small clinics. There are also increasing numbers of

people coming back and gutting their homes [removing the toxic, mould-impregnated plaster walls inside, so the house can be restored] and trying to return, and doing community organizing.

- **Most of this work is very fragmented, though**, and there is not a lot of cooperation or coordination between these local groups and efforts. We struggle with that. Some of this is cultural: we don't have the same community traditions that you all have, we are very western-influenced, and have been brought up with American values and American individualism. We don't work together and we have a lot of conflict.
- **Another big issue for us is the serious level of environmental contamination after the storm.** People like those in Reverend Dejean's community are trying to find resources to clean up the toxic contamination that happened after the storm. One of the biggest challenges people are facing when they return to the region and try to rebuild is dealing with the industrial and petro-chemical poisons that have been washed inland. People who do come back and try to rebuild are getting sick. Since the government is not doing much to clean up these contaminants, there are people on the community front who are working to clean up these toxins, so they can return to the region.
- **There are also some positive examples of immigrant communities which are organizing.** Some of the hurricane-survivors who are immigrants in the USA are facing the same kinds of problems as displaced Thai people and Burmese migrant workers are facing here - of not having documentation and not having any status to receive government aid. So they have been organizing independently, even to get their wages! Many people from Latin American countries have been brought to the region to do a lot of the reconstruction work, so the demographics are changing, also.
- **Also people are fighting to maintain their land rights in hurricane-affected areas.** Lots of people who are actually land owners find that their land rights are not being recognized.
- **And renters are being completely left out of the picture.** But people are organizing in those areas.

Reverend Dejean : Well in the United States of America, when you talk about New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, *the government just lost it!* Because they'd never had a disaster of that severity. So they didn't know what to do, and the people who were looking to them for answers found no answers. So you had to depend on yourself to survive. A lot of promises have been made. But I was very happy to hear the gentleman saying the other day that the government [in Thailand] came to the communities to find out what was necessary and how to provide it, because communities know what they need. Well in our case, the government has not done that. *Our response from the government is zero.*

6. Nepal : Lumanti and community people speak about the country's "Disaster Safety Net Campaign"

7. Japan : Experience with the Kobe earthquake.

8. Vietnam : ENDA Vietnam and their work supporting communities after the floods from the big Typhoon this year.

9. India : Abhayan's work with the Gujarat earthquake.

10. Philippines : The Philippines Homeless People's Federations work supporting communities after the Leite land-slide and the earlier Payatas Garbage Dump slide.

Last Question : What message for people and groups facing other disasters in the future?

1. Gujarat
2. Aceh
3. Sri Lanka
4. Tamil Nadu, SSP
5. Philippines
6. USA
7. Maldives
8. Vietnam
9. Nepal
10. Japan

(I have this whole session on tape, but haven't transcribed it, except for a few of the remarks from the New Orleans/USA team.)

Afternoon, October 31 :

Sub-group Discussions on people-managed disaster rehabilitation (4 sub-groups)

- the Thai-speaking group

- the tsunami group
- the floods, storms and landslides group
- the earthquake group

Summary of the conclusions from the four sub-groups is included as "**Appendix 1**" at the end of these notes.

THIRD DAY (November 1)

Last morning's session (at the Phuket Hotel) :

Country presentations :

- India (SSP)
- Sri Lanka (Help-o)
- India (Gujarat, Abhiyan)

New Orleans / Mississippi Group talks about the situation in USA :

- **Latosha Brown** gives a detailed overview of the deep problems people are facing after the hurricane, in both urban New Orleans and rural gulf coast areas. "This is the poorest area of the USA. The real problems in New Orleans was a man-made disaster, but in the Mississippi Gulf Coast, it was the storm itself that caused the trouble...."
- **Nathalie Walker** : Can I just give you a few facts about the storm? More than a year after the storm, less than half of the city of New Orleans is back. People can't get back because their houses have been destroyed. 80% of the city was flooded. If you owned a home in New Orleans that was destroyed, you haven't received any money from the government yet – *none*. If you were a renter, the government doesn't plan to give you any money. So we have a problem of trying to get organized, but our citizens are spread all over the place.
- **Reverend Dejean** : I represent families. I am a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. All of my children lost everything. So all of them are displaced throughout the United States of America. Now when I talk about "*my family*", that represents hundreds of thousands of families who are displaced from each other. And . . . (*unclear*) want you to understand what's happening in the United States of America – "*the land of the free and the home of the brave.*" In my part of the city [the Gert Town neighborhood in New Orleans], the flood waters receded into a place that had been made for agent orange and all kinds of toxins. Nine million pounds of toxins have to be removed out of my [*neighborhood?*] before we can rebuild. Because without an environmental clearance, we cannot build in the area, even though the area is a very poor part of the city. So our fight is to clean up first. And I mean to see my community come back – I will NOT leave it. So we are fighting together to make sure that those who own their home in Gert Town will remain in Gert Town, and those who rented in Gert Town will have a place to rent in Gert Town, regardless of what the government says [whose agencies have got funding to reconstruct and gentrify Gert Town?]. *This all may sound like a horror story to you now, but it is a bigger horror story to those of us who've got to live with it every day.*
- **Nathalie Walker** : The battle is about the people that the government put on airplanes and forced to go somewhere where they didn't know where they were going. The government has no plan whatsoever to help those people get back home. They're not giving any support at all to those who are coming back on their own - not that there is any housing to come back to! But our government just said, *here is a one-way ticket, goodbye! We have no more responsibility to you.*
- **Geina Jones** : I live in a historical neighborhood [Holy Cross Neighborhood, in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans] and for those who don't know, that means homes that are 150 years old or older. And it's difficult because we have to do things a certain way when we rebuild and use certain kinds of materials, and those materials are expensive. The problem that we're having in our community is that our neighborhood is on higher ground and it was never supposed to flood, and so we were all told we didn't need flood insurance. But it did flood, and now a lot of people are sitting and waiting [for help to rebuild their damaged houses]. It's been a year and a half now, and it rains quite often. Those homes that are damaged will eventually rot away. Now we need plenty of contractors to come in and do the work, but they're charging outrageous prices. So people who are paying rent or paying off mortgages are just trying to survive and live day-to-day. But it's extremely hard for us to do. You know what I wish is that you guys can show us and help us, so that we can take the information from here and use it in the United States. Because you guys are strong, and we're feeding off of that, every single day.
- **Reverend Frederick Fields** : (*hard to understand tape...*) In the community where I reside, in 1964, the government came in and they decided they wanted to build a facility to test engines for the rocket boosters that went up to the moon. So they relocated four communities in 1964. During the Hurricane Katrina situation, some of the people they came to that rocket engine facility, trying to use it as a shelter, but they would not let them in. So people had to leave that facility, that was right in the middle of their community, on land that they used to own, and had to go find other places to go. I'm very encouraged by what we've

seen here, and I want to go back and continue the struggle. Before the hurricane, our community was very small – just about 2,000 people. Now, a year and a half after the storm, we're up to about 1,000, so we've got our work cut out for us. Most of our people in the community own their own property. There is this property called [sixteen section?] that is owned by the school board. And you have to lease that property from the school board on a yearly basis, and if the school board decides that they want that piece of property where you are, they can come in and take that piece of property from you. That is one of the issues that we are facing. And our building back is moving very slow. But I'm encouraged, as we've gone to these villages and seen the work that you are doing, not waiting for your governments to respond, but moving forward on your own.

- **Vicky Cintra** : I just wanted to say that I work with the immigrant community, and like Latosha was saying, one of the biggest things we're dealing with is that the government is hiring these big companies to come in and do the clean up and all the reconstruction – not the homes of course, but the companies and casinos. These companies hire all these immigrant workers who came in and then they don't pay them. They are being abused and exploited and the government has refused to help them by granting them temporary work permits and work visas – a lot of them were undocumented workers. So they didn't get any assistance. But not only were they victims of Hurricane Katrina and displaced by the storm, but they are also victims of the corporations and these big contractors. So we're dealing with all that. And then of course the Red Cross [takes a shot at them?] too, because they also evicted them from their shelters. So every one of us up here are fighting with government and private agencies that were supposed to be set up to help us. And that makes our struggle that much more difficult. And feeding off of you really gives us encouragement. And we just hope to be able to soak up everything that we have been able to learn from you and take it back and somehow apply it, in some way, and make a new way of bringing about change in our communities.
- **Vicky** : *In our area, there was a community plan after the storm. The city had a beautiful plan, but it involved throwing away all the poor people and building beautiful green spaces and condos and casinos where they used to live. It was a "community plan" but it wasn't the community people's plan.*

Mr. Graham Bristol (a Canadian architecture professor who teaches at King Mongkut College of Architecture in Bangkok) :

Every single university in Thailand was involved in the tsunami rehabilitation process – and in assisting affected communities in their process of planning and designing new settlements and houses. One of the biggest lessons we've learned from this process is this:

If communities don't have a plan of their own, somebody else will, and their plan is probably something the community is not going to like!

Somsook's closing remarks :

- **People who are sitting in this room, who have struggled in different ways to resolve the problems of disasters, know very well that we've got some very important messages to give, about people taking control of their own development.** And how are we going to move forward? This is not another abstract idea, but it is the truth of how development should be. So I am very sure that for this meeting, when we all go back - the Thai group, our friends who have come from disasters in many places overseas, and those who are still struggling to find a good direction - probably you may find a way to sit together back home and bring this important message and these truths from this meeting, and see how to change things and go forward.
- **I think that what we are seeing here is a clearer picture of the new theory in development - not only regarding disasters, but regarding development in general.** Our societies are facing disasters every day, in many different forms. We don't have to look very hard into our societies to see that in fact, disasters are happening all the time, everywhere – not only natural disasters like tsunamis, floods and earthquakes. The tsunamis and floods and hurricanes only reveal these other real disasters that are otherwise *hiding*. And we've learned now to use the immediate problems from these natural disasters as an opportunity to develop.
- **It would be good if we didn't have to wait for more disasters to happen in order for this truth to arise!** But the challenge is how to use this truth and apply it to different kinds of development situations and to use it to solve different kinds of deep, structural problems of poverty and wrongful development which already exist in our societies.
- I think we can use the conclusions from this meeting as a proposal to as many development agencies in the world as possible, so this truth will be distributed and opened up to the world, to so many organizations. But at this point, one of the most powerful development agencies – the United Nations – is here with us, we want to hear from Mr. Haken, the Deputy Regional Representative, how this very powerful UN agency thinks about the results of this meeting.

