

Six Monthly Progress Report

Mobilising women for reconstruction - post tsunami

Matara & Hambanthota Districts

1. Name of the project : Mobilising women for reconstruction - post tsunami

2. Period covered by the report : 1st July to 31st December 2005

3. Objectives of the project :

a) Mobilising women in affected communities in Matara and Hambanthota districts, to address immediate and short-term issues arising from displacement, dislocation and loss.

b) Resource and build capacity of the community based program to provide trauma counseling and support and recreate social networks for women from affected communities.

4. How objectives were realised

a) During the relevant period 600 women (274 in Matara & 326 in Tangalle) in Hambanthota and Matara Districts were mobilised in 90 small groups. Community Mobilisers had continuously been in touch with these 600 members of the small groups and met them 3045 times during the period under review for the purpose of alleviation their grief (trauma) and identifying their immediate and short term needs.

b) Following activities were undertaken during the relevant period with the women in the two districts.

- Workshops of trauma counseling
- Community Discussion Forums
- Social and Recreation activities
- Religious activities after one year of tsunami

It was possible to pave the way for capacity building, improving psychological and emotional well being and reconstruction of broken relationships of the communities, particularly of women. (More details on these will be given in the Activity Section of the report.)

5. Activity Report

Mobilisation women, formation of small groups, small group funds and group activities

As a prerequisite a 5 days residential training workshop on social mobilization was held 22-27 June 2005 for 5 full-time Community Mobilisers and 10 part-time Assistant Community Mobilisers of Matara and Tangalle. (Details of that workshop were included in the last six month report) After that workshop, formation of small groups was started in July 2005. As a result it was possible to form 90 small groups in Tangalle (Hambanthota District) and Polhena (Matara District) with a membership of 600 women and build a solid partnership with them. (For more details about the small groups please see the annex 1 of this report)

In each small group there is a membership of 5-10 women and they meet once a week and contribute to their small group fund and discuss their problems and possible solutions. Table 1 below shows how they have built their collective funds during the period from July to December 2005.

Table 1
Small group fund – Tangalle and Polhena

Month	Polhena LKR	Thangalle LKR	Total LKR
July	1752.00	1735.00	3487.00
August	10500.00	7790.00	18290.00
September	18500.00	15980.00	34480.00
October	62013.00	136084.00	198097.00
November	178794.00	138565.00	317359.00
December	186089.00	158660.00	344729.00

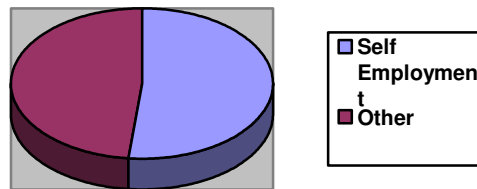
By end of December 2005 the strength of small group fund was LKR 344,729.00 of which LKR 300,000.00 was contributed by Kantha Shakthi. (LKR 216, 00.00 from IWDA and the balance LKR 84,000.00 from the sympathizers and well wishers of Kantha Shakthi) This amount was distributed equally among the members of 90 small groups on the basis that each member got LKR 500/-. The objective of assisting the members through small groups was to give helping hand to those women whose income avenues had been disrupted due to tsunami. In spite of the grave consequences of the tsunami the members of the small groups have shown remarkable courage and determination by saving LKR 44,729.00 during the referent period. Table 2 shows the details of loans given to the members of small groups from group funds.



Table 2
Loans given to members from group funds – Polhena and Tangalle
July - December 2005

Purpose of the loans	No of women	Amount LKR
Self employment	90	148080.00
Other	152	137865.00
Total	242	285945.00

Following figures shows how the beneficiaries have used the credit.



