

**THANE CYCLONE RESPONSE PROGRAM REPORT***Introduction*

After the Dec. 2004 Tsunami that struck the coastal areas of Southern India, these areas witnessed yet another disaster on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Dec. 2011 which has once again disrupted the life of the people, causing a major jolt to their Shelter and Livelihood. As the people were preparing themselves to welcome the New Year 2012, the sudden depression in the Bay of Bengal developed into a strong cyclonic storm named as Thane. Cyclone Thane left a trail of destruction mainly in Cuddalore district and Puducherry and also impacted the neighbouring Villupuram and Nagapattinam Districts of Tamil Nadu.

As this was a slow onset disaster, the human lives lost were very less. Further, thanks to the organisations that had worked on Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives, the vulnerable communities were able to respond with speed, without waiting for external help to save their lives. However, Thane Cyclone had battered the shelter and livelihood of the people very badly. More than 5 lakhs houses were destroyed and 4.5 lakhs trees were uprooted posing direct threat to the environment and livelihood. The affected communities required external support from the Government and NGOs to restart their lives.



Initially, the assessment work got delayed, as the devastation was unlike Tsunami which ravaged the entire coastal belt. The impact of Thane was scattered and mostly inland up to 15 km. National and a few International organisations had responded to the situation.

Habitat for Humanity India Disaster Response Team had rushed to the disaster affected areas within a few hours of the event, assessed the extent of the damages and prepared situation reports and need analysis. Habitat realized that there were heavy damages to their shelters. Habitat developed a three-pronged intervention strategy viz;

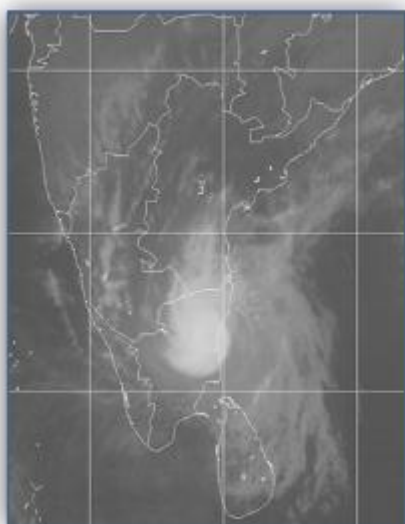
- a) Provision of Emergency Shelter Materials
- b) Reparation, renovation and rehabilitation of the partially damaged houses to make it fit for human dwelling.
- c) Reconstruction of houses for those families who have lost their houses

This report narrates HFH India's first intervention program namely "Emergency Shelter Assistance to Families affected by Cyclone Thane." One thousand families were helped to repair and strengthen their shelters as a path way to permanency.

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### Thane Cyclone Development



Thane initially developed as a tropical disturbance within the monsoon trough to the west of Indonesia on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Convections surrounding the system had started to consolidate over a weak low level circulation centre. The disturbance gradually developed further, moved towards the northwest and, under the influence of a subtropical ridge, its development slowed down on the 27<sup>th</sup> December, turning towards the west. With favourable sea surface temperatures, Thane started to turn towards the west under the influence of a subtropical ridge of high pressure before its development slowed down on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, as a strong outflow and marginally favourable sea surface temperatures fought with persistent vertical wind shear. Thane became a very severe cyclonic storm on December 28<sup>th</sup>, approached the Indian

states of Tamil Nadu, Pondichery and Andhra Pradesh and made a landfall on December 30, on the Tamil Nadu coast between Cuddalore and Puducherry.

Joint Typhoon Warning Centre (JTWC) reported that Thane had become equivalent to a category one hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale with 1-minute sustained wind speeds of 120 km/h (75 mph), while an eye feature had become visible on microwave imagery. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, Thane continued to intensify and developed a small pinhole eye of about 20 km, before the JTWC reported that Thane had peaked early on December 29 with 1-minute sustained wind speeds of 150 km/h (90mph). The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) then followed suit and reported that the system had peaked as a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm with 3-minute sustained wind speeds of 140 km/h (85 mph).

## THANE CYCLONE IMPACTS

As per the Government reports, more than 450,000 houses were devastated by the cyclone apart from loss of 58 human lives. Around 176,000 hectares of agricultural crops were destroyed. Almost the entire tree cover of Cuddalore district was ravaged including the entire cashew nut trees and jack fruit trees that were the backbone of the majority of the people's livelihood options. Electricity for many of the affected villages had not been restored even after 15 days of the cyclone, which resulted in acute shortage of drinking water and other basic amenities.