Summary remarks by Mr. Haken Bjorkman, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative :

It is a great honor for me to contribute to the closing of this meeting. I am a little nervous. And I don't feel very powerful at all, I feel humble. And I think we can all agree what an amazing meeting this has been. It has been an incredible three days – very inspiring, very educational. It was a unique opportunity to share knowledge and experiences. And I don't know what to highlight from this meeting... the group work yesterday. But I think one of the best things about the meeting was that we had a field trip the first day – it really set the scene and the tone of the rest of the meeting, it really gave me a grasp of the communities that we visited. And I also very much enjoyed the singing and dancing, especially the dance from Nepal – it was fantastic, no? (applause) And the singing from Japan was also quite good. I'm sorry for not mentioning anybody else – India, you're not too jealous, right? I just want to raise three key messages that I heard coming from the meeting that I keep telling people about :

- **The key to success in post disaster recovery is people's leadership, and community empowerment and community strength.** And the importance of having this open dialogue and very strong partnership between communities and local and national government and aid agencies, with the people in the driving seat in the process of recovery. It's a key to success, but it's also an insurance against failure, in terms of the recovery process.
- **The importance for communities to prepare themselves, and build up their strength to deal effectively with disasters,** and other external shocks that might happen. It's a question of building up the resilience and the solidarity and a culture of cooperation. And the key task is to get organized and mobilized. This is of course easier said than done – there are many obstacles, difficulties, there are cultural issues, there are government policies that work as obstructions to getting organized. But it's extremely important.
- **The importance of equity and human rights in this recovery process.** The most marginalized and most poor communities really need to be supported, and their human rights protected and respected. Cultural and ethnic minorities, migrants, the elderly, children and so on.

So all of this leads to one big conclusion, that we need to change the way we do business, the way we prepare for and respond to disasters, to put people in the driving seat, and to create the mechanisms for meaningful consultations. And governments need to change the way they do business too, and communities also need to stand up and demand these changes. So this is really the big conclusion.

I think at this point in the meeting, we can all agree that we all share a feeling of gratefulness – grateful to each other for everything we have shared with each other, the rich knowledge, the experiences, the problems and the solutions. And really the feeling of being grateful for having this opportunity, for me, and get together. And I would like to start by thanking all the representatives of communities from around Thailand – from the north, south, east, west, central, northeast – everywhere! Thank you very much – your strength and resilience is a fantastic thing to see. And I think on behalf of all the international participants, we would like to thank you for your hospitality, and for inviting us to your wonderful country. And secondly I think we should thank representatives from all the communities that have come from all over Asia. Thank you very much for all your contributions and your inspiration. And a special thanks for our friends who came from *really far away*, from the other side of the earth, from the United States! Yea! Thanks for bringing home a huge expression of solidarity from us here, good luck... .

An "Encouragement Card" for our friends from USA :

Thailand's Community Networks (from Uttaradit in the north, and from the south) present the New Orleans and Gulf Coast group with an "Encouragement Card" – with great warmth and spirit.

Mr. Maitree (Community leader from Ban Nam Khem) speaks :

Field visits to tsunami-affected communities in Phuket Province (Wednesday afternoon and Thursday, November 1 and 2)

Background on Phuket Province :

- **Phuket is the name of this big island,** which is also a self-contained province, and is also the name of the island's chief city. The island is connected to the mainland (Phangnga) province by a long bridge at the northernmost tip of the island. A lot of coastal fishing communities still exist on this heavily touristy island, many of which were affected by the tsunami. But the damage in Phuket was much lighter than in other Andaman coastal areas farther north.
- **There are 20 communities on Phuket Island which have very precarious land tenure** (most not affected by tsunami). All these communities are now part of a network, which is just beginning. After the tsunami, tourism is again coming back to boom level in Phuket, and this is bringing back the threat of eviction for many traditional communities around the island. The government now has a big tourism

development mega-project for the whole island, which is another threat to these communities. So it's not only the capitalists, but the government trying to push out these communities.

- **Province-wide community and tenure upgrading in Phuket:** Phuket makes a very good case of how a major disaster has created opportunities to organize and network the island's poor and vulnerable communities, and to tackle the issue of secure land tenure by connecting tsunami rehabilitation with the next stage of development of the whole island's poor communities.
- **There are now six Baan Mankong community upgrading projects underway in Phuket**, including 5 tsunami-affected settlements and one settlement that was not affected by the tsunami.

Singing on the bus: Reverend DeJean is an assistant pastor and choir director in her church in the New Orleans neighborhood of Gert Town, *and boy can this woman sing!* On the bus, and in every community we visited, she led the American group in rousing spirituals, to the delight of everyone along the way. A few of the favorites :

*This little light of mine / I'm gonna let it shine / Let it shine / Let it shine
I woke up this morning and it stayed on freedom / hallelujah!*

Visit to Taa Rua Mai Village, in Phuket Town, Phuket Province

Palm's comments on the Taa Rua Mai community (CODI tsunami-support staff) :

Taa Rua Mai ("New Pier") in Phuket. (Near Plaa Katak Community) (58 households) This project is interesting because the good coordination and strong support for the community came from the *Aw Baw Taw* (local provincial authority). This community relocated to new land very close by, which they now rent from the provincial authority. Before, they lived along the road. The provincial authority asked for this land for relocation, which is on a reservoir just nearby, on lease. The people have designed interesting new houses built on concrete stilts over the water, which they will build with housing loans and infrastructure subsidies from CODI's Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program. Chumchon Thai Foundation supports this project.

This is a small, urban slum community of 58 households (180 people) built on stilts on swampy public land under the provincial authority's control not far from the sea. The people have stayed here about 20 years – first one woman built a hut on this unoccupied land, and then others followed until it became a little settlement. When we arrive here, on the buses, we are greeted with a beautiful party of drummers and costumed dancers, who accompany us in great style into the community.

- **No basic services :** They still don't have any land title or land registration, so they can't get metered electricity or water supply from the city. They have to buy their electricity at inflated rates from a nearby company, and purchase their water from private tankers (240 Baht for a 1,500 liter tanker, which lasts a family about one week, which means each family has to fork out 1,000 Baht per month just for drinking water! Plus another 1,000 Baht per month for electricity. (it would be much cheaper if they had meters and could get municipal supply)
- **Jobs and income :** Most people here are low-paid seasonal workers in the fisheries and tourism sectors, and while most husbands work, the wives mostly stay home, but a few run small food vending businesses. Average household income is about 15,000 Baht per month.
- **Started a monthly community savings group after the tsunami and started to organize themselves,** with support from the Andaman Sea Tsunami Communities Network and CODI, with good support from the Provincial Administration. Recently, they have gotten assistance from the provincial authority to get metered electricity and a graveled access road into the community.
- **No tsunami damage here, but the tsunami set off the process of organizing Phuket's poor and vulnerable communities into a network,** to tackle their land and housing problems together. Taa Rua Mai is now one of the 20 poor communities in the Phuket Network.
- **Solving their land and housing problems :** Now, with assistance from CODI architects, the Tsunami community network and the Provincial Administration, this community has mapped their settlement and prepared a full, on-site community redevelopment plan, which includes rebuilding their houses on sturdy concrete stilts, replanting mangroves down beneath, forming a cooperative, which will collectively lease the land from the Provincial Authority, and developing sustainable systems for managing their solid waste and sewage. Very good collaboration with different organizations here.
- **Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program in process here :** The Taa Rua Mai community will submit their redevelopment use CODI's Baan Mankong Program to get house-building loans and infrastructure subsidies for the project. The people have put up all the drawings and maps and scale models of their new housing project in the marquee which they have set up for our visit.
- **Land tenure terms :** The community is now in the process of negotiating their land tenure terms with the provincial authority. They are asking for a 30-year collective lease (which in Thailand is still the normal maximum lease time for communities on public land), but it's not yet final.

- **Deputy Provincial Governor speaks (Ms. Anjalee)** : Explains how the Provincial Authority, CODI and the community have worked very closely to support the community-led redevelopment process here, and in other Phuket settlements. She stresses that the good collaboration between these different groups has allowed the whole redevelopment planning process to proceed very quickly. This woman is clearly very well-known and VERY POPULAR here!

Visit to Plaa Katak Community, in Phuket Town, Phuket Province

Palm's comments on this community (CODI tsunami-support staff) :

Plaa Katak ("Anchovy Village") in Phuket (33 households) This community is now in the process of requesting support from the Baan Mankong Upgrading Program to support their upgrading plans. This is another fishing village, but not Moken! People here are very strong here, had a hard struggle to get rights to their land, traveled up to Bangkok and slept on the ground in front of Government House in their protest demonstrations! Fought hard! Finally they won their case. (I think this is an on-site upgrading, where there was a land-conflict after the tsunami, but they seem to have managed to get rights to their land.)

This little slum community of just 33 households is just next-door to Taa Rua Mai. We cross a small swamp on foot to get there. The community is named after the tiny silver anchovy fish ("*plaa katak*") which most community members catch, sun-dry, fry, package and sell – *plaa katak* is a famous local Phuket delicacy. *When you're in this community, you can't escape the overpowering smell of fish!* The people here are about half Buddhist and half Muslim. The community is very spread out, occupying 52 Rai of land (8.3 hectares), most of which is used for the long tables upon which they spread out the *plaa katak* fish to dry in the sun. The condition of the houses is really bad – tumble down shacks made of recycled bits of rusty tin and wood and plastic sign-boards.