It is obvious that loans taken for self employment are more than those taken for other purposes. The percentage of loans taken for self employment is 51.78%. (Please see annex 2 for more details about the loans and comments by those women who have started self employment)

The agenda of the small groups meetings was not limited to discussion of their problems and activities. They have used the small group as a forum to articulate their creativity such as singing songs etc. The Social Mobilisers paid attention to the need of improving the skills and talents of women in the area of performing art too. There is opportunity for women in each group to sing songs, recite poems, dance, and role play, share their experiences in food preparation etc.

Awareness building is one of the most important aspects of the activities of small groups. Community Mobilisers always ensure that all activities of the small groups should be directed towards awareness building. The objective of awareness raising is to make women strong enough to face the challenges. What is understood by empowerment of women is that, in this context. Some times, the articles of Kantha Shakthi journal 'Akshi' are also discussed in small

groups. Violence against women including domestic violence, discrimination against women, environmental conservation, are some of the topics discussed in the small groups. However, particular attention was paid for the objective of strengthening the revolving group fund and improve skills of financial management.

Unity and solidarity among members have been improved to a great extent as a result of the small group activities. For example members volunteered to help in account keeping of those who could not handle the subject.

Community Discussion Forum

Community Discussions were planned and carried out to reconstruct the broken social relationships and alleviate grief and sufferings of the members of the community. Seven such forums were held in the period covered by this report. Approximately 100-250 women participated in each forum, and at these meetings they found time for planning of programs and vocational training and recreational activities such as singing, dancing and role play etc. The participant women were very much interested in these programs and they are of the opinion that such programs bring about hope and inspiration to their lives.

Recreation Activities

A tour to up country was organized by Kantha Shakthi for 235 women on 11th and 12th September 2005. For most of the women, it was the first time they visited the sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha in Kandy and the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens. The educational and religious significance of the tour was greatly appreciated by the participants. They enjoyed the trip and for younger women and girls it was a picnic after a long time. It also brought about a change to their routine monotonous lives. Some women confessed that those 2 days were the happiest days in their whole lives. It was also an opportunity for women to relax and forget and grievances and express themselves. In an environment where there were no males, most of the women danced and songs throughout the tour. Comments of some women in this regards are mentioned in annex 2.

Two religious programs on behalf of those who died in tsunami were held on 27th December 2005, the anniversary day of the disaster in Polhena and Tangalle. All villagers including men and children in the two villages participated in these.

Trauma Counselling

Trauma counseling programs were held on 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th of July 2005 in Polhena and Tangalle. 43 women from Polhena and 56 women from Tangalle participated in those workshops.

The effects of trauma counseling workshops are mentioned in annex 3 of this report.

Capacity building program for the Community Mobilisers (Staff development)

It was felt that continuous education and skill development is a must for the Community Mobilisers to enable them to perform their services effectively. Two capacity building programs were held during the relevant period. Apart from that, participation of 4 Community Mobilisers in a 4 day residential training program on human rights and development organized by Lawyers Association for Human Rights and Development was facilitated by Kantha Shakthi. Themes of those workshops were as follows.

- Conflict resolution
- Gender issues
- Basic Human Rights
- Laws relevant to women
- Nutrition and health
- Land ownership

Participation in this program was of great benefit for the women. The training was helpful for their personal lives too. As women who have many obstacles and constraints in the family and social

life, the program brought about strength and sense of independence. An assistant Community Mobiliser in Tangalle has sent Kantha Shakthi her comments on the program which is included in the report an annex 4.

Training in Small Business Management



Two training programs on small business management were held in Tangalle and Polhena on 21st, 22nd, and 27th and 28th and 41 women from Polhena and 55 women from Tangalle participated in these programs. Subjects taught in the programs were as follows.

- Issues to be considered when starting a business.
- Book keeping of the business.
- How to access market
- How to determine pricing

The benefits and learning of the program were summarized by participants and main points were as follows.

- Gained confidence and knowledge to start a small enterprise.
- Gained an understanding about how to improve and continue ongoing self employment
- Gained considerable knowledge about how to maintain accounts books.
- Gained knowledge about transactions with banks.
- Gained awareness about business promotion.

