

People-driven response to floods in northern Thailand

These are rough notes from Thomas Kerr at the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) in Bangkok, drawn from two visits to flood-hit areas of northern Thailand

- **July 21, 2006**
- **October 6-9, 2006**

2006 has been one of the worst years of flooding in living memory. In this year's long rainy season, we've seen storms, cyclones and extraordinarily heavy rainfall. Nearly three-quarters of the country's 76 provinces have experienced waves of flooding, landslides, burst dams, washed-out roads, swollen rivers, destroyed crops and destruction of urban and rural infrastructure, between May and October. It's up for debate whether all this destruction is being caused by global warming, El Nino or by the wrongful stewardship of the country's waterways, forests mountains and river deltas. But one thing is certain: like the devastating tsunami two years ago, the scale of this ongoing calamity has proven too great for the government and aid organizations alone to respond to properly.

And like the tsunami, the role of horizontal relief and rehabilitation, which is being directed and managed by coalitions of community networks and flood affected people themselves (especially those poorest and most vulnerable), is proving to be a vital, efficient, fast, flexible and effective supplement to formal relief and reconstruction efforts. And again as with the tsunami, when the affected people take a key role in the reconstruction of their damaged houses and villages and in the rehabilitation of their livelihoods, the disaster has become an opportunity for longer-term development gains for some of the country's poorest rural and urban communities.

The floods in northern Thailand have allowed the people-centered relief and rehabilitation processes which were developed in the aftermath of the tsunami to be put back into use, but scaled up, refined and streamlined by the community networks. In fact, since the floods have happened in a part of the country already rich in varied and sophisticated community networks, the "horizontal" nature of the response to the floods has been much greater - the immediate outpouring of assistance and goodwill by all these networks during the various flood crises has allowed CODI to take a back seat in the organizing process, and channel funds to a process which is being almost entirely managed by this large group of community networks. So it seems clear that horizontal relief and rehabilitation, which is managed by communities and which makes the affected people the key actors, is here to stay.

1. There have been several more natural disasters in Thailand since the December 2004 tsunami :

There have been several more natural disasters in Thailand after the tsunami :

1. **Floods in Northern Thailand - Chiang Mai (13-14 August, 2005)** Natural resources networks and rural networks came to help these hundreds of flooded villages rebuild, but also organized a special event to build a traditional wooden and bamboo dam ("fai" in Thai), where the big hydro concrete dams had failed, causing the floods. Indigenous ways of dealing with water and flooding. Idea: bring many groups to participate in rehabilitation of villages and deal with dams.
2. **Floods in southern Thailand (December 2005)** : other southern community networks and community planning networks supported and used the rehabilitation process to deal with land issue
3. **Floods and landslides in Northern Thailand (May 21-22, 2006)** Floods in Uttaradit, Phrae, Sukhothai and Tak Provinces - rural and urban both. The floods happened about 2:00 AM on May 21, after days of extremely heavy rain, so many people were sleeping. About 100 people died in landslides or drowned in the floods from overflowing rivers. In the hilly areas of the region, big chunks of hillsides broke away and slid down the hill, carrying soil, rocks, uprooted trees and mud sliding down the hill, destroying all in its path. Even in flooded areas down below, the mud covered agriculture fields, and this mud has to be removed before crops can be planted again. 1,000 villages were affected, with flooding, mud-slides and destroyed orchards, trees torn out of the ground and carried along in a tide of mud. Uttaradit and Phrae fruit orchards especially - this was the real wealth of those provinces. The people's accumulated wealth of houses, culture, land, trees and everything! Great agricultural wealth was destroyed. (Different than sea gypsies, who were poor to start with, and could sleep on the beach, had almost no possessions.
4. **Floods again across the entire country (Early October 2006)** : This most recent wave of floods, which affected nearly two-thirds of the country's 76 provinces, especially in northern, central and eastern Thailand, were caused by extremely heavy rainfall, high-tides, swollen rivers and the onset of Typhoon Xhangsam, which hit Thailand in August. The government's Department of Disaster Protection and Mitigation (under the Ministry of Interior) reported on October 10, 2006 that the flooded areas now cover 46 provinces around the country (out of total 76), including 285 districts, 1,543 sub-districts and 8,664 villages. *Here are the ministry's official figures on these most recent floods:*

- **Total no. of people affected from the flooding** : 2.1 million people (540,844 households)

- Deaths from flooding and landslides so far: 38
- Houses totally destroyed : 3,600
- Houses partly damaged : 7,209
- Temples and schools damaged : 453
- Dams broken or washed away : 437
- Bridges destroyed : 226
- Agricultural lands damaged (along with the crops growing on them) : 250,000 Hectares
- Estimated value of losses from flooding : 237 million Baht (US\$ 6 million)

Information on the 17 Worst Affected Provinces (info from Ministry of Interior) :

Region	Provinces / districts affected by floods	Number of WORST affected areas		
		Provinces	Districts	Sub-districts
Northern Thailand	Chiangmai, Pijit, Sukhothai, Kamphaengpet, Pitsanulok	5	20	119
Central Thailand	Nakornsawan, Chainat, Uthaitani, Singburi, Angthong, Ayuthaya, Supanburi	7	29	216
Eastern Thailand	Jantaburi, Prajeenburi	2	7	34
Peripheral areas around Bangkok	Nontaburi, Patumthani	2	14	52
Bangkok Metropolitan Area	Ladkrabung, Bangbon Meenburi, Nongjog,	1	4	-

Notes on some field visits to flood and land-slide-hit areas on 21 July 2006 :

In Uttaradit city, 5 communities were badly flooded and damaged after the May 21 floods. But use the flood crisis to survey all the 26 settlements in the city into the Baan Mankong upgrading process, to broaden the process! So the floods end up being a chance to get the city-wide upgrading going, in a city where it had gotten stalled. Use the disaster to broaden to the whole city, not only crisis communities

- **Visit to Tambon Chai Chumpon (at the edge of Uttaradit town) - 21 July 2006 :** Many wooden houses along the river in this semi-rural area were destroyed in the floods, which remained about 4 hours here. Three people died. Many of these people were not poor before the floods, had small but prosperous farms where they raised lucrative red onions for the Thai market. But now, many of their fields were covered over with thick mud from the floods, and cannot be cultivated again without a lot of work. This is one of the communities that has gotten funds from CODI for building temporary houses for those who lost their homes in the floods. Community network members from other parts of the north have come to help people rebuild their houses. Most people doing the work of rebuilding their houses themselves, to save money.