- **Land tenure** : This land belongs to a private land-owner, to whom the community members pay land rent.
- **Land problems started in May 2006**, when the landlord announced he wanted the land back, cancelled their leases and told them they would have to leave within 15 days. The people negotiated with him, saying they have to make their living here with the fish drying business, and asked to continue staying there. Long process of protest and negotiation and struggle, all since the tsunami happened!
- **An unexpected opportunity** : Meanwhile, with support from the new Phuket community network, they began exploring the land ownership and discovered that 10 rai of the land (out of the total 52 Rai they occupy) does not belong to the landlord at all, but is public land, under the Provincial Authority, and had been illegally occupied earlier by this land-owner! So the Provincial Governor has now given the people permission to use this 10-rai (1.6 hectares) of public land to rebuild their housing. Tenure terms are still being negotiated, but the community is asking for a 30-year cooperative lease.
- **Community redevelopment is now underway**. Now, the community has developed a complete housing plan, with a community layout plan and new houses on that 1.6 hectare piece of land, for which they will get support from CODI's Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program. Many of the old houses have been demolished, in preparation for vacating the private land.
- **All the beautiful drawings and maps and scale models of the new housing project are on display** in the make-shift community center, where we are all given bottles of cold water and complimentary packets of *plaa katak*.
- **Savings group** : The community has an active savings group, in which all 33 households are members. They set up the savings group only 8 months ago, with each member saving 100 Baht per month. So far, they have saved 80,000 Baht, to which CODI and Chumchon Thai Foundation have added a supplementary 50,000 Baht, which the community is now using to give small loans to their members, mostly for expanding their *plaa katak* drying business.
- **Mr. Nam, a small but tough-looking fisherman with curly black hair, is the community leader here** : He explains how their water and electricity both had to be purchased at rates much higher than official metered rates from private businesses, as in Taa Rua Mai. *"It's very expensive being poor and landless!"*
- **Deputy Provincial Governor speaks (Ms. Anjalee)** : She is clearly as well-known and as popular in this community as in Taa Rua Mai!

Visit to Hin Look Dio Village, in the northern part of Phuket Island, Maikhao Sub-district, Talang District, Phuket Province

Palm's comments on this community (CODI tsunami-support staff) :

Hin Look Dio ("One rock") (54 households) – this is a Moken (sea gypsy) fishing village in Phuket Island, at the northern tip of the island, near the bridge to Phangnga. Palm says this case is very interesting because this is the MOST traditional of all the Moken villages hit by the tsunami: their style of living here, their extremely simple life – there is very little presence here of modern life! Palm says they are much more traditional in the way they live here than in Ban Tab Tawan or Ban Tung Wah. People live in bamboo and thatch houses still, which they make from materials they gather and fashion themselves – without buying a single nail! Now they are thinking about community organization to take care of things like their land tenure problems. Before the tsunami, they lived on land that was claimed by a private land owner, were evicted and moved to a nearby mangrove forest (to land which belongs to the state). They got the Department of Mines (maybe Department of Marine Coastal Lands?) to allow people to stay here, with communal rights. No lease, just communal user rights. 38 households. Stilt houses on wooden posts which minimize environmental impact. All fishermen.

This is a very old, very poor Moken ("sea gypsy") fishing community of **54 households (192 people)**, built among the mangroves along the northwestern edge of Phuket island. The people here mostly came from farther up the Andaman coast, in Phangnga Province, but migrated here about 100 years ago – first a few families, and then later more joined them. "*Hin Look Dio*" means "*one rock*" in Thai.

- **Another rousing welcome for us**, with drumming and singing and the village's elderly women doing their beautiful dances, in which they make slow circles around each other, making delicate movements with their hands and wrists...
- **The tsunami didn't cause any deaths here, but a lot of the village got flooded** and many of the people's very lightly-built bamboo and thatch houses were destroyed. They also lost a lot of their boats, nets and fishing equipment.
- **Not all the children here go to school** – it costs about 1,000 Baht per month for uniforms and books and fees to go to the "free" government schools nearby, so only about 50 of the village's children go to school. Others too cash-poor to send their children.
- **Most people here are fishermen**, who practice their traditional subsistence fishing from the beautiful wooden "long-tail" boats moored in the mangroves just below the community. The village women have set up an occupation group which makes beautiful little wooden boat models to sell to tourists, with support from CODI and Chumchon Thai Foundation.
- **Land Tenure** : The people used to occupy land nearby, where they lived for over 100 years (5-6 generations), but after the tsunami, a rich land-owner whom none of the people knew, claimed most of their village land and evicted 34 families from their land (the rest occupy their own land, with no land conflict). These 34 families moved nearby to public low-lying land within the "degraded coastal mangrove forests", under the control of the coastal forestry department (the local branch, under the control of the sub-district authority), who gave the people permission to stay here (but nothing on paper yet).
- **This new community occupies 3 Rai and 2 Ngan of public land (0.56 Hectares)**
- **After the tsunami, they coordinated with the Phuket network to solve their land problems.**
- **Many agencies and aid organizations have offered help here of various sorts**, including big water jars (from the Bangkok-based Human Development Center, and donated materials to help people rebuild their damaged houses, etc.).
- **Now their big struggle is to work out a solution to their land and housing problems**, and are preparing an upgrading plan to submit for support to CODI's Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program. They will ask for long-term user rights to the public land where they are now staying, with help from the sub-district and provincial authorities, and will rebuild their houses there. Negotiations and planning still in process.
- **Simple living!** But they have their long traditions of folklore and Moken culture. Palm calls this one, the purest of all the moken villages, unaffected by the tourism or commercialization that have affected and influenced other Moken settlements along the Andaman coast.
- **Community Organization** : 7 people on each team, to manage 1. environment, 2. technical, 3. youth, 4. culture, 5. savings and credit.
- **Savings and credit** : monthly savings of 100 Baht per household.

"But these ARE our permanent houses!"

After the dancing and drumming and discussions above, we go walking around the lower part of the community, and look at the extremely small and light houses the people have built since the tsunami (made of bamboo, woven bamboo panels, thatch and timber). Yuri (a young architect from Indonesia whose been working in Aceh since the tsunami) asks, "*Will you replace these temporary houses later with permanent houses?*" and the people answer, "*These ARE our permanent houses!*" Yuri says, "*Amazing!*"

Baan Mankong Project here : To develop community infrastructure and new housing for the 34 evicted households which have moved to the new land. Project includes :

Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Project (budget) (37 Baht = US\$1)

- Demolition and land filling : Baht 87,750 (\$2,372)
- Constructing elevated walkway (2m x 230 meters) : Baht 300,600 (\$8,124)
- Constructing 12 community toilets (in 3 blocks, 4 seats each) : Baht 436,170 (\$11,788)
- Individual household kitchen waste-water treatment systems : Baht 324,000 (\$8,757)
- Piped water supply system (2" x 230 meters) : Baht 30,455 (\$823)
- Tree planting and greenery : Baht 20,400 (\$551)
- Community center : Baht 151,100 (\$4,084)
- **TOTAL BUDGET : Baht 1,350,475 (\$36,500)**

Visit to the Tai Mai beachfront village, at Rawai ("Fish-hook") Beach, at the southern tip of Phuket Island

Tai Mai is another coastal fishing community of 200 households (about 1,000 people) which has occupied this land for over 100 years. The people here are sea gypsies, mostly from the *Ulak Rawoi* indigenous group, with a few *Moken* families in the community also. The area has now become a popular beach, and the people are now locked in a nasty land conflict struggle with three private land-owners who have somehow managed to obtain land title documents for different sections of the village's traditional land. The crowded village covers about 29 Rai of land (4.64 hectares). Nobody died here during the tsunami, but a lot of fishing boats and pieces of fishing equipment were washed away.

Mr. Nong, the village chief, tells the story of Tai Mai's history : He explains how long the people have stayed here by saying that his grandmother's mother settled here at the beginning of the last century. At the time the first families settled here, it was almost like virgin land, with huge trees that covered the area with a canopy of green, full of birds and animals and blue-eyed lizards.

- **Back then, there was no concept of land title or land ownership papers:** People just built their huts and planted their gardens and vegetables and coconut trees, and everyone in the village considered it "their land. Nobody challenged this de-facto system, in which the person occupying and using the land was its rightful owner. People in the Tai Mai Village were for most of this long period sufficiency fishermen and farmers, raising vegetables and catching only enough fish to feed their own families and sell a little extra in the market.
- **They are poor here, and most of the elderly have never been to school, but the people are very proud of their Ulak Rawoi culture, and their heritage** as indigenous Andaman coastal fishermen, with all their rituals and fishing practices and food and their own language. In this hot tourist place, that heritage is in great danger of being erased. They don't want to lose this heritage, want to pass it on to their children.
- **The "pioneers" become "invaders" of their own land.** Then, about 20 years ago, the land title race began, as Phuket began to become a hot tourist destination, and Rawai Beach became a new destination for the beach set. Three local businessmen suddenly claimed to have land ownership papers for different parts of the villager's land and the land struggle began. At first, there was no real fight – the land-owners didn't impose any rules, but just made it known that the people were living on their land. Eviction threats came only later. But now things have gotten more tight, and the landowners are getting meaner. And of course this beachfront land has become enormously valuable, as commercial real estate. The village land is worth millions of dollars now.
- **Other changes made it harder and harder for people to survive :** At the same time the people's land began shrinking and becoming more precarious, the big commercial trawlers began to ply the seas around Phuket and the fish stocks dwindled, making it more difficult for small fishermen to survive. Also, many new laws were drafted by the national fisheries department to create and protect a "coastal conservation zone" which made it even more difficult for these small fishermen to survive. While the big commercial fishing trawlers openly flouted these laws and dragged their destructive nets across the fragile coral reefs and sea-grass beds close to shore, environmentalists and scuba-divers began targeting these small fishermen and destroying their shell-fish traps and nets in the shallows off the beach. Now the government is trying to impose a new policy called the "*Seafood Bank*", in which the sea itself is going to be divided up into plots and leased out to individual fishermen and companies, who will have exclusive rights to fish in that place! So even the sea itself will have an owner!
- **The village that is not allowed to be "permanent" :** Since these three landlords have claimed ownership of the people's land, they have intimidated the villagers and imposed rules on what they can and cannot build in their village. Some have even begun to collect land rents. The landowners will not allow the people to build "permanent" houses, to build proper toilets, or to improve the mucky internal roads and walkways, will not allow them to set up any kind of solid waste collection system. At one entrance to the community, where there is a big muddy puddle in the middle of the walkway, we learn that the landowner wouldn't even allow the Sub-District Authority to pour some gravel to level the walkway. The people seem a little

frightened of these guys. After the tsunami damaged some of the houses, the landlord wouldn't even allow people to repair their houses (though many did anyway).