The comments made by two participant women are mentioned in annex 5.

Training course on food technology

Six (6) women from Tangalle participated in a residential training course on food technology conducted by 'Cathy Rich Memorial Food Processing Centre' at Empilipitiya from 12th to 14th December 2005. The participants were trained on the following;

- Yoghurt making
- Honey – Cashew making
- Preservation of pineapple
- Making Jam
- Making sweets with sesame

One participant woman has already started making of honey – cashew. Others are planning to start their own self employments using the knowledge and training gained from the training course.

Taking initiative and providing leadership to the affected people to obtain assistance delivered by government and non governmental organizations in housing, relief assistance and other services.

Community Mobilisers have been instructed to intervene in necessary welfare assistance for the affected people, and on two occasions such interventions were of great benefit.

- a) To organize a delegation of women to meet the Assistant Director of Planning, affiliated to Divisional Secretariat of Tangalle, in connection with the title deeds of lands within the 100 m zone. (The government has prohibited construction within 100 m from the zone)
- b) Organise a meeting with 'Shridose' Sri Lanka (NGO), in Tangalle to obtain necessary documents required for applying for financial assistance to start small trade for widows of tsunami.

Collection of data and information in the two project locations. (Tangalle and Polhena Grama Niladhari Divisions).

Collection of data using a printed questionnaire was completed by 31st July 2005. Data analyses and the preparation of survey report is also completed at the end of September. An English translation of the survey report is not available.

Exchange of experience with other organizations involved in reconstruction activities in the affected areas in the South

Kantha Shakthi came to know that an NGO called 'ESCAPE' was involved in conducting counseling training programs and sent 15 mobilisers for training. Our observation is that the training provided by that organization was an utter failure. It was only an opportunity for us to share our experience with another organisation.

Progress review field visits

Head office of Kantha Shakthi in Colombo, organize monthly progress review field visits to project villages as an important activity. These field visits are of utmost importance in identifying problems and obstacles and finding solutions and planning of future work. During the last 6 month period 6 such field visits have been made encouraging responses and feedback from the beneficiaries were received.

Problems and Successes

Successes

- The trauma counseling workshop held in July 2005 was a great encouragement and redress for the women in two project villages. All participants repeatedly speak about counseling. Benefits that women gained brought great encouragement and strength to Kantha Shakthi and Social Mobilisers in the project areas.
- Social Mobilisers from Balangoda project visited the tsunami project villages from 18-20 July 2005 and the solidarity shown by Balangoda women was a great support for Polhena and Tangalle. As a more experienced group, the Social Mobilisers from a lot to share with the Balangoda had women in the South, who had just started on coming back to life. This sharing of experiences was of immense importance in confidence building.
- The tour to Kandy was of educational and cultural significant for most of the women. The tour is a sweet memory for all most all the women and it kindled their enthusiasm for making the world a better place for them to live.
- The opportunity given by the project for the members of small groups to start self employment has built a broader support base for Kantha Shakthi and future progress of the project.
- The visit to two project areas by Ms. Jose Mott of IWDA and her friendly ways brought about inspiration to the women in two project villages. The trust in IWDA and its activities has been greatly improved due to this visit by Ms. Jose. It is a strength to the program too.

Obstacles/problems

- Since some other organizations are also involved in reconstruction activities in the area a proper co-ordination is required to bring about maximum benefits from different projects to the people. Our observation in the recent past was that we that lack of such coordination resulted in inconvenience to affected villages as well as to NGOs like Kantha Shakthi. For example participation a trauma counseling workshop held in 4th July 2005 by Kantha Shakthi was badly affected due to another program being held on the same day by another NGO and Kantha Shakthi had to conduct the same workshop on 5th July 2005 too.
- The fear of re-occurrence of tsunami is deeply rooted in the minds of the people particularly in mothers of small children and this created disturbance to the activities of the program. This was a very discouraging phenomenon that distracted the attention of people from planning for future. For example at 9.30 p.m. on 24th July 2005, people in the project villages started to evacuate carrying younger ones and meagre belongings. It is very difficult for community

mobilisers to manage such situations. This fear psychosis is partly due to lack of an early warning system.