2. Visit to Amphor Lab-lae, in Uttaradit Province (21 July 2006) : This is a rural sub-district which straddles the big hills in the northern part of Uttaradit Province. Extremely beautiful area, with small farms and fruit orchards perched along the steep roads and forested hill-sides. But there is a lot of mud everywhere, roads in bad shape, eroded away in places, bulldozers coming and going. We learn that this area has been continuously settled since the Khmer period, with many influxes of migrants over the centuries from Isan, Lao and hill-tribes.

In this area, the problem was not so much flooding, but land-slides. As we drive along these steep mountain roads, we see across valleys where whole sections of hills have slid away, leaving great, red colored gashes and bald-patches on the mountainsides. When these chunks of hill slid downhill, they destroyed houses, crops, orchards and roads – everything in their path – in a river of mud and rocks and uprooted trees and electric poles. Many people died here.

We visit an old woman whose house, orchards, farm and agricultural products near a stream were all completely destroyed by the landslides. (but still this lovely, strong woman is smiling!) Big earth-movers are clearing the mud and tree-stumps and rubble along the road. She has been given one of the free houses from the King's Foundation. It is a tall, decent, wooden house built up on stilts, with a tin-sheet roof. But she tells us that when she asked for some small changes to be made in the layout of the house, she was told that the design can't be changed, must be built exactly as specified, by the foundation's building team, composed mostly of volunteer students. This house costs 150,000 Baht to build. (Somsook: "You could build three houses for the same amount of money and unleash people's energy in the process!")

Some of the worst-hit areas are very hard to reach, far up the slopes of big hills, where the mountainsides came sliding down after so many days of heavy rain, and after years of wrongful deforestation and cultivation of the hill slopes with shallow-rooted mono-culture crops (like bananas). Pui says many of these hills look very green from a distance, but when you look at them up close, you find that they are not forests, but crops like bananas covering the hillsides. And these crops do not hold together the soil, and so when the rain was so heavy, there was nothing to knit together the soil, and it slid down in great swathes, devastating fields, villages, forests and roads along the way.

Lots of un-organized private assistance and donation in the area : Many private charitable foundations coming in handing out cash donations to villagers or providing various kinds of assistance, according to many different standards. Just like the tsunami. If donations go through the government channels, at least it follows some kind of standards of assistance – and so far, the government has been promoting people to work together, not alone.

Passive attitude of flood-affected families initially, waiting for government to solve problems : When the CODI team went to visit the flood areas on June 1, 2006, they went to visit many rural and urban communities, damaged very bad, mud everywhere. But people were sitting around waiting! We said, "*Why don't you get together and start cleaning up the mess?*" They answered, "We don't have any equipment, and besides, we're waiting for the Land Development Department to come investigate and make an assessment and issue a budget!" At that time, there was a lot of confusion, and the barrage of visits by various government departments and ministries had left people waiting around for others to come and tell them what to do, waiting to see what kind of assistance the various departments and agencies would be offering.

2. People's Flood Rehabilitation Center in Uttaradit (set up May 27, 2006)

Brief description of activities by community networks and CODI since the floods happened on May 21 – 22, 2006:

- **Surveyed damage** : All the areas damaged by the floods and landslides were quickly surveyed by community organizations, which coordinated with government organizations and other actors.
- **Provided emergency relief** : Emergency relief supplies were quickly to flood-affected people, including food, medicines, clothes, food, tents, etc.
- **Much horizontal relief support was mobilized almost immediately** : people helping each other, from many community networks around the country, as well as from civil society groups. "See the strength of people"
- **Established rehabilitation centers to help flood victims**. At these centers several activities take place. From the very beginning, meetings were organized every week (on Mondays) for staff and people's organizations representatives to meet, share news, summarize their activities and present their progress in building temporary housing, occupational revival and fruit orchard revival.

We visit the center on October 6, 2006, which is located in the tranquil grounds of a Buddhist Temple in Uttaradit, and sit in an open-sided sala with the community committee which manages the center. Various members of the committee explain about the history of the center and how it works.

This **People's Flood Rehabilitation Center** at Uttaradit was first set up on 27 May 2006 to deal with the devastating landslides and floods that happened May 21-22, but has continued to function as subsequent waves of flooding have spread around the northern region. At the time of the May floods, the networks were having a regional meeting in another city, and quickly began mobilizing assistance for the affected communities (which included both urban communities and rural villages). The Urban Community Network in Lampang sent four trucks of drinking water and immediate relief supplies to the affected villages and urban communities. Networks and monks from other nearby provinces also began gathering donations in cash, food and relief supplies and sent them to the worst hit areas very quickly. CODI has supported this center from the beginning with a grant of about 2 million Baht.

The Center in Uttaradit quickly became an important linking point between the affected communities in the three or four flood-affected provinces in northern Thailand and the community networks and civil society groups which wanted to come help the flood and landslide victims. The center became the headquarters for the people-driven side of the relief operations.

An emergency relief center run entirely by community people : The center is run entirely by members of various rural and urban community networks which had already been active in northern Thailand (an area already rich in rural and urban network activities and NGOs), and which very quickly and spontaneously became involved in the flood relief assistance in the region. The center is supported by CODI, local NGOs, academics, student volunteers and the Buddhist monks, who do not manage the center, but support the work and advise in different ways. Networks participating in the center include :

- Uttaradit urban community network
- Northern Region Urban Community Network
- Network of Riverside Settlements
- Natural Resources community network, Pitsanulok Province
- Community Welfare Network of northern Thailand
- Community Planning Network
- Community Revival Network
- Laplae Sub district Riverside Community Network

Center acts as a forum for discussing problems, dividing tasks and gathering information : All these networks sat together to discuss the problems, issues and aspects of the calamity, with representatives of the affected communities: what are the problems and how to help? All these different networks work together on the calamities. The center had to keep active almost 24 hours a day, because so many community networks and groups keep coming in to help. The Center also acts as an important linking point for government departments involved in relief and aid agencies. In many cases, the information on the situation in the flood-affected communities gathered by the Center has been more detailed and more useful than the government's. The center is open to all groups, but belongs to people.

"The center belongs to people."

As one committee member put it, "Our work is as serious as the government's. And here, the recourses and decisions do not have to pass through any structure, through all sorts of different departments. Our help goes directly to the people who most need it. We will link with whatever community needs help."