- **This village used to be a "tourist feature" on the Rawai Beach :** "Go visit an authentic Sea Gypsy Fishing Village" etc. Used to be many visitors, who were very curious to see how the fishermen lived and what their simple thatched houses were like. This spawned lots of small businesses, selling sweets, grilled fish, souvenirs and pearls. But now the landlord doesn't allow tourists to enter the village any longer.
- **There are only 30 toilets in this community, for a population of 1,000 people!** Most people have to use the beach as a toilet, waiting until it's dark to do their duty. Man speaks almost with tears in his eyes, "*I am 32 years old and I still go to the toilet on the beach!*"

Mr. Ari Fongfaiton, Tai Mai Community Committee leader speaks : (*speaking with a lot of emotion!*) He says some NGOs (like World Vision) have come to the community and want to help with various things like education, health and social issues. Many came after the tsunami with food aid and help repairing their damaged boats. But their main problem is the land conflict – all these other issues are side issues - and that is the problem nobody has been able to help them with that main issue.

QUESTION from Indonesian woman from Yogyakarta : *What is the role of women in the community development process here?* Nong answers that the women here do not have high education. In their tradition, the men go out to sea to fish and the women help prepare the boats and sell the fish the men bring back, besides doing the cooking and looking after the housework. But the women are involved in all the decisions in the community.

QUESTION from the New Orleans group about the role of the community networks in helping deal with some of these issues in Tai Mai? Nong says it's all very new, and so far, there has not been too much exchange between Tai Mai and other sea gypsy communities or tsunami-affected communities in Phuket. But they know the other communities in Phuket and know about the places like Plaa Katak and Taa Rua Mai, where the people have resolved their land problems and are rebuilding their communities.

QUESTION from the Indonesian group about whether people have metered electricity and water supply here? Some houses have metered water and electricity supply, but many don't. To get a formal connection now, people need the written permission from the land-owner, and he will not give this now. So most are forced to buy water and power informally, and much higher rates. The Sub-District Chief is here in the meeting, and the people ask him to say something about this.

QUESTION from New Orleans group : *How do the people prove they own this land? And how did these three landlords get the title papers if the land belonged to – and was occupied by - the villagers?* Nong answers that the people can easily prove that they have occupied this land for almost a century, with their ID cards, their legal house registration certificates, their ancestor's grave yard within the community and the coconut trees (which they planted, whose rings show how long the tree has been here). But they don't know how these guys got the land papers, or what fishy business allowed a stranger to grab this land. Some landlords have started to demand rent, and once people pay rent, it is like legally agreeing that you are a tenant, and not the owner of the land. So this has weakened people's case.

(The community people ask that the discussions about land stop here, because it's such a sensitive issue, and they're afraid word might reach the land-owners, who live nearby, and make for more trouble...)

Sub-District Chief makes a patronizing little speech : These people have stayed here for 100 years, but have no education at all. Before they also had no ID cards. Then the leader of this community supported the people to go to the government and get ID cards, so their children could study at school. Now they understand better about following the rules. That's why in the Sub-District Administration we are working so hard to protect this community. We want to help, but there's nothing we can do about the land problems, because this land belongs to private land-owners. It's all legal and proper. We've tried to find the money to buy this land for the people, but it's too expensive. We can't even put in drainage or road improvements here, because we're not legally allowed to do anything on private property, without the land-owners permission.

Woman from Evangelical Christian Missionary Group speaks : (she joined the meeting late, and didn't seem to know who we are, assumed we were overseas donors or something...): She runs a Sunday school here, and has converted many young people in the village to Christianity now. (she gets a group to come out and sing a sad-sounding little Christian hymn in their Ulak Rawoi language – "*God is great, God is love!*"). She speaks very emotionally (even theatrically), asking for us to help these poor people, who have no toilets, and where young girls have been raped while trying to go to the beach in the night for their toilet purposes. She says the church gave tsunami victims new boats and new houses at Koh Siri (another tsunami-hit area) but nobody has helped these people at all – would we? (*after finishing this spiel, she abruptly leaves. Pikun, our translator, is not very happy with this woman's performance, or her group's "hidden agenda"*)

The Bahasa Indonesia language and Sea Gypsy languages are related! Arif Sudhirman, a village chief in the group from Aceh, sings a song in the Acehnese language. The Indonesian team discovers that when listening to the people speak here, in these Moken and Ulak Rawoi villages, that there are many words in common with their own Indonesian languages!

Appendix 1 : Why People-Driven disaster rehabilitation?

This is a summary of the points that came out of the sub-group discussions with disaster survivors from the flood and storm group.

1. Why is people centered recovery important?

- **It empowers people, it strengthens human spirit and human dignity.** It builds confidence pride and dignity it helps to reduce the helplessness communities initially feel after a disaster. This process can help reduce stress, trauma and depression amongst community members as it keeps people active and working towards improving.
- **It helps address the real needs in the affected communities** – people understand best their problems, know best what they need and don't need, and are the best ones to solve those problems.
- **It ensures that assistance goes to those that really need it** and helps facilitate some level of equity. When people lead the relief and rehabilitation processes, it creates more transparency and helps reduce corruption. ("Not everyone who comes to support you after a disaster has good intentions!")
- **It enables a faster, cheaper, more equitable and more efficient recovery process,** and is therefore more sustainable. It increases accountability and responsibility. Governments are always slow in responding to disasters, and other outside actors may take advantage of the process.
- **It not only builds houses but it builds people and communities** – the goal of people-driven disaster rehabilitation is not only to rebuild destroyed houses, but to empower communities and build people.
- **It enables local people to be the owners of their own recovery process.** In many disaster affected regions where homes were reconstructed without involvement of the community, the people continue to live in the camps or in their ruined homes and not in the new houses because they feel like aliens in those new houses, which a contractor built.
- **It can help reduce social divisions in disaster affected communities.** By encouraging across-the spectrum involvement of community members, it can ensure that the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged groups in a community (such as women, children, the elderly, lower caste and minority groups) get involved, get their needs on the table and get equal attention and help. In India, in the rebuilding after earthquakes in Maharashtra and Gujarat and the tsunami in Tamil Nadu, the caste system, became less rigid after the tsunami (in some areas). But in some areas caste system still presents a problem as people of one caste may not like to be housed in the same community as the others.
 - a. 1993 earthquake in India, people became homeless. So the recovery process started with grants being given for the construction of new houses. But it appeared that men used up the money for gambling instead. The local government changed the policy for house entitlement by involving the women/ women groups and that helped set right the problem.
 - b. This also helped changed the traditional equation between the men and the women, with the women playing a more active and central role in decision making
 - c. Earlier experiences in house construction/ reconstruction was that the new house was in the name of the man, this too has now changed and the reconstructed homes are now jointly in the names of the woman and the man.
- **It helps disaster survivors to cope with trauma and depression** by keeping them active, busy, working together and making them the prime movers in the process of managing, planning and carrying out their own relief and rehabilitation. When you work as a group your individual problem does not seem so big.
- **It builds people's collective "community power" in many different ways.**
 - a. It promotes a sense of belonging to the group, **solidarity, security.**
 - b. By involving them in all aspects of the relief and rebuilding process, it **strengthens people's confidence in their capacity to manage their own longer-term development.** It helps people to become more articulate, more aware, more savvy about negotiating for what they need. It empowers them.
 - c. It strengthens **communities' collective management skills** because the community is the key management mechanism in the relief process – so all the rehabilitation direction and work comes from people and reflects their real problems and needs.

- d. It **strengthens women's involvement and status** as full, needed, active leaders in the recovery process, even in cases where their roles were more marginal or cloistered before the disaster hit. In India, for example, women's involvement was mostly confined to the house and were not involved in village decision making, but after the tsunami and earthquakes, were more involved, their opinions were sought. In Thailand, women are equal partners to men, helping after landslides, floods and tsunami to help in doing damage survey, cleaning up, cooking food.
 - e. It strengthens **social relations and collective action**. Disasters can be a chance to rebuild society and restructure inequitable social relations within communities, and within larger constituencies.
 - f. It increases people's **economic strength** by making room for them to identify their economic needs and develop livelihood options to getting their lost jobs and businesses back to start earning and being self reliant again..
- **It preserves affected communities' customs, culture and ways of life:** Poor communities have a culture of living, and people have "knowledge capital" in how to survive, they have common beliefs, history and unity. Without these things, they could not have survived! Post-disaster development activities should not be used as a means of transforming communities into a new way of life. People can maintain the spirit, local wisdom and culture of their affected communities throughout the rehabilitation process in ways outsiders can't.
 - **It opens up deep, structural problems of poverty which have been simmering under the surface and have haunted and exploited poor communities for years and years, but which have not been addressed** – problems like unclear land tenure. These are problems which the government has not been able to solve through its conventional, slow bureaucratic systems, but which the disaster makes urgent and open.
 - **Because geography demands it.** The impacts of disasters are widespread and so it is critical that the all those affected be involved from the very beginning (the Philippines, for example, is a country of 7,000 islands and experiences an average of 19 typhoons per year. Dealing with so many natural disasters requires local people's involvement - governments alone cannot handle them.

2. What are the tools, mechanisms and processes which enable affected people and their communities to drive their own recovery process?

Geina from the New Orleans group asked this question :

"You all have so little, yet you are able to give so much to each other. You are always willing to help each other. We have so much more than you folks do, but we can't support each other like that, we only seem to fight with each other! So how do you motivate people, organize them and get them to work together, as a group?"

1. GET BUSY right away and start lots and lots of activities which address immediate and long-term needs, but which also bring people together.

- **Start with something small, this will help to create positive energy in the community.** A small success like cleaning the canal can help to create confidence and encourage and helps to create a result. This result can then be shared with others and from this small activity we are able to bring more people together.
- **Start with what you CAN do.** Lots of things are impossible to do at first, and so many needs are not being met, so much chaos, etc. But the important thing is do those things which can begin to build some hope that change is possible, and to build the collective spirit and collective confidence that something is possible, bit by bit.
- **The rebuilding work should be done by local communities themselves, as much as possible.** Keep contractors out, let communities take responsibility for their own housing, often this also lead to improved social relations within the members of the community.
- **Open opportunities for everyone in the community to participate** and be in the process.
- **Organize lots and lots of local exchange visits and forums :** Every week! To see what others are doing, to show what you are doing. Local visits between affected communities don't cost anything but can be great solidarity-boosters and idea-spread-arounders, and network-builders. Out of city or out of country exchanges are also great and helpful, but since they are more expensive, they can't be very often.
- **Have lots and lots of big events :** To gather people, to generate excitement, to make small bits of progress into big public milestones, to invite officials and partners onto your turf, to bring your negotiations into the public realm, to make a noise that is proactive instead of only protesting. Organize such big events around any and all milestones (first house completed, presentation of community's plan, ground breaking for first house, visit of some official or some other group, Queen's birthday, etc.). Invite everyone and this is the chance to bring all those reluctant officials on board.