- In a situation where there is a severe criticism of NGO in the country, people tend to suspect the integrity of NGOs. The popular allegation among some section of the society is that NGOs “sell tsunami affected people” and get huge sums of money and spend only a small portion of that money for reconstruction. Kantha Shakthi was also subjected to that criticism. This suspicion can be considered as the greatest obstacle for the activities of some organizations.
- A conflict among the social mobilisers in Tangalle emerged in August 2005 causing damage to the unity among the social mobilisers. The disunity spread to the assistant community mobilisers too resulting in sectarianism. It was then difficult to proceed with the project. The issue was discussed during the field visit by Executive Director and causes of the conflict surfaced. The parties to conflict agreed to make up their divisions and avoid such conflicts in the future.
- Some members of small groups left the program saying Kantha Shakthi was too late in providing assistance to them. Some other members of small groups have also criticized Kantha Shakthi on ground that loan amount was not sufficient to start feasible self employment projects. They also complained that Kantha Shakthi misappropriates funds and taken the lion’s share for itself. Members of the small groups and others in Tangalle village also come to know about this issue. Kantha Shakthi felt that it was not possible to proceed without solving the issue and made arrangements to discuss the allegation in an open forum. The Community Discussion Forum that introduced by Kantha Shakthi in this project was helpful to discuss this issue. It became crystal clear for those who participated in this open forum that Kantha Shakthi did not appropriate any funds but in fact even raised additional funds from well wishers and sympathizers. The professional Accounting system of Kantha Shakthi was useful in explaining to the villagers about appropriation of funds for tsunami affected people in 2 project villages.

Memorable victories

As mentioned above the women who joined the tour to Kandy made use of the tour to their freedom. In the limited period of time during the tour they sang, danced and lived like free human beings without any kind of discrimination. One can define their behavior as an explosion of suppression. The tour to up country also paved the way for them to consolidate their solidarity.

Kantha Shakthi is now considered as a unique organization by both women and men in the two project villages. Kantha Shakthi is the only organization in these two villages and surrounding villages “where women have been given priority as a group”. Already there are many requests for Kantha Shakthi by other surrounding villages to visit them and support them to organize themselves. Some women in surrounding village have emphasized that they do not want financial or material support but direction and leadership to organize them and help them on their future.

The training in small business management was also successful. 89 women from two project villages had already received loans for self employments at the end December 2005.

7. The programs that have been planned for the next 6 month period are as follows.

- Further awareness building for women in small groups and strengthening solidarity
- Expanding and continuation of credit facilities
- Training in program management
- Vocational training
- Deepening of community discussion forums and broadening of the areas of discussion.
- Improving the progress review field trips

8. Documents connected with income and expenditure are annexed.

ANNEXURES

Annexure 1

Loan transactions – Polhena and Tangalle July to December 2005

Location	Purpose of loan	No of women	Amount LKR
Polhena	Consumption needs	89	89000.00
	Medicine	23	14500.00
	Education of children	9	5100.00
	Traveling for family members	1	100.00
	Self employment		
	Textile trade	3	3500.00
	Selling of lotteries	1	3000.00
	Selling food item	9	14930.00
	Soap making	1	5000.00
	Purchasing of clothes	1	500.00
	Purchasing building materials	2	1450.00
	Consumption needs	2	600.00
	Repayment of loans	6	7000.00
	Purchasing of Jewellery	1	1000.00
	Total	148	145680.00
Tangalle	Consumption needs of family	03	1,100.00
	Medicine	04	1100.00
	Self employment		
	Investment in fire wood trade		
	Making food items	02	2500.00
	Small trade	26	30650.00
	Textile trade	38	58500.00
	Business	09	29500.00
		01	500.00
	For urgent needs	11	16415.00
	Total	94	140,265.00
	Grand total	120	285,945.00