At first, nightly meetings : At the beginning, there were nightly meetings, to discuss what to do. After the immediate relief stage, they divided into different teams who went to different areas and after talking with people there and assessing the needs, conclude how to assist, and to develop plans which include assisting in :

- **First stage: emergency relief :** food, clothes, medicines, utensils, tents, mosquito nets, etc.
- **Second stage: temporary housing.** The center quickly set up teams to deal only with temporary housing construction and deal with housing issues. Within a month of the floods, the center was already

Setting up a management system for the center : After the initial stage, in which decisions were made quickly and in a somewhat ad-hoc fashion, there was more discussion on how to manage the center. A managing committee was set up comprising 19 community leaders, from the various networks involved in the relief and reconstruction assistance.

Now, weekly meetings : Now, large meetings are held every week, in which people from different flood-affected provinces and from various community networks all come down to the center in Uttaradit to tell what's happening in their areas, share information, set plans for the coming week's work and divide tasks: *What are the problems, how to solve them and who will do what?*

Resolving clashes by providing lots of opportunities to talk :

When so many different community networks and groups are working alongside each other in an intense, difficult and urgent disaster situation, there are inevitably clashes. Different networks have different cultures, different priorities and different styles of working. Some times there are clashes when so many different groups and community networks work in the same area, as here, and as earlier with the tsunami. Here are some thoughts from Somsook on how these differences are being resolved and put to good use in the flood rehabilitation process :

- **The best way to resolve these clashes is simply to talk.** The more people sit together and the more chances they all have to talk, the faster these things will be smoothed out. In the early stages, right after the floods, there were lots of conflicts. It's much better now. Now the areas and roles and responsibilities have more-less been divided between different groups. But it is still important to keep a central platform for discussion, for sharing, so that everybody can sit together and tell what they've been doing.
- **Since the floods, there have been meetings organized every week in Uttaradit** for this purpose (every Monday). So all the coordinators and whoever is active in all the various networks and NGOs and local government officials go to these weekly meetings. This is very important because people are so active and energetic, with so many different ideas. So the best thing is to use these regular meetings to link all these ideas, and to resolve any conflicts that arise.
- **The regularity of these meetings is the crucial thing – not the structure of how people work together.** Because if we spend too much time working developing a structure by which people are unified or organized, the whole thing will get stuck and nothing will happen. In a complex crisis situation like this, where so many immediate needs are crying out to be met, where so many different kinds of people and groups are involved, and where so many different aspirations are being pushed for, different beliefs of how things should be done – you can't expect everyone to follow the same lead. The best way to resolve all these differences is through discussion in the meetings, in this regular, communal platform.

- **Did this understanding about maintaining a regular platform for sharing, but a very light working structure, come out of the tsunami experience?** I think this is the form that the relief and rehabilitation work takes ultimately, if you organize the process correctly. In the case of the tsunami, it's not something people thought about initially, but finally we all found that we had to do it this way: a constant platform of sharing, but a very light structure of working together. And in the tsunami relief camps, we had these camp-wide meetings every single night – both the people's meetings and the agencies' meetings! Here in these flood-hit areas, we have the meetings only once a week – but the scale is so much smaller than the tsunami, so daily meetings are not necessary.
- **Also the strategy to let people and groups do their own thing, according to their separate strengths, rather than forcing them to follow a certain model or strategy :** It has to be like this. CODI is just one agency among many working in these areas. If we have to collaborate with all these different groups and agencies, to develop some kind of common direction in the rehabilitation process, it means we have to let all the different groups to proceed, according to their own strengths and inherent ways of doing – but more-less gear it towards a common development direction. *We have to accept these differences.* And if they are to agree to work together, all these different actors have to have their space, they have to be trusted and be respected. This was also a key strategy in how so many different groups worked together in the tsunami.
- **When we see all these different actors involved in the flood relief, I see it as a strength, not a problem :** This is a way to multiply our forces. Besides CODI, the community networks, the community planning network, the natural resources network, the sub-district authorities, there are many NGOs in this part of the country. We are trying to pull more NGOs and university professors to be involved, by making space for the universities (especially Rajabhat Institute in Uttaradit, with whom we already have a good working relationship, through the Baan Mankong Program) to make studies in these flood-hit areas, in how all these processes are developing, and how the people themselves are able to manage the process. The academics can put this whole process into a systematic language which the larger society can understand, and that is an important contribution to the process. Also, the role of a cool-headed professor can sometimes neutralize difficult situations, when different forceful factions have a conflict within the revival process.

Support from some very active monks in Uttaradit :

In the flood relief and rehabilitation work in Uttaradit, and in the city's poor community housing development process of the past ten years, the Buddhist monks in Uttaradit have been key supporters of a people-driven process. This is not always the case! The monks in Uttaradit have been closely involved with the urban communities in the city on housing and land issues since the beginning of the community process in the city, seven or eight years ago – first with the Jarerng Tham relocation project, and later with the Boong Kook squatter resettlement. That monks in that same temple are now involved in supporting the flood-affected communities. The abbot of that temple has a network of monks around the province, and they are quite influential. This is an activist abbot, in a very good way.

- **The Abbott of the temple where the center has been set up has been particularly active in the social aspects** of besides giving land for the city's first canal-side squatter housing relocation project seven years ago, the temple has given space within the temple compound for setting up the Uttaradit people's flood rehabilitation center, and has helped gather relief supplies and donations and channel them to flood victims through the people-driven mechanism which the Rehabilitation Center set up.
- **Even the monks in Uttaradit have their own coordinating committee**, which links together several temples in the city – so when the People's Center requires a certain amount of drinking water or relief supplies, they just contact the monks and through their coordinating committee, they gather the donations and channel them through the center.
- **Also helping in disseminating information about the floods and people's needs and helping affected communities link with the Center :** The monks used their own networks to get word out to people in flooded and landslide areas to call the center here and tell what they need, to link with the process right away for help. They also linked with several national radio stations to get this message out to the more remote flood-affected communities.

On-again, Off-again support from the Uttaradit Municipality : The local politics within the Uttaradit municipal government has been volatile. While the city's progressive former mayor (Ms. Prakaikaw Ratanakana) was a strong supporter of the urban community network, relations with the subsequent mayor have been difficult and support from the city minimal.