- **Try to develop revival activities of all sorts, covering all aspects of the community** – both physical, economic, cultural and social – so the rehabilitation after a disaster is holistic and sustainable, on all fronts.
- Providing relevant skill training like masonry enables women to be more active in reconstruction, or education or engineering so that people can get employment within their community.
- **Promote local knowledge and practices in recovery process** like using traditional house building, traditional medicine, story-telling, etc. Try to use the problem solving process as a way to boost local wisdom, so people can learn from this disaster and the next generation can inherit this wisdom. Like in northern Thailand, the people used available materials or what are left after the disaster for house building.
- **Set up different groups in the communities like youth groups**, women's groups, elderly groups, boat-building groups, environment groups, temporary housing groups, relief donation management groups, cooking groups, etc. so that there is room for everyone in the community to help, to get involved and to bring their skills and ideas into the process.
- **Creating community center or information center** as a "bridge" to link different stakeholders, and as a place to facilitate dialogues.
- **Setting up community savings groups** is a simple way of getting people organized and getting people to work together –
- **Culture** : Use the social and cultural capital that exists in communities as a way to bring people together and build up their communal strength.

2. Build networks and linkages within and between affected communities and existing community organizations in disaster areas : Scattered individual community organizations all need to link together in some way, through networks or federations.

- **Start small with those who understand and expand later to include larger area and more groups.** No need to get everyone on board at the start! This is a way to build community strength.
- **Link communities to increase their collective bargaining power** - communities have no strength in isolation. When communities link together around common problems and common struggles, they can negotiate and bargain and fight collectively, for the things they all need. Networking communities together increases community power, brings the power of numbers and the clout of large scale into the formula.
- **Working together is a means of sharing the burdens, sharing the breakthroughs and rewards.** Linking together into networks is a way to give moral support to each other.
- **Keep the diversity among groups and respect differences in people's situations and priorities across a disaster situation** - don't try to control everybody too much or get them all to do the same way.
- **Try to find common issues, common problems and common interest.** Try to build common criteria and agreement for all the different groups to do something together. Make a clear target and common direction.
- **Sharing experiences, lessons learnt and best practices between affected communities** also provides opportunities for a people lead recovery process. It helps other communities that are not exposed to people driven process to rethink their approach and problems.

3. No passive victims allowed beyond this point! People have to see the problems as being THEIR problems :

- **We are the only ones who can rescue ourselves!** No outsider is going to rescue us ultimately. People are the owners of the problems they are facing – even in a terrible disaster – and should not fall into the passive victim trap.
- **We have to depend on ourselves first**, and look for solutions to our problems within. We have to stand on our own feet as much as possible. People tend to wait for the help from the government, imagine the government is going to solve their problems. Sometimes people are blinded by the government's lovely promises.

4. Focus on common problems and common directions, not on differences. Try to respect differences and diversity among people within communities and among groups within networks, and try to minimize conflicts. Plan and collaborate where it is possible, and let it go (but keep linking and sharing and talking!) where it is not possible.

- Try to set common agreement and a common direction on the basis of belief and common community culture as well as religion and other things which bring people together.
- It is not necessary to focus only on problems – issues that are common, like culture, can also be very effective bringers-together of people and collectivity-builders after a disaster.

5. Know your communities! Information : Must get and maintain detailed information about your community. Important at the very outset of a disaster that you quickly gather community profile. This information will help to facilitate many discussions, planning processes and help to determine the needs of the community. Community-conducted surveys should start right away and continue throughout the rehabilitation

process. Observe the situation and gather needs of different communities as the basis of real community information.

- **Know your own communities** : affected people need to have basic information about their own communities and need to really understand the strengths and potentials of these communities.
- **This information is then the basis for your reconstruction and community revival planning**
- **This information also** becomes a tool in your negotiations with the state and with various involved agencies and actors. Why? Because it's very likely that the information you have is FAR better and more accurate than anything they have.
- **Social assessment** : It is also important to study and understand people's real needs and priorities after the disaster in a survey. Instead of just physical needs after a disaster, have to understand people's serious social needs also.
- **Information must be easily available and accessible**. Ensure that all communities can access the information, so we must look into issues of language and the medium in which it is communicated. Not everybody has a TV or cell phone so one needs to ensure that there is also a system in the community to exchange and share information quickly especially if it is an early warning to a disaster.

6. Get aid budgets directly to affected communities :

- **Most donor money intended for disaster victims does not reach those who most need it** – it gets spent along the way in management and overheads, gets diverted, gets delayed and gets lost in corruption.
- Most disaster aid passes through governments (itself a disaster!) and then governments use their conventional systems to deliver that aid – systems which are slow, rigid, narrow, bureaucratic and almost never work in a major disaster crisis. So it is important that aid should go *directly to affected communities* . Or if it does go through governments, then governments need to find ways to bypass these conventional bureaucratic systems and deliver the aid quickly and directly to affected communities.
- **Grants should pass directly to communities to manage**. If aid funds can be passed directly to communities, then the people can design, plan and build themselves.
- NGOs have a very important facilitating role to play in disaster situations – they should not become channels for aid budgets for affected communities, or act as brokers or middle-men for aid flows or pretend they are governments in a crisis!
- NGOs should push people's real needs up to the funders, not push the funder's agendas and targets down on top of grassroots people's heads. NGOs can help link donors directly to communities and community networks, which identify their own needs.
- People should be strong enough to be able to say no to donors which will not adjust themselves to people's own plans and answer the needs which they themselves set.
- Community organizations and not individuals should make proposals for what they need and deal with outside aid groups collectively. By the other token, donors should not try to go straight to individual people and break up communities.
- **Channeling grant money and donations into a revolving loan fund** can be a means of pulling people together (instead of dividing them, as individual donations often do) and getting them to work together and make decisions about how to use this common resource together. Plus, the funds revolve, so scarce resources becomes re-usable and sustainable.
- **Community managed welfare funds** can also bring communities together and give them a chance to make decisions together about helping their own most vulnerable community members.

7. Communities have to make their own plans :

- **Affected communities have to develop their own plans for redeveloping their damaged lives and communities** – plans which include all aspects of their lives – including finance, livelihood, health, welfare, land, housing, etc.. Once people know what they want to, this plan becomes a tool for negotiating with others for resources and assistance.
- Outside help has its own agenda, a community plan and strategy can help change this agenda and make it more appropriate to what people really need, not development fashions.
- **Communities also have to develop plans for redeveloping their settlements, housing and infrastructure damaged by the disaster**. They to have ready very clear plans, which architects can assist in drafting, in which houses, settlement layout and infrastructure are detailed. These plans have to reflect people's way of living, not someone else's idea of what they need.

8. Affected communities can play a big role in coordinating aid efforts in a disaster situation :

- Need for a sustained, open local dialogue in disaster situations : To bring together all the different groups to discuss issues, meet frequently. This is a way to put everyone's work, their plans and problems, and the policies and budgets all on the table for everyone to see and know about. This is a way to bring groups together to share and learn, even if they don't opt to work together.
- It's hard to coordinate aid organizations, but communities can do this because they are "at the end of the pipe."

9. Negotiate with government and other actors in the rehabilitation game :

- **Building allies :** Try to link with many different actors and keep opening space for existing local and national actors to be involved – local government officials, mayors, district and state and national officials and key government bureaucrats, NGOs, academics, architects, etc.. You can do this by just inviting them for ceremonies and ribbon-cuttings and events, or involving them more significantly in your reconstruction process. This is a way to build bridges with potential sources of support.
- **Not all government people are bad guys:** We should not negate the government totally. Certainly there are some individuals that we could link up and work with.
- **Get on the offensive with your own proposals :** Go into negotiations with government and agencies with your own nicely-worked-out and beautifully presented plans and information of your own! *Don't wait for the government to come to you with their awful plans which have nothing to do with what you need, in which you then become the nay-sayer!* When people make the first move, and come with all their homework done and their proposals all ready to go, it is a way of pushing the government to play the game according to your rules.
- **Keep persisting:** A lot of these problems that communities face after disasters cannot be solved overnight – problems like land tenure security, livelihood revival, etc. Communities need to develop the strength, the confidence, the persistence and the longer-term vision to keep working on it, to not give up!
- **Policies that come from the bottom-up rather than the top-down:** The community's strength should make the development process move from the grassroots right up to the policy level ("*bottom – up*")

3. How can we build linkages, networks and communication channels between affected communities?

1. **Exposure and exchange is a tool to help people believe change is possible :** Need to organize lots and lots of exchanges between disaster affected communities in the same city, sub-district, district, province, country, region, etc. People need to see with their own eyes that change is possible, need to see concrete activities which others are doing which show that change is possible, that people can transform their lives and settlements in concrete ways. Exposure and exchange visits can be powerful attitude-changers and can be potent sources of inspiration.

2. **People need to have some resources of their own,** which they manage themselves and control themselves. Usually money is always in the hands of others: government agencies, aid agencies, NGOs, etc. But if communities have some finance under their own control and in their own hands, they can plan things and implement what they need, and need not wait for others to grant permission!

3. **Use common problems to build relationships and linkages between people and between affected communities.** Try to include people with the same problems to make proposals together and mobilize people around common issues and common struggles. Disasters can be powerful forces for bringing scattered people into new kind of unity when they suddenly find themselves facing the same huge problems which they can't solve alone.

4. **Try to develop core leadership and bring up new leaders** by starting so many different kinds of activities, which make room for new leaders to emerge and create new pools of enthusiasm and new opportunities for involvement.

5. **It is important to produce some real, concrete achievement as soon as possible, don't just talk and talk and talk!** You have to do or make or improve something that you can see and touch, something like houses. This first achievement – even if it is very small – can be a powerful way of showing that people can deliver development. Has to be something real, something show-able. To inspire the next step, to create confidence and speed things up. In order to build a network or organization in your own community start with a small activity. Use the small activity to organize people.