Comments by women who got loans for self employment

"I started petty trade as self employment. My small group gave me a loan so that I could start my self employment. I am thinking of repaying the loan and get some more loans in the future and develop my business"

Mayurawathie , Deepankara Road, Tangalle – 2nd December 2005

"At the moment I am doing a self employment of making short eats like rolls and string hoppers etc. My small group supported me financially to purchase 50kgs of floor at regular intervals at the beginning. I am proceeding successfully"

Ranganie, Medaketiya, Tangalle – 5th December 2005

Annexure 2

"Tour Kandy was fantastic. It was a great opportunity for us to enjoy. We cannot go on such a trip with our family members. My mother and father are sick. Hence I appreciate this trip very much. I have never been to Kandy."

Gayani Nirmala, Polhena, Matara – 19th September 2005

" I enjoyed the trip very much with dance and singing"

Priyadarshani, Pohena, Matara – 20th September 2005

"I had never been to Kandy before and I worshiped the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha. I enjoyed the trip very much"

Wasantha Harriot, Tangalle – 19th September 2005

"I had never gone on a picnic like this. It was wonderful."

Chandra, Tangalle – 20th September 2005

Annexure 3

Women's comments on the workshop on trauma counseling

Comment on the impact	No
Alleviation of sorrow, pain and frustration, and strengthening hopes and recovery from psychological breakdown	20
Mental satisfaction and relief	33
Alleviation of jealousy, crazyness and hatred and strengthening of good intention for life. Encouraging positive thinking	19
Bringing about strength and determination to reconstruct life for a new beginning.	26
Bringing about content and happiness	12
Lessen loneliness and frustration	2
Improve will power and self confidence	12

"On behalf of all participants I/we appreciate this workshop on trauma counseling. This is an important and great opportunity for all of us. In a situation where we were not in a position to bring

about relief with money or any other material resource, this opportunity was a real blessing for us.”

Daya Wikramasooriya, Tangalle- July 2005

“Organisations of different kinds come to our village and give us relief material. We thank those organizations. But Kantha Shakthi in the only organization that taught us how to identify our own feelings and moods such as hatred anger etc and how to overcome them. We on behalf of Polhena extend our gratitude to Kantha Shakthi and the psychologist who conducted the program.”

K.D.A. Chandra; Polhena, Matara – 4th July 2005

Annexure 4

My life before tsunami

“Before tsunami, my life was that of a lone prisoner in a prison cell under a dictator. On 26th December 2004 the waves of tsunami knocked down our lives. It was an unprecedented tragedy. It brought about agony to our lives. However tsunami changed my life. It paved the way for me to proceed towards a broader new world. Before tsunami my world was within the walls of my family house. I had been forced to live their like a prisoner. Kantha Shakthi and Community Mobilisers changed all that. A Mobiliser of Kantha Shakthi namely Jayanthi, Hema, & Shanika came to our village and they introduced me to Kantha Shakthi. I was selected as an Assistant Community Mobilisers.

I am working with Kantha Shakthi since June 2005. I gained lot of things such as knowledge of women’s rights and human rights, leadership etc from the organization. I have to learn lot of things from the organization. Now I have my new life.

I have my own money in my hands. So I can do something for my father and sisters.

I would like to thank Kantha Shakthi for every thing it had done for me.”

Prema Disanayaka, Tangalle

Annexure 5

Program on Business management

“I lost 4 family members, my house and every thing. At present I am living with a family known to me. After having solved problem that needs immediate solutions I am thinking of starting my life. We were taught and I am going to use it”

Nandaseeli – Polhena – 29th October 2005

“From today onwards this program will be useful for me to continue my self employment in a systematic way. This program that came to our villages after tsunami is a real helping hand to people like us”

Kumari, Tangalle – 27th October 2005