Good collaboration with other local and national government agencies now : There were lots of problems at the beginning, when the center was first set up, and things were a bit chaotic. Now things are running very smoothly. There is now lots of involvement from the government, local authorities in the various flood-hit areas, as well as local people. But the community people continue to be the main actors here, the ones who organize the process.

Agriculture problems after the floods and landslides : The Center has also been assisting groups of farmers who are having trouble bringing their fruit crops and agricultural products down from the mountains and hilly areas, after the floods and landslides destroyed access roads and pathways.

Some get government assistance, others don't : In many areas which experienced severe flooding, people in great need have received no government assistance at all, for various reasons: in the case of Nepoon Village in Phrae Province, which is one of the worst-hit mudslide areas, people were occupying land which the government was trying to clear for other development projects, and the villagers were told by their sub-district chief they could only qualify for the free government "knock-down" houses if they agreed to move away from their land. In this and other cases where people refused to move from their land, even to get the compensation or free houses, the Uttaradit Center and CODI have given them full support with relief and on-site house reconstruction subsidy. (as villagers have increasingly linked with the center and made these decisions on their own, with support from the Uttaradit Center, many village chiefs are not happy!)

Committee member from center : "This is a special relief center."

This people's center in Uttaradit is not just a channel for giving donations to affected people, *but is a place to learn. This is a learning center.* Every Monday, all the people who are active in the flood rehabilitation process all over the North gather here to explain their problems, learn what others are doing, what resources are available, and get help. Every Monday there are presentations of the various sub-districts' survey results, problems and redevelopment and housing plans. All this is a learning opportunity in how to redevelop our flood-hit communities with people as the driving force.

- In the past, people just waited for the government to solve their problems. Here, with this center to support them, people are learning to deal with their problems themselves – even people who have just lost everything!
- When people do it themselves like this, it is also much cheaper and more efficient than the government's relief and emergency housing system. When people control the money, they can build a quite decent wooden house for just 15 or 20,000 Baht, but the government will hire contractors to build a tiny house that nobody wants to live in for 200,000 Baht!
- Plus, it's not just a matter of providing houses to flood victims! The process of planning all this housing and redevelopment of ruined villages has to revive the livelihoods and lives of people in these battered sub-districts.

The larger picture : Rebuilding household and village economies after these people's agricultural assets were wiped away, and finding ways for people to stay. It often happens that after calamities like these floods, which destroy not only people's houses, but also destroy their means of survival, that people have no choice but to leave their villages and migrate into the city looking for any kind of work, just to survive. For those at the vulnerable lower end of the economic system, *especially in rural areas and especially those without land*, calamities like these floods and landslides can push them over the edge and into a downward spiral of poverty. Plus, in many areas destroyed by landslides or severe floods, the government will not allow people to stay on their old land, because it is considered unsafe and unfit for human habitation. So one of the focus ideas behind the Uttaradit Center's work has been finding ways to ensure that these most affected people can stay in their villages and rebuild their lives collectively, and with strength.

Another committee member at the center puts it like this :

"The role of the center here is very clear: we are not just doing relief and rehabilitation. People in many areas hit by floods are getting used to receiving donations, and waiting around for the government to decide their future. We're working to build people. It's not easy to revive these flood-hit communities, and to revive their spirit of self-reliance. Plus, the rain is still falling hard, and there may be even worse floods in the coming months. But even if the weather prevents us from helping villagers start the more long-term reconstruction activities, we can start right now building people – building communities and building their active involvement in planning their future. We have to get people to sit together, to decide what they need, what they want to do and then figure out who will do what. There are so many serious issues the floods bring up: land tenure, housing, jobs, agricultural management of our precarious environments, etc. There are also plenty of people who feel impatient with the government's slow response to this disaster. So we say why not go ahead and do it ourselves?"

3. The role of horizontal relief and support in Thailand's flood rehabilitation process

Lesson: Community networks can deliver relief and rehabilitation faster, cheaper and better, and in ways which lead to better development afterwards. ALL this because of the tsunami experience!

Several networks have been involved in the flood relief in the north : There were already a lot of very good quality community networks in this northern region, even before the floods. This is one of the areas of Thailand that has been very much involved in the community revival program. And since the floods, the community planning network, the natural resources network, the network of communities in northern cities has pitched in to help. We will meet many of these people in the meeting today. The interesting thing about this process is that once the disaster happened, so many networks in the northern part of the country, as well as in other areas of the country, rushed up here spontaneously to help, full of enthusiasm to support the affected people here. Plus, community networks and various actors from nearby cities have also been keen to assist the affected people in nearby rural areas and join in the reconstruction process, where some of the worst flooding and land-slides occurred.

Horizontal support systems after disasters represents an important emerging trend in Thailand. The tsunami was the starting point. Then there were floods in the south and in the north, and community networks in other places mobilized large groups of people to come to help in the flood-hit areas – with emergency relief, with housing reconstruction, with rubble clearing, etc. And it has now become a trend now, and I think it is something very healthy.

There is so much "people's energy" pouring into this revival process : It is a different world now! The other day, I was telling Billy Cobbett (from Cities Alliance) how frustrated I sometimes feel with the mainstream development profession. It's hard to explain. We believe that if you open up space for them and unlock the energy of people, it is an immense force. We have seen this force being brought to bear in many ways in Thailand and in Asia – it's a new world we're talking about, a totally different kind of society emerging with this force, with different kinds of communities, different kinds of people, who have such energy, who are showing they are capable of so much. Yet all the old development agencies continue to look at people in the same old way – as helpless, as "beneficiaries" or, at most, as "participants". This is so annoying. But if we can understand this energy, and see how to instigate processes which allow it to come out, out it will come! And when it does come out, it is so chaotic, so full of surprises and whimsy and creativity - so unpredictable. It's like an *outburst*, this people's process!

All of this support and assistance to flood-hit communities from these many community networks is 100% voluntary. CODI only supports with a little budget for their transport and food!

4. Sub-District-wide post-flood community rehabilitation planning :

Since the May 2006 floods, CODI has been providing two types of support in these flood-hit areas :

- **temporary housing construction subsidy :** the 18,000 Baht per-family subsidy for temporary house construction (*described below*)
- **200,000 Baht per each sub-district ("Awbawtaw") to support a collaborative planning process for reconstructing flood-damaged areas :** Using a total budget of 50 million Baht, CODI has channelled a small grant of 200,000 Baht to each flood-hit sub-district to support a collaborative rehabilitation planning process. This money is distributed as a fund to each sub-district, and it allows the affected people and their local-authorities the freedom to survey the damage in their sub-district, think together whatever they'd like to do, plan relief and revival activities which solve the immediate problems. This money is for anything – to plan, to undertake pilot projects, to do relief activities, etc. It is similar to the DANCED process, where we use serious needs to pull people together and to work out plans for a local process. So far, about 100 sub-districts are involved (each sub-district covering about 10 villages – the smallest administrative unit in the Thai system of governance – this is an elected body.) (This money comes from three sources: Thai government budget, special relief project money from UNDP, and private donations).