6. **You don't always have to develop new committees or organizations, often you can use existing ones and build on them.** Use natural groups that already exist in the community such as housewife group, parent teacher groups etc

7. **Start with people who have the same problem,** and someone who has strong and genuine intention to solve the problem. Use this as a mechanism to bring people together. Thereafter share your experience with other community or village.

- Recovery is the hardest phase as this is when most communities are left to fend for themselves so need to map out a strategy, identify risk or problem areas. See how these problem areas can be linked to existing

networks, networks who are also struggling with the same issues. This helps to make the issue more urgent or helps to give it recognition.

8. Examples from SETU (formed in Kutch after Gujarat Earthquake)

- Building network at different levels, local, national, regional, international, etc. and linking different levels together.
- Having an information center or community resource center will enable the people to identify, link up, and make use of community “experts”. Disseminating of local information and knowledge is also very important.
- Using IT as communication channels (e.g. to link with high up government official) like video conference, etc.

APPENDIX 2 :

SCHEDULE : Regional Seminar in Phuket : People’s Leadership in Disaster Recovery: Rights, Resilience, and Empowerment

Phuket, 30 October – 1 November 2006

Saturday, October 28

- Arrival of international participants
- Overnight in Bangkok, Deluxe Hotel

Sunday, October 29

- 09h00 - Departing for Phuket by coach
- 16h00 - Arrival in Phuket, Hotel: Royal Phuket City

Monday, 30 October 2006

- Registration
- The Chairperson arrives at the Workshop Venue, Royal Phuket City Hotel.
- Visit the Community Exhibitions on People's Response to Disaster Recovery
- ACHR Tsunami Recovery Video Presentation
- Welcome Remarks by Provincial Governor of Phuket, Mr. Udomsak Asavarangkoul
- Report/ Remarks by CODI Director, Ms. Somsook Boonyabantha
- Opening Remarks by the Minister for Social Development and Human Security, Mr. Paiboon Watanasiritham
- Message from UNDP, by UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mrs. Joana Merlin-Scholtes

Coffee Break

- Remarks on trends in disaster response, by Dr. Pichit Rattakul, Executive Director of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center

Lunch

- Departure to Tung Wah Community in Phangnga Province. Opening Ceremony of Moken Cultural Center at Tung Wah.
- Leave for site visits to 3 Areas in Phangnga Province (participants divided into 3 groups): Tap Tawan Village, Baan Nam Khem Village, and Laem Pom Community.
- Memorial Ceremony for Tsunami Victims, followed by dinner and cultural performances by local community groups and participating countries.

Tuesday, 31 October 2006

- **Panel Discussion 1:** Experiences and Lessons Learnt on Disaster Recovery of Local Community in Thailand

Coffee Break

- **Panel Discussion 2 :** Experiences and Lessons Learnt on Disaster Recovery of Local Community in the Region

Lunch

- **Sub-group discussions**

Dinner

Wednesday, 1 November 2006

- Presentation of summary of sub-group discussions

Coffee Break

- Concluding session: Workshop results and recommendations for further implementation of people-driven disaster recovery at the regional and international levels
- Closing Ceremony

Lunch

Site Visits (participants divided into three groups)

- **Ranong Province group** (to visit Pak Triem and Sai Dam Communities)
- **Krabi Province group** (to visit Koh Lanta Island communities)
- **Phuket Province group** (to visit Taa Rua Mai, Plaa Katak and Hin Lok Dio communities)

APPENDIX 3 :

Names, biographies and contact details of the 10 people in the USA team :

1. **Latosha Brown** (Biloxi) is the Executive Director of Saving Our Selves (SOS), a coalition of over 117 groups with historical ties, contacts and interests to these low and moderate-income rural communities.
2. **Victoria Cintra** (Biloxi) is a Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA) organizer who is leading the charge across the region battling for the rights of the foreign-born while driving around, organizing, documenting abuses, and demanding justice. website: www.yourmira.org
3. **Elvis Cintra-Licea** (Biloxi) also works with the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA).
4. **Reverend Lois Dejean** (New Orleans) is the director of the *Gert Town Revival Initiative (GRI)*, where she advocates for environmental justice. Rev. Dejean and GRI are currently involved in obtaining property in the Gert Town neighborhood (a low-income inner-city neighborhood of about 2,000 families, before the storm, and has nice, not-too-damaged houses and is ripe for gentrification as soon as the toxic mess from the Pesticides blending facility there is cleaned up...) that has been adjudicated to the city of New Orleans so that the property can be repaired and offered to individuals displaced by Hurricane Katrina.
5. **Reverend Frederick Fields** (Biloxi) pastor of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church has been bringing people together and coordinating volunteers and victims of all faiths.
6. **Sam Jackson** (New Orleans) is an electrician who works for a ship builder also works with tenant groups at the B.W. Cooper Housing Complex.
7. **Sharda Sekaran** (New York) is the Associate Director of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI). She has researched a human rights approach to reforming health care financing in the U.S. and has experience connecting grassroots constituencies with social justice and public health advocacy.
8. **Jon Stuyvesant** (New York) is a videographer who works with *Rada Film Group*, a production company founded by Joe Brewster and Michele Stephenson. He helped develop the US version of the Asian Coalition video that you have in your packet..
9. **Geina Jones** (New Orleans) works with Pam Dashiell in the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association. Geina's address : 614 Lockheed Drive, Kenner, Louisiana, 70062, USA. E-mail: mannie3483@yahoo.com
10. **Nathalie Walker** (New Orleans) co-founded *Advocates for Environmental Human Rights (AEHR)*, a public interest law firm. The mission of AEHR is to defend the fundamental human right to a healthy environment. AEHR provides a broad range of legal and public advocacy services to communities where the rights to life, health, and racial equality are systematically violated by governmental laws, policies, and practices that deny human rights and facilitate and perpetuate environmental racism. Postal address : *Advocates for Environmental Human Rights (AEHR)*, 650 Poydras Street, Suite 2523, New Orleans, LA 70130, USA. E-mail: nwalker-aehr@cox.net

APPENDIX 4 :

Full text of the welcoming speech by Somsook Boonyabancha, Director of the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) and Secretary General of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR).

APPENDIX 5 :

Full text of keynote speech by Mr. Paiboon Watanasiritam, Minister of Social Development and Human Security, Government of Thailand.

Regional representatives of UNDP, representatives of Disaster-affected communities from overseas countries and Thailand, excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great privilege and a great pleasure to be invited here today to open this international workshop on *People's Leadership in Disaster Recovery : Rights, Resilience and Empowerment*. I believe that this is very important issue that has great relevance, not just for how we can better cope with disasters but also for how we can reshape our normal world into one in which all people can have access to human security and can play meaningful social roles. There are a number of interrelated reasons for me to be extremely optimistic about the value and potential impact of this workshop.

The first reason is that we live in the same increasingly crowded and environmentally fragile world. We know that it is inevitable that we will encounter more and more natural and manmade disasters. Moreover, because of increasing population densities in disaster prone regions, and because of new factors like global warming, we can expect many future disasters on extremely large scales. We cannot prevent natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and hurricanes from occurring but we can look for new and more creative ways of anticipating and mitigating the onset of such disasters and for coping more effectively and equitably with the impacts of such disasters on people, especially poor communities which usually suffer the most.

The second reason is that each of our national and regional experiences of natural disasters and the emergency relief and recovery efforts that are made in response to each of them, can provide us with lessons that can help us to identify new and better approaches to disaster prevention, mitigation, relief and recovery. The new information and communications technologies have greatly enhanced our capacity to record and document these experiences, to analyze them and share them with others anywhere in the world. In this way many valuable insights, experiences and innovations can be shared right now with others from other countries and regions. These lessons and new approaches can also be adapted and institutionalized for the benefit of others in the future. This will help to move us away from the often token and ad hoc responses to disaster relief and recovery that we have seen in the past, responses that have tended to repeat mistakes rather than rectifying them.

The third and perhaps the most important reason for having high hopes about the impact of this meeting is the fact that a great deal of new learning and tested experience has been attained in the recent spate of natural disasters including the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat in India, the December 2004 tsunami that affected several countries in the Indian Ocean. This learning has significantly changed our perceptions of how to better assist survivors in the short and long term and how to prevent or minimize the negative impacts of disasters on the lives and property of vulnerable populations in the future. Disasters and their aftermaths bring into sharp focus the extremely difficult and precarious circumstances under which the many poor and marginalized people in the world are living all the time. But in normal times we tend to only look at their situation in a very superficial way. Disasters highlight the fragility and vulnerability of poverty and powerlessness that stalk the daily lives of the poor. Some dimensions of poverty are structural like landlessness, lack of access to education, health services and economic opportunities. In the aftermath of a disaster, it becomes clear that by neglecting these issues in times of normality, we have left people at a great disadvantage not only when disaster strikes but also in a post disaster context.

Because of the tragic loss of life and property, because of the isolation and despair they cause, disasters jolt us out of our apathy and indifference and provoke strong waves of solidarity with and compassion for both those who have been lost and those broken hearted survivors who must begin their lives and rebuild their communities from scratch. In this respect disasters provide each and every one of us with an opportunity to exercise our humanity and give generously, without expecting any return for ourselves, to those who are so clearly devastated and left destitute by disasters. The outpouring of emergency relief and recovery aid funding in the wake the 2004 tsunami demonstrated this very powerfully when we saw unprecedented scales of private donations from all sides. But all the money and materials in the world does not guarantee that all those survivors that need various types of assistance and support will get what they really need. The first thing we have learned from these recent experiences is that we have to listen to the disasters survivors themselves if we really want to help them, if we really want to reach those most in need and help them in lasting way.

In the emergency relief phase the responses of donors, relief agencies and volunteers are scattered. They have to be so because these outsiders do not know which individuals and which communities have been most affected by the disaster, where those people are temporarily located and what their most pressing specific needs are (apart from the very general categories of medical aid, food, water and temporary shelter). What we have learned from the community based approaches adopted in Gujarat, India, Aceh, Indonesia and several provinces in Southern Thailand is that when we bring the affected community members together they can help to make the flows of emergency aid effectively reach all those in need, not just the ones in the most accessible areas.