The districts affected by the recent floods and the extent of damages district-wise were as depicted in the table below:

State	Affected Districts	Blocks affected	Villages affected	Deaths reported	Houses fully damaged	Houses Partially damaged
Tamil Nadu	Cuddalore	7	901	41	73292	275925
	Villupuram	8	311	4	15172	51371
		4	17			
Puducherry	Puducherry			7	9789	86445

(Source Government District Administration / IAG /NGO Reports)



### Infrastructure and Communication systems:

Thane Cyclone had disrupted the total communication systems in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. Telephone lines and electricity poles were uprooted and there was no electricity for 2 days in the cyclone affected areas of Villupuram and Pondicherry. In Cuddalore the situation was very bad as the total electricity system was paralyzed for more than 10 days. Even today the electricity has only been partially resumed and repair work is in progress. The communication and the electricity systems disconnected the district from other parts of the state and delayed the response work. The electricity failure affected the water and sanitation facilities heavily. There was acute shortage of safe drinking water. The drinking water situation is better now. The Government, with the help of NGOs and other institutions, brought water from neighbouring districts. The electricity power supply has been resumed in some parts of the city (Cuddalore).

**Livelihood:** Agriculture is the major livelihood in the area. The cultivable land masses were damaged heavily in different levels of intensity and impacted mainly the farmers and agricultural labourers. Major long term cultivation practices are coconut, cashew and jackfruit growing. Thane cyclone had uprooted the trees and the future of those families who were involved in agricultural practices has now become a big question mark.

Fishing activities have come to a complete halt immediately after the disaster. The Government communication states that around 10,000 fishing boats were moved to safer locations. In Andhra Pradesh,

700 fishermen were reported to be stranded near Nizampatnam and were saved with the help of National Coast guards.

**Cuddalore** bore the brunt of the cyclonic fury accounting for 21 deaths with damaged roads rendering it difficult for rescue teams to reach the cyclone hit villages. The Cyclone disrupted the road and rail operations with services cancelled or rescheduled. The Cyclone had destroyed more than **75,000 thatched huts** in Cuddalore alone. More than 15,000 hectares of agricultural lands were destroyed with the standing crop.



**Puducherry** was cut off from neighbouring districts in Tamil Nadu with the uprooted trees blocking road traffic. More than ten people have lost their lives. The electricity was totally cut off and there was shortage of drinking water in the cyclone affected villages. More than **10,000 huts** were destroyed and the roofs were blown away by the fury of the wind. Two thousand five hundred acres of paddy crops ready for harvest were damaged in Puducherry

## Government Responses

The State and the District Administration officials had visited the flood affected areas and pressed the Police and Fire service personnel for evacuating people to safer locations. The District administration also provided food and relief compensation to the affected people. The Government of Tamil Nadu had undertaken the assessment work and the Damage Assessment Report was submitted to the Central Government for Assistance. The National Disaster Response Force Teams (9 teams) were deployed for the early recovery programs.

## Humanitarian Agencies' Response

The Humanitarian agencies representing NGOs, INGOs and local civic societies were working together through IAG Tamil Nadu. Humanitarian organisations provided food items such as rice, dry ration, water and non-food items such as Tarpaulin sheets, Mats, household utensils to the affected communities.

## Habitat Response

HFH India Disaster Response staff along with the Partners reached the cyclone affected areas within few hours of the cyclone, met the people, contacted all the HFH Partners working in this area and collected all the information on the damages and the immediate needs. The Disaster Response Team also met the Government Officials, NGO leaders and the Community members. HFH Partners / NGO meeting was conducted in Puduchery on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2012.

HFH India Rapid Response team had conducted a Rapid Assessment on the extent of the damages and immediate and the long term needs of the affected communities. A need analysis was done in consultation with the HFH Partners on ground and Emergency Shelter Kit materials were proposed to Habitat Disaster Management Committee for approval.

## Thane Cyclone Response Plan

Habitat for Humanity India proposed to respond to Thane Cyclone situation from its core competency area of Shelter.

In the first phase Habitat planned to help 1000 families with Emergency Shelter Kits In the second phase, Structural intervention (Repairs & Renovation) was proposed for families whose houses were damaged partially. In the third phase, Habitat proposed to reconstruct houses for the families whose houses were damaged fully.

Community Based Risk Reduction and Mitigation Program:

As Cuddalore and surrounding areas are more prone for repeated disasters, Habitat is planning for CBDRM program for the vulnerable communities in this region. A systematic study on the need for Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation program will be initiated. Based on the outcome of the study, Habitat will design CBDRM program for multi-hazard risk reduction/mitigation.

## Procurement of