Using this small planning budget to get people to work together : CODI is now supporting 700 villages (mostly rural, but some urban) through this sub-district planning process. The idea was to release this budget quickly, to allow people to address whatever people need, allow them to begin, and not to wait for all this formal government assistance. But give the budget in such a way as brings the people in these villages together and gets them to work together.

The point is to go quickly! Allow people to begin right away and set their own plans. Before this bombardment of government departments and their wacky and mismatching plans and pronouncements start falling like bombs out of the sky! Just START! That way, get themselves ready, make their own plan, set their own priorities so that they can then be in a position to make the other agencies follow their way!

Getting the affected people and their local authorities to be the main actors in the relief and reconstruction process :

- **dealing with the immediate problems** : whether it is the temporary housing or local relief process, the plan is to get the affected people and the local authorities to be the main actors in the process, to start the process as soon as possible, to put their resources and energy together, and to look around and see what they can do *as a local group* to solve their immediate problems.
- **and dealing with longer-term problems** : It is also important to use this crisis to get these local people and their local authorities to also look to the future. Why? Because some of the effects of these floods and landslides have quite serious implications for the economic survival of these rural communities. The fruit orchards and agricultural land in these flood and landslide-hit areas was some of the best in the country, and was an important basis for the area's economic security. When these fields were covered over with mud, and the orchards were torn up and washed down-away by the landslides and floods, it meant their means of earning was swept away also. Fruit trees, of course, take years of nurturing before they begin to produce. This means long-term economic hardship for these people. For rural people, they were quite prosperous before the floods – now they've lost everything. So many may have to change their livelihood now, maybe go to the city to work in factories. So the long-term income-generation aspects of rehabilitation is an important part of the planning.

On 21 July, 2006, a regional seminar was organized in Uttaradit, which brought together community leaders from flood-affected areas all over northern Thailand, to talk about action planning for each sub-district to decide how to use their 200,000 Baht sub-district funds. A total of 13 sub-districts joined the meeting)

It's not big money, but it is flexible, it's in people's hands and they can start right away :

About 300 people joined the seminar, mostly community members from affected villages and communities in the four northern provinces. In the afternoon, the meeting broke into 13 groups, in which all the different sub-district groups began discussing how they propose to use this 200,000 Baht fund from CODI to start their post-flood revival process, and what kind of activities they will now undertake. The plan is that people can propose activities which can start right away – no need to wait, start tomorrow! CODI can release half the amount to sub-districts right away. Then once they report back on the first phase, the second 100,000 Baht will be released. The idea of this process is to :

- Develop plans which come from people's real needs, as they prioritize themselves.
- The money goes directly to the affected people.
- These activities should "build a bridge" to the Ministry, and get the larger government rehabilitation budget to go in the right direction.
- People have to make decisions and take charge of their own rehabilitation, not like helpless "victims"
- People have to negotiate with various government agencies for what they need, not wait for things to be handed down.

BIG CHANGE! Now villages in about 58 sub-districts are looking beyond their immediate problems of the flood and using the crisis to build collaboration in their communities and set longer-term goals for how they want their area to develop.

"We feel sad and good at the same time" One woman in the Uttaradit center speaks: We feel sad and good. Sad because these have been the worst floods in 40 years and they have taken a huge toll on our lives and farms. But we also feel good because we have gotten in touch with other networks and met other people from flood-hit areas all over the north. Close relationships have been built through this crisis – now we do many things together, visit each other, meet frequently, share ideas and support each other.

- Laplae is one of the worst-hit areas in the region, for example. We all went there together and stayed with those people who had lost all their houses and their farmland in the landslides, helped them with their immediate relief needs and then worked on their temporary housing, helped them sort through the salvage timber from their destroyed houses to find materials that could be used to build new houses, helped them build new pathways up to their mountain-side fruit orchards that survived.

To me, this is all impressive, because suffering and tragedy brings people together. We made a big pot of curry and share it with so many others, where we used to eat alone. All this makes us think of an older way of life, in which people lived much more closely together, observed rituals and holidays together, shared more.

The big issue: Land tenure. As in the tsunami, one of the biggest and most serious issue for people affected by these floods is land tenure. Most of the villagers and urban community members who have been affected by these floods do not have any formal papers giving them legal rights to their land, and the status of their land is extremely unclear. Even if they've been staying there for generations. And like after the tsunami, many communities are facing eviction – by government departments and by private land-owners who have managed to acquire title papers for land occupied by these communities. So the question about land tenure has been one of the key topics of discussion in the forums about the floods. How are villages dealing with these land tenure problems?

- **For example, in one flood-hit area in Phrae Province,** one very badly-hit village is facing an eviction threat by the Department of Forestry, which claims the people are squatting on land under the National Forests. This village has been staying here for generations. So after the flood, they ignored the warnings by the

Forestry Department and just began clearing the debris from their land, and with support from the Uttaradit Center, "encroached" on their old land and began building temporary houses there. (same strategy as with the tsunami) What did the Forestry Department say? *Nothing!*

- ***In another village***, which was partly wiped out by landslides, they asked the local authority to allow them to use a piece of nearby public land to build their temporary houses, and the local authority agreed.
- ***In another case, 17 families who lost their land and houses in landslides***, the community network helped negotiate with a neighboring private land-owner, who agreed to allow the people to build temporary houses on part of his un-used land.
- ***There have also been cases where areas where the government is erecting clusters of "knock-down" houses*** for flood survivors on public land, people have "encroached" on this resettlement site and build their own houses in clusters next door! So as one community person said, *"we encroach together!"*

There have been several visits to the flooded areas by community leaders from the tsunami areas in southern Thailand. What to they advise flood-affected people who are being threatened with eviction from their traditional land? Don't make any loud demonstration – that won't solve anything. If this is your traditional land and the government says you cannot stay here, build anyway! Rebuild your houses right away and reoccupy your land!