Because the survivors know their neighbors and village localities, they can ensure the elderly and the disabled and the orphaned and traumatized are not overlooked or neglected. Because the survivors know where more remote villages were located before the disaster, they can alert emergency agencies and volunteers to seek

them out and provide vital emergency relief to them. Involving the survivors from 'day one' in the emergency relief and reconstruction effort enables a range of new learning on all sides; on the part of the surviving villagers who would normally be treated as passive victims capable of merely receiving things, and on the part of relief and assistance agencies, professionals and volunteers who would normally assume that they had to do everything for the daunting number of disaster 'victims.' The survivors and their communities can contribute greatly to the relief phase through providing their knowledge, their energy and their surprising range of skills and creativity to the process.

So a major breakthrough takes place when the survivors are able to organize and work out their priorities and participate in taking decisions on what is provided to whom. This is important in the relief phase not just to improve the relief distribution itself, but also because it provides survivors with the collective strength to cope with other threats and challenges that await them in the reconstruction and recovery phase. Sometimes government policies that are imposed in the post disaster context without consultations with the disaster affected communities result in communities being forced to relocate to areas far away from their livelihoods and social networks. It can also mean that they are forced to live in houses that are of unsuitable designs for their lifestyles and livelihoods. But when the survivors in disaster affected communities begin to organize and network with each other they can overcome these challenges. They can also draw on their vivid awareness of the recent disaster to build collective commitment to preparing for and minimizing the impact of future disasters, regardless of what form they take.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this month Thailand has been experiencing the most serious flooding in more than 60 years covering the areas in 47 out of 76 provinces. In this context the experiences and self reliant approaches developed by the communities in tsunami affected provinces in the South of Thailand, such as Ban Nam Khem, Tung Wah and Tab Tawan villages, have proven to be of enormous use to flood affected communities. The work of the community networks has been an important contribution to helping communities to better protect their lives and property rather than waiting passively for the others to rescue them and redress their losses.

But perhaps the most important learning takes place within the lives of the survivors themselves, especially the poor, prompted by their recent close encounters with death and the tragic loss of their loved ones, they learn that working together with their neighbors on solving their individual and collective problems, brings new levels of solidarity and mutual trust, of energy, courage and hope to each and to all. In this way they begin to see that they can not only regain the level of control they had over their lives prior to the disaster, they can also begin to tackle the longer term problems like poverty and insecurity, barely subsistent livelihoods, lack of access to credit and increasing environmental degradation. In so many disaster afflicted communities men and women, youths and elders, regardless of how poor they are, no matter how marginalized and disadvantaged, have found that they have valuable contributions to make to the well being of those around them, to the future well being of their families, their communities and to their countries, especially when development agencies and the government are actively involved and in support to communities.

In this light we can see that community-based and community-driven disaster relief and recovery approaches offer us new possibilities, not just to better cope with post disaster needs but to contribute directly to disaster prevention by enabling poor vulnerable communities to break out of their poverty and to create their own collective security. This is indeed important development direction for the government and development agencies in our global society to learn and work together.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Why People-Driven disaster rehabilitation?

This is a summary of the points that came out of the sub-group discussions with disaster survivors from 14 Asian countries (plus USA!), held in the afternoon of November 1, 2006, in Phuket. The 400 meeting participants were divided into four groups:

- *the Thai group (floods, land-slides and tsunami)*
- *the Tsunami group*
- *the earthquake group*
- *the flood and storm group.*

1. Why is people centered recovery important?

- ***It empowers people, it strengthens human spirit and human dignity.*** It builds confidence pride and dignity it helps to reduce the helplessness communities initially feel after a disaster. This process can help reduce stress, trauma and depression amongst community members as it keeps people active and working towards improving.

- **It helps address the real needs in the affected communities** – people understand best their problems, know best what they need and don't need, and are the best ones to solve those problems.
- **It ensures that assistance goes to those that really need it** and helps facilitate some level of equity. When people lead the relief and rehabilitation processes, it creates more transparency and helps reduce corruption. ("Not everyone who comes to support you after a disaster has good intentions!")
- **It enables a faster, cheaper, more equitable and more efficient recovery process**, and is therefore more sustainable. It increases accountability and responsibility. Governments are always slow in responding to disasters, and other outside actors may take advantage of the process.
- **It not only builds houses but it builds people and communities** – the goal of people-driven disaster rehabilitation is not only to rebuild destroyed houses, but to empower communities and build people.
- **It enables local people to be the owners of their own recovery process.** In many disaster affected regions where homes were reconstructed without involvement of the community, the people continue to live in the camps or in their ruined homes and not in the new houses because they feel like aliens in those new houses, which a contractor built.
- **It can help reduce social divisions in disaster affected communities.** By encouraging across-the spectrum involvement of community members, it can ensure that the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged groups in a community (such as women, children, the elderly, lower caste and minority groups) get involved, get their needs on the table and get equal attention and help. In India, in the rebuilding after earthquakes in Maharashtra and Gujarat and the tsunami in Tamil Nadu, the caste system, became less rigid after the tsunami (in some areas). But in some areas caste system still presents a problem as people of one caste may not like to be housed in the same community as the others.
 - a. 1993 earthquake in India, people became homeless. So the recovery process started with grants being given for the construction of new houses. But it appeared that men used up the money for gambling instead. The local government changed the policy for house entitlement by involving the women/ women groups and that helped set right the problem.
 - b. This also helped changed the traditional equation between the men and the women, with the women playing a more active and central role in decision making
 - c. Earlier experiences in house construction/ reconstruction was that the new house was in the name of the man, this too has now changed and the reconstructed homes are now jointly in the names of the woman and the man.
- **It helps disaster survivors to cope with trauma and depression** by keeping them active, busy, working together and making them the prime movers in the process of managing, planning and carrying out their own relief and rehabilitation. When you work as a group your individual problem does not seem so big.
- **It builds people's collective "community power" in many different ways.**
 - a. It promotes a sense of belonging to the group, **solidarity, security.**
 - b. By involving them in all aspects of the relief and rebuilding process, it **strengthens people's confidence in their capacity to manage their own longer-term development.** It helps people to become more articulate, more aware, more savvy about negotiating for what they need. It empowers them.
 - c. It strengthens **communities' collective management skills** because the community is the key management mechanism in the relief process – so all the rehabilitation direction and work comes from people and reflects their real problems and needs.
 - d. It **strengthens women's involvement and status** as full, needed, active leaders in the recovery process, even in cases where their roles were more marginal or cloistered before the disaster hit. In India, for example, women's involvement was mostly confined to the house and were not involved in village decision making, but after the tsunami and earthquakes, were more involved, their opinions were sought. In Thailand, women are equal partners to men, helping after landslides, floods and tsunami to help in doing damage survey, cleaning up, cooking food.
 - e. It strengthens **social relations and collective action.** Disasters can be a chance to rebuild society and restructure inequitable social relations within communities, and within larger constituencies.
 - f. It increases people's **economic strength** by making room for them to identify their economic needs and develop livelihood options to getting their lost jobs and businesses back to start earning and being self reliant again..
- **It preserves affected communities' customs, culture and ways of life:** Poor communities have a culture of living, and people have "knowledge capital" in how to survive, they have common beliefs, history and unity. Without these things, they could not have survived! Post-disaster development activities should not be used as a means of transforming communities into a new way of life. People can maintain the spirit, local wisdom and culture of their affected communities throughout the rehabilitation process in ways outsiders can't.
- **It opens up deep, structural problems of poverty which have been simmering under the surface and have haunted and exploited poor communities for years and years, but which have not been addressed** – problems like unclear land tenure. These are problems which the government has not been able to solve through its conventional, slow bureaucratic systems, but which the disaster makes urgent and open.
- **Because geography demands it.** The impacts of disasters are widespread and so it is critical that the all those affected be involved from the very beginning (the Philippines, for example, is a country of 7,000 islands and experiences an average of 19 typhoons per year. Dealing with so many natural disasters requires local people's involvement - governments alone cannot handle them.

2. What are the tools, mechanisms and processes which enable affected people and their communities to drive their own recovery process?

Geina from the New Orleans group asked this question :

“You all have so little, yet you are able to give so much to each other. You are always willing to help each other. We have so much more than you folks do, but we can’t support each other like that, we only seem to fight with each other! So how do you motivate people, organize them and get them to work together, as a group?”

1. GET BUSY right away and start lots and lots of activities which address immediate and long-term needs, but which also bring people together.

- **Start with something small, this will help to create positive energy in the community.** A small success like cleaning the canal can help to create confidence and encourage and helps to create a result. This result can then be shared with others and from this small activity we are able to bring more people together.
- **Start with what you CAN do.** Lots of things are impossible to do at first, and so many needs are not being met, so much chaos, etc. But the important thing is do those things which can begin to build some hope that change is possible, and to build the collective spirit and collective confidence that something is possible, bit by bit.
- **The rebuilding work should be done by local communities themselves, as much as possible.** Keep contractors out, let communities take responsibility for their own housing, often this also lead to improved social relations within the members of the community.
- **Open opportunities for everyone in the community to participate** and be in the process.
- **Organize lots and lots of local exchange visits and forums :** Every week! To see what others are doing, to show what you are doing. Local visits between affected communities don't cost anything but can be great solidarity-boosters and idea-spread-arounders, and network-builders. Out of city or out of country exchanges are also great and helpful, but since they are more expensive, they can't be very often.
- **Have lots and lots of big events :** To gather people, to generate excitement, to make small bits of progress into big public milestones, to invite officials and partners onto your turf, to bring your negotiations into the public realm, to make a noise that is proactive instead of only protesting. Organize such big events around any and all milestones (first house completed, presentation of community's plan, ground breaking for first house, visit of some official or some other group, Queen's birthday, etc.). Invite everyone and this is the chance to bring all those reluctant officials on board.
- **Try to develop revival activities of all sorts, covering all aspects of the community** – both physical, economic, cultural and social – so the rehabilitation after a disaster is holistic and sustainable, on all fronts.
- Providing relevant skill training like masonry enables women to be more active in reconstruction, or education or engineering so that people can get employment within their community.
- **Promote local knowledge and practices in recovery process** like using traditional house building, traditional medicine, story-telling, etc. Try to use the problem solving process as a way to boost local wisdom, so people can learn from this disaster and the next generation can inherit this wisdom. Like in northern Thailand, the people used available materials or what are left after the disaster for house building.
- **Set up different groups in the communities like youth groups,** women's groups, elderly groups, boat-building groups, environment groups, temporary housing groups, relief donation management groups, cooking groups, etc. so that there is room for everyone in the community to help, to get involved and to bring their skills and ideas into the process.
- **Creating community center or information center** as a “bridge” to link different stakeholders, and as a place to facilitate dialogues.
- **Setting up community savings groups** is a simple way of getting people organized and getting people to work together –
- **Culture :** Use the social and cultural capital that exists in communities as a way to bring people together and build up their communal strength.

