

“Resources available for rehabilitation must be used to help rebuild just and equitable societies.”

- a wake-up call by the Asian Civil Society Declaration on Post-Tsunami Challenges

Politics, poverty and discrimination in tsunami response initiatives came under hammer during a two-day consultation in Bangkok on the 13th and 14th of February, 2005. Over 70 civil society actors from across the tsunami affected areas in Asia – representing local, national, regional and international organisations – came together at the Asian Civil Society Consultation on Post-Tsunami Challenges in Bangkok, Thailand.

Speaking on behalf of the civil society initiative, Dr Unnikrishnan PV, Emergencies Advisor for Action Aid International said, “Rebuilding communities is not a hundred meters race, it’s a

marathon. effort that can be achieved only with the long term investment that would strike at the route of poverty.”

The newly formed civil society group today issued a statement of concerns and outlined the plans for collective action. This includes:

- The need to ensure that women are involved in the consultative and decision-making processes: from camp administration and disaster management committees to policy making bodies for rehabilitation efforts.

- That communities have a right to participate in all stages of planning, decision making, implementation and monitoring of all relief and rehabilitation processes

- Transparency in fund use is a moral responsibility of the state, INGOs, NGOs and others. Complete details of the utilisation of funds should be made public through fortnightly reports.

- International humanitarian and human rights norms and standards must be respected, observed and ensured throughout all relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The tsunami has turned the development clock back by one generation. “The need for coordinated action and a strong civil society involvement in the rebuilding of affected communities is crucial,” said Anselmo Lee, Executive Director Forum-Asia.

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