Visit to the reconstruction of Ban Danakam Village, in Uttaradit Province :

This is a small, fruit-growing village set in the lush mountains north of Uttaradit. The landslides were very bad here, and of the 12 villages in this sub-district, about 5 villages were very badly affected. For ten days, the rain fell very heavily, and the by May 21, the soil had become so water-logged that whole portions of the hill-slides began sliding down, destroying orchards, roads and houses. People say they now feel scared when the rain comes down!

- ***Lots of rebuilding projects here:*** some CODI-supported houses, some government-built "knock-down" houses (which people don't like at all! Too small!), and some houses being built by the Crown Princess's foundation.
- ***55 houses were badly damaged in this village, and another 18 were totally destroyed.*** The community network has tried to coordinate with the village and the local sub-district authority to build temporary houses for these people, and for the families who lost their houses in the other 5 villages in the sub-district, as a whole project.
- ***Community plan :*** Includes rebuilding houses, and big task of getting legal land papers for their land, as well as developing a sub-district-wide plan for managing the water flow when it rains. Before the floods, there were no links between the 12 villages in the sub-district. Now they all know each other and visit each other all the time – both the flood-hit and the non-flood-hit villages.
- ***The Uttaradit Urban Community Network supports savings groups.*** Income generation making bamboo mats: The women here weave beautiful bamboo mats, which they sell wholesale for 35 Baht each. One team can make about six mats a day.
- ***Uncertain tenure :*** Some of the houses in the village are built on land that is technically under the forestry department's "Forest Reserve Area", even though people have stayed here for 150 years! Much longer than the forestry department has existed! But for the people, this is very much an "economic forest" area, because they use the forests to survive – growing their fruits and gathering various mushrooms and materials from the forest to live and to sell. Especially longan and langsat fruits grow very well here (*delicious!*)
- ***The Princess's Foundation housing project :*** Up the road, a group of 20 students from a technical college in Buri Ram have come with their professor to help build these houses for flood victims. It takes 20 students 40 days to build three houses, which are designed and built according to a fixed plan, cannot be altered. The students get six credits for doing this work. The professor told us that when he asked the beneficiary families if they would like to help out with the construction, they said *"No, we're busy!"*

5. CODI support for temporary housing construction :

After the relief stage, the most critical need in most of the affected communities was for temporary housing. Within a month of the May floods, work on constructing temporary housing for people was under full steam. First, teams of community network leaders from the Uttaradit Center worked with local people to survey the housing problems in each affected community: how many people had houses that were damaged or totally destroyed by the floods or landslides, and what was the extent of the damage.

Funds to support temporary housing construction : At first, they channeled private donations and a 30,000 Baht emergency loan from the Uttaradit Community Network savings groups (*all now paid back!*) and some loans from three or four temples to families to help start building temporary shelters right away. The government's temporary house building scheme for flood-affected families (prefabricated steel frame *"knock-down" houses*, have been very expensive, slow in coming and unpopular with local people)

CODI support for 3,500 units of temporary housing construction : Later, CODI was able to get hold of enough budget to provide a temporary housing construction subsidy of 18,000 Baht per flood-damaged unit. But this money was managed as a collective fund by the community, based on their own survey of the damage. With CODI support, so far 3,500 units of temporary housing have been approved and the budget released to affected communities. In many cases where people had received some government relief assistance to repair their houses, they'd had to use that budget to eat and survive, and so could use this communal housing fund from CODI for their housing.

- **18,000 Baht per unit for temporary housing : (so far, 3,500 units approved)** But this money, which also comes from the central government, goes in a bulk grant to the village or to the community, which must then manage for the temporary housing for everyone, all together. The 18,000 Baht per unit gets multiplied by the number of homeless families in the village (according to the people's survey). That money becomes a temporary housing fund, which is controlled by a mechanism set up by the village, and they have to manage it together, to provide temp housing for all 50 (or however many) house-less families in the village. Typical CODI strategy. This is *very* little money per house, so the people have to be resourceful and combine their creativity to manage and to act quickly. Decisions about this made by a central committee of representatives from the different networks, who look at proposals from communities and decide together.
- **CODI set a ceiling of 18,000 Baht per unit, and multiplied by the number of homeless families in the village (according to the people's survey).** That money becomes a temp housing FUND, which is controlled by a mechanism set up by the village, and they have to manage it together, to provide temp housing for all 50 (or however many) house-less families in the village. Typical CODI strategy. This is *VERY* little money per house, so the people have to be resourceful and combine their creativity to manage and to act quickly.

Communities do it together : These CODI funds to support temporary housing construction are based on the surveys of affected families, but are not disbursed directly to individual families, but released as bulk grants to the sub-district, where a community committee manages the housing construction collectively, with support from the Uttaradit Center (including young architects and a team of 20 skilled carpenters). This 18,000 Baht per-family subsidy for temporary is very small, but because the funds are managed together, it gives communities the freedom to use the funds flexibly – using lesser amounts to repair houses which sustained relatively minor damage, and greater amounts for houses that were totally destroyed. Though the amounts are small, in many communities, by re-using salvaged timber and by making use of their considerable skill in dealing with timber, community people have been able to build quite decent wooden houses within that budget.

The kind of things that are only possible when communities are in control of the finances : In one flood-hit sub-district, the communities surveyed the damaged houses and proposed to CODI for budget to support the rebuilding of 120 houses, at 18,000 Baht per house, making a total fund of 2.16 million Baht, but actually used the money to construct 200 houses! Other sub-districts had money left over, after they'd rebuilt all their flood-damaged houses and contributed the extra funds to other communities still in need – such as one case where subsequent waves of flooding washed away the building materials one sub-district had bought with the CODI subsidy.

Lots of networks from different places come to help construct temporary houses: As one person on the committee points out, what is important is using this communal housing construction process to link people together, to rekindle a spirit of mutual help and cooperation, and to link these affected communities into the larger spectrum of community networks around the region and the country.

Quick work, quick resolution of basic housing needs because people are in control : By now, just a few months after the floods, more than 80% of the houses CODI has supported are finished, and people are well-sheltered for the time being. Compare this to the government's "knock down" houses, of which less than 50 have been built in the whole northern region!