2. Build networks and linkages within and between affected communities and existing community organizations in disaster areas : Scattered individual community organizations all need to link together in some way, through networks or federations.

- **Start small with those who understand and expand later to include larger area and more groups.** No need to get everyone on board at the start! This is a way to build community strength.
- **Link communities to increase their collective bargaining power** - communities have no strength in isolation. When communities link together around common problems and common struggles, they can negotiate and bargain and fight collectively, for the things they all need. Networking communities together increases community power, brings the power of numbers and the clout of large scale into the formula.
- **Working together is a means of sharing the burdens, sharing the breakthroughs and rewards.** Linking together into networks is a way to give moral support to each other.
- **Keep the diversity among groups and respect differences in people's situations and priorities across a disaster situation** - don't try to control everybody too much or get them all to do the same way.
- **Try to find common issues, common problems and common interest.** Try to build common criteria and agreement for all the different groups to do something together. Make a clear target and common direction.
- **Sharing experiences, lessons learnt and best practices between affected communities** also provides opportunities for a people lead recovery process. It helps other communities that are not exposed to people driven process to rethink their approach and problems.

3. No passive victims allowed beyond this point! People have to see the problems as being THEIR problems :

- **We are the only ones who can rescue ourselves!** No outsider is going to rescue us ultimately. People are the owners of the problems they are facing – even in a terrible disaster – and should not fall into the passive victim trap.

- **We have to depend on ourselves first**, and look for solutions to our problems within. We have to stand on our own feet as much as possible. People tend to wait for the help from the government, imagine the government is going to solve their problems. Sometimes people are blinded by the government's lovely promises.
- 4. Focus on common problems and common directions, not on differences.** Try to respect differences and diversity among people within communities and among groups within networks, and try to minimize conflicts. Plan and collaborate where it is possible, and let it go (but keep linking and sharing and talking!) where it is not possible.
- Try to set common agreement and a common direction on the basis of belief and common community culture as well as religion and other things which bring people together.
 - It is not necessary to focus only on problems – issues that are common, like culture, can also be very effective bringers-together of people and collectivity-builders after a disaster.
- 5. Know your communities! Information :** Must get and maintain detailed information about your community. Important at the very outset of a disaster that you quickly gather community profile. This information will help to facilitate many discussions, planning processes and help to determine the needs of the community. Community-conducted surveys should start right away and continue throughout the rehabilitation process. Observe the situation and gather needs of different communities as the basis of real community information.
- **Know your own communities :** affected people need to have basic information about their own communities and need to really understand the strengths and potentials of these communities.
 - **This information is then the basis for your reconstruction and community revival planning**
 - **This information also** becomes a tool in your negotiations with the state and with various involved agencies and actors. Why? Because it's very likely that the information you have is FAR better and more accurate than anything they have.
 - **Social assessment :** It is also important to study and understand people's real needs and priorities after the disaster in a survey. Instead of just physical needs after a disaster, have to understand people's serious social needs also.
 - **Information must be easily available and accessible.** Ensure that all communities can access the information, so we must look into issues of language and the medium in which it is communicated. Not everybody has a TV or cell phone so one needs to ensure that there is also a system in the community to exchange and share information quickly especially if it is an early warning to a disaster.
- 6. Get aid budgets directly to affected communities :**
- **Most donor money intended for disaster victims does not reach those who most need it** – it gets spent along the way in management and overheads, gets diverted, gets delayed and gets lost in corruption.
 - Most disaster aid passes through governments (itself a disaster!) and then governments use their conventional systems to deliver that aid – systems which are slow, rigid, narrow, bureaucratic and almost never work in a major disaster crisis. So it is important that aid should go *directly to affected communities* . Or if it does go through governments, then governments need to find ways to bypass these conventional bureaucratic systems and deliver the aid quickly and directly to affected communities.
 - **Grants should pass directly to communities to manage.** If aid funds can be passed directly to communities, then the people can design, plan and build themselves.
 - NGOs have a very important facilitating role to play in disaster situations – they should not become channels for aid budgets for affected communities, or act as brokers or middle-men for aid flows or pretend they are governments in a crisis!
 - NGOs should push people's real needs up to the funders, not push the funder's agendas and targets down on top of grassroots people's heads. NGOs can help link donors directly to communities and community networks, which identify their own needs.
 - People should be strong enough to be able to say no to donors which will not adjust themselves to people's own plans and answer the needs which they themselves set.
 - Community organizations and not individuals should make proposals for what they need and deal with outside aid groups collectively. By the other token, donors should not try to go straight to individual people and break up communities.
 - **Channeling grant money and donations into a revolving loan fund** can be a means of pulling people together (instead of dividing them, as individual donations often do) and getting them to work together and make decisions about how to use this common resource together. Plus, the funds revolve, so scarce resources becomes re-usable and sustainable.
 - **Community managed welfare funds** can also bring communities together and give them a chance to make decisions together about helping their own most vulnerable community members.
- 7. Communities have to make their own plans :**
- **Affected communities have to develop their own plans for redeveloping their damaged lives and communities** – plans which include all aspects of their lives – including finance, livelihood, health, welfare, land, housing, etc.. Once people know what they want to, this plan becomes a tool for negotiating with others for resources and assistance.
 - Outside help has its own agenda, a community plan and strategy can help change this agenda and make it more appropriate to what people really need, not development fashions.
 - **Communities also have to develop plans for redeveloping their settlements, housing and infrastructure damaged by the disaster.** They to have ready very clear plans, which architects can assist in drafting, in which

houses, settlement layout and infrastructure are detailed. These plans have to reflect people's way of living, not someone else's idea of what they need.

8. Affected communities can play a big role in coordinating aid efforts in a disaster situation :

- Need for a sustained, open local dialogue in disaster situations : To bring together all the different groups to discuss issues, meet frequently. This is a way to put everyone's work, their plans and problems, and the policies and budgets all on the table for everyone to see and know about. This is a way to bring groups together to share and learn, even if they don't opt to work together.
- It's hard to coordinate aid organizations, but communities can do this because they are "at the end of the pipe."

9. Negotiate with government and other actors in the rehabilitation game :

- **Building allies** : Try to link with many different actors and keep opening space for existing local and national actors to be involved – local government officials, mayors, district and state and national officials and key government bureaucrats, NGOs, academics, architects, etc.. You can do this by just inviting them for ceremonies and ribbon-cuttings and events, or involving them more significantly in your reconstruction process. This is a way to build bridges with potential sources of support.
- **Not all government people are bad guys**: We should not negate the government totally. Certainly there are some individuals that we could link up and work with.
- **Get on the offensive with your own proposals** : Go into negotiations with government and agencies with your own nicely-worked-out and beautifully presented plans and information of your own! *Don't wait for the government to come to you with their awful plans which have nothing to do with what you need, in which you then become the nay-sayer!* When people make the first move, and come with all their homework done and their proposals all ready to go, it is a way of pushing the government to play the game according to your rules.
- **Keep persisting**: A lot of these problems that communities face after disasters cannot be solved over night – problems like land tenure security, livelihood revival, etc. Communities need to develop the strength, the confidence, the persistence and the longer-term vision to keep working on it, to not give up!
- **Policies that come from the bottom-up rather than the top-down**: The community's strength should make the development process move from the grassroots right up to the policy level ("*bottom – up*")

3. How can we build linkages, networks and communication channels between affected communities?

1. Exposure and exchange is a tool to help people believe change is possible : Need to organize lots and lots of exchanges between disaster affected communities in the same city, sub-district, district, province, country, region, etc. People need to see with their own eyes that change is possible, need to see concrete activities which others are doing which show that change is possible, that people can transform their lives and settlements in concrete ways. Exposure and exchange visits can be powerful attitude-changers and can be potent sources of inspiration.

2. People need to have some resources of their own, which they manage themselves and control themselves. Usually money is always in the hands of others: government agencies, aid agencies, NGOs, etc. But if communities have some finance under their own control and in their own hands, they can plan things and implement what they need, and need not wait for others to grant permission!

3. Use common problems to build relationships and linkages between people and between affected communities. Try to include people with the same problems to make proposals together and mobilize people around common issues and common struggles. Disasters can be powerful forces for bringing scattered people into new kind of unity when they suddenly find themselves facing the same huge problems which they can't solve alone.

4. Try to develop core leadership and bring up new leaders by starting so many different kinds of activities, which make room for new leaders to emerge and create new pools of enthusiasm and new opportunities for involvement.

5. It is important to produce some real, concrete achievement as soon as possible, don't just talk and talk and talk! You have to do or make or improve something that you can see and touch, something like houses. This first achievement – even if it is very small – can be a powerful way of showing that people can deliver development. Has to be something real, something show-able. To inspire the next step, to create confidence and speed things up. In order to build a network or organization in your own community start with a small activity. Use the small activity to organize people.

6. You don't always have to develop new committees or organizations, often you can use existing ones and build on them. Use natural groups that already exist in the community such as housewife group, parent teacher groups etc

7. Start with people who have the same problem, and someone who has strong and genuine intention to solve the problem. Use this as a mechanism to bring people together. Thereafter share your experience with other community or village.

- Recovery is the hardest phase as this is when most communities are left to fend for themselves so need to map out a strategy, identify risk or problem areas. See how these problem areas can be linked to existing networks, networks who are also struggling with the same issues. This helps to make the issue more urgent or helps to give it recognition.

8. Examples from SETU (formed in Kutch after Gujarat Earthquake)

- Building network at different levels, local, national, regional, international, etc. and linking different levels together.
- Having an information center or community resource center will enable the people to identify, link up, and make use of community "experts". Disseminating of local information and knowledge is also very important.
- Using IT as communication channels (e.g. to link with high up government official) like video conference, etc.