Bringing communities together through the housing construction process :

- **The temporary housing construction process is a tool to get people in the village who used to be very individualized to work together, not only on housing, but on the other important issues that affect their lives, like land tenure, welfare, agriculture, etc. To get this kind of confidence that comes of doing things together, it is important to start right away, and to start with real activities – like clearing the debris from the floods, building temporary houses, etc.**
- **The housing construction process is also the way to build the relationship between the affected villages and their local authorities. If we use the construction process to bring these two local actors together (who may not have**

liked each other much before the floods!), through forums and dialogue and negotiation, these barriers can begin to melt, and a more healthy, more collaborative and more mutually-assisting relationship can develop between people and their local government.

Options for PERMANENT HOUSES for flood-affected families whose houses were destroyed :

1. "Knock-down houses" (in Thai "Thai Khom") : The former Prime Minister had been supporting a project to provide pre-fabricated emergency houses in some of these flood-hit areas in the north. But even after nearly five months since the first bad floods, only about 45 of these houses have been built! These houses are of a standard design, built of steel frame sections that bolt together, with pre-fab wall panels and tin-sheet roofs – all built in a factory in Bangkok. The whole thing collapses into a flat kit of elements, which can be trucked in to any site and erected quickly by a team of technicians. The Prime Minister's private charitable foundation has been very generous in giving all these houses free of charge (they are built partly using government money, and partly donations from the Prime Minister's personal charitable foundation), and has been using the floods as an opportunity to push the design (which hasn't so far been very popular).

- **We learn that people are afraid to stay in these houses, though.** They feel they are not so safe, especially if lightning strikes and the whole building (made of steel framing) will conduct the electric current and perhaps electrocute the people inside! There are also complaints that the knock-down houses are not expandable – everything is fixed and it's hard to attach anything to the iron structural elements without special tools and hardware.
- **Nobody objects to this house being one option for flood-affected families.** But many feel shouldn't be the only option. In theory, this house is only one of several options open to people in the flood-hit areas, but in practice, the various government departments are strongly pushing people to accept these knock-down houses, and the other options (like the King's foundation, or self-built houses with CODI grants) are being suppressed. (*"The three taps are there, but the government is not opening those other taps"*)
- **This is an expensive housing option :** Although the Prime Minister's private charitable foundation is providing the pre-fab wall panels that fit onto the frame, the Thai government is subsidizing the rest of the cost of the house, which includes 150,000 Baht for the frame and roof, 27,000 Baht for the foundations, 40,000 Baht for the labor, and more for infrastructure. It may be given "free" to affected people, but the real costs of this house may be anywhere between 250,000 and 300,000 Baht.

2. Self-build houses, using CODI grant of 50,000 Baht : In this option, people can design and build their own houses, either individually, or as a group. In this part of the country, people really understand how to build with wood, and can knock together a decent house, using some recycled wood from their destroyed houses (if available) for as little as 30,000 Baht. Much cheaper, and people are in control of the whole process. The money for these grants come from private donations and the UNDP budget. (*So far, 50 CODI-funded houses have been built.*)

3. The Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program has also been linking with many of the affected communities in the cities of Uttaradit and Sukhothai, and will be helping to support the reconstruction in various ways, with housing loans, infrastructure grants and technical support. Several of the communities from Bangkok and other cities, which have organized their own community upgrading projects under Baan Mankong, are now involved in assisting the flood-affected communities up here in the north – helping build temporary houses, cooking in communal kitchens, all sorts of assistance, very human and friendly.

This northern region is an area with very rich traditions of housing design, especially timber houses, since the area has lots of forests and many kinds of wood for building – especially Phrae and Uttaradit, which still have great teak-wood forests. Even the most ordinary houses you see up here are very beautifully built, with lots of creativity, lots of fine carpentry, interesting wood detailing and joinery. If people have access to some wood, they know what to do and know how to build their own houses very well. Some of the most beautiful houses in Thailand are in the north.

Table: CODI's work sup support for temporary housing construction :

(figures as of August 30, 2006, only after the bad floods in May, and not including the even worse floods in October)

Province	Areas where CODI is working			Temporary housing supported by CODI		
	Districts	Subdistricts	Villages	Totally destroyed houses	Partly damaged houses	Total
Uttaradit	3	12	53	200	683	883
Sukhothai	3	5	18	46	221	267
Phrae	9	8	24	125	304	429
TOTAL	9	25	95	371	1,208	1,579
Official	26	171		704	4,314	5,018

figures of total flood and landslide affected areas					(houses that are partly damaged or in high-risk areas)	
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CASE 1: Na Thong Village, in Phrae Province :

Temporary housing system where people have to relocate because land destroyed. This village was totally destroyed by landslides and flooding. Since it was not possible for people to stay in this place, and could not build temporary houses on their own land, the government provided some public land nearby for their temporary housing construction. The people collectively built their own temporary houses with CODI support. Now they are waiting for the government to provide safe, permanent land for building their permanent houses.

CASE 2: Taa Plaa Community, in Uttaradit City :

This poor community is located alongside the Nan River, and when the river flooded in May 2006, many houses were washed away or else partly damaged. The community people with ruined houses got 30,000 Baht compensation from the government and 18,000 temporary housing subsidy from CODI, and put it together to build permanent houses in their own land. No need to wait for government housing program! The strategy here, which was decided collectively, was to combine the two flood subsidies to build proper permanent houses, instead of wasting materials and time on temporary houses. But neither budget was sufficient, so they put them together.

CASE 3: Dongyaplaa Village, in Sukhothai Province :

This small rural community was partly destroyed by landslides – 17 families lost their houses and all their crops. But they decided not to wait around for the government to provide alternative land or housing, and used part of the 30,000 Baht per-family subsidy to buy new land which they found nearby (and bought very cheaply!) for the 17 badly-affected households. They combined the remainder of the subsidy with CODI's 18,000 Baht per-family temporary house subsidy to build very nice wooden houses on the new land for as little as 20,000 – 25,000 Baht (US\$500 – 625). They built the houses using collective village labor, but each family designed its own house and many used recycled timber. This is an area with lots of cheap timber, and people have good carpentry skills – no hired labor!

6. Rebuilding communities, not just flood-damaged houses

In the typical government response to a disaster, so many different departments and agencies show up at the scene of the calamity, each with its own cycle of funding and work, its different methods, its different roles and agendas, its different affiliations and biases, its different sources of revenue! It's impossible if you wait for this complex onslaught to solve your problems! Plus, when government agencies come to disaster-hit areas like these ones in northern Thailand, they tend to regard the people the same way they regard the poor, as *helpless and without knowledge or resources*. The style of assistance they offer follows the style of charity for the helpless: *I'll decide what's good for you, because you are in no position to decide for yourself*.

These are "rich" communities in this region : In fact, these flood-hit areas have been settled for many centuries, and these northern rural cultures are quite rich in many ways. They may not have been as rich by Bangkok standards, but they are far from helpless – besides being rich in land, they are rich in traditions and history, rich in understanding about cultivating the land, rich in wisdom about survival. And they are rich in that they know what they want. Plus, they already have a lot of very strong, good-quality community networks in this area. All this richness and energy is there, it just requires the right process to bring it out and let it flower.

Turning a calamity which affected people individually into a group rehabilitation process : In many ways, the situation of these areas hit by floods and landslides in the north is not so different from the tsunami. As with the tsunami, the most important thing we have to do very early is to find ways to transform a situation of desperate *individual* calamity into a *group* process. What does this involve? We start by looking into several aspects, such as supporting people to make their own plans, then making space for them to use these plans to start implementing whatever they need, whatever is appropriate to their situation. This is a way to organize the communities using the difficult issue of a natural calamity as an motivating force.

"I think that outside agencies like CODI can only do work up to a certain level. More important is building the internal process within these affected communities. People have to start organizing themselves, start looking around, try to understand the situation and begin planning for their revival. Once people are clearer about what they need, and what they want to do, then the external agencies will have a clearer view also of what kind of support is required. That's the stage here right now. Today we'll see what people are needing." (Somsook)

"Making small money big" Mind you, this money being managed by CODI is extremely small peanuts, compared to the scale of government investment going into these areas for reconstruction and relief. But we can turn this small money very big, because it totally goes to the people, and it can make a lot of significant change. (Somsook)

7. Sharing community experiences dealing with earlier disasters in Thailand :

On 21 July, 2006, a seminar in after-flood planning in northern Thailand was held at Rajabhat University Campus, in Uttaradit. The purpose of that seminar was to launch the new process, in which the local groups within each sub-district would begin to solve their problems and develop their flood revival plans collectively, using a budget of 200,000 Baht per sub-district. As part of the seminar, some community leaders from other disaster-hit areas of Thailand presented their experiences reviving their communities after tsunami and floods and made some recommendations. These are some brief notes from their presentations at the seminar :

1. Experience of floods in Mae Hong Son last year (Northern Thailand) : Flood relief leads process leads to the formation of waterways community networks and waterways revival movement. Mr. Sakchai, an NGO guy from Mae Hong Son, talks about the floods in Mae Hong Son last year. (date?) This is a mountainous province, with the provincial capital of Mae Hong Son surrounded by mountains. Normally, there are no problems of flooding here, but in Pai District, there has been massive de-forestation to grow poppies for opium cultivation in the past decades. There hasn't been much rain in Pai District for a long time, so many of the waterways and natural drainage channels have dried up, and people have gradually built houses in places where rivers and creeks once flowed. So when the heavy rains and floods happened, it was all made worse by the deforestation, many of these houses were washed away. When the disaster happened, a lot of government organizations came with conventional relief support. So we tried to link communities along these traditional waterways into a network, to deal with these problems of flooding, deforestation, dams and wrongful development. *The focus of this network's work expanded quickly beyond disaster relief, to look at how they can protect and revive their traditional water systems.*

2. Experience of flooding and land-slides in Chiang Dao (Northern Thailand) : The Ping River is the main river in the north of Thailand, and has its origins in Chiang Dao. The experience of dealing with this disaster led communities in the Ping River watershed to expand their movement into protecting and reviving the whole river system, which has been badly compromised by big dams, over-development, deforestation, pollution, etc. A community leader from Chiang Dao tells about the process. Used the disaster to try to link community groups along the river together, into a new kind of coordinating mechanism.

- **Getting all the different groups to go in the same direction, linking into a movement of the whole river system :** The important thing here was how to get all the different groups (communities, local government, national government agencies, NGOs and civil society groups) to go in the same direction. How did they do this? by linking the relief and revival activities after the floods into a movement of the whole river, not just flood-damaged areas. Now what we can do is not only to solve the problems of the calamity, but see how we can protect the whole river system, so that this does not happen again in the future. So we meet together all the time, work together and secure the water for everyone.
- **Before the crisis, everyone just did their own thing, in isolation.** But one community cannot solve the deeper problems which caused the flooding and landslides. "You cannot brew a batch of rice wine with a single grain of rice!"
- **How to work together and learn from each other?** Begin by accumulating our "capital" such as funds, knowledge, natural resources.
- **CODI assisted a little in the beginning,** mostly by helping people to link together, and providing small funds and natural resource persons. Gradually, taking care of the river and expanding the Ping River Revival program to include education, welfare program, knowledge. The movement has also links with local cultural practices that we already have, all the cultural richness of these mountain and river communities.
- **Ultimately, what we do to revive our environment, villages and culture** contributes to our knowledge pool, and can begin to influence policy about the river, in which the local communities are the main actors in finding solutions to problems of the river.

3. The experience of dealing with the Tsunami (Southern Thailand's Andaman Coast) (presented by Mr. Maitree, community leader from Ban Naam Khem, the worst-affected town in Thailand's Andaman coast) : This is the worst story, the worst disaster of all. In five minutes, my entire town was destroyed, 1,000 houses completely vanished.

- **Start by organizing survivors at the relief camps :** We started by organizing people at the Bang Muang camp, a couple of days after the tsunami. We set up a system where every ten tents had one coordinator, and these coordinators knew all the problems, all the issues, and shared them at nightly meetings.
- **Temporary housing construction :** The survivors all discussed this, and set criteria that the first to get into the newly-constructed temporary houses in the camp would be families with kids and elderly.

- **Managing donations collectively** : So many people coming offering free things, and people just grab it, like beggars. This is very divisive and very humiliating. So we organized a more dignified system in the camp, in which all donations go to a central committee, which gathers all cash and materials donations, so that everyone can use it, everyone knows what's there, and it's all managed collectively, so everyone gets what they need.
- **Then we used some of these donations to set up occupational groups**, to give people loans to start small businesses, to tide them over while they rebuild their lives.
- **Linking the 6 tsunami-affected provinces together** : lots of meetings, lots of exchanges, lots of cross-learning, lots of visits and sharing. And this has helped to build a network of vulnerable coastal villages where no network was before.
- **Building houses and reclaiming our land** : Most important of all is the movement to go back to our own land, and to rebuild our houses. We have to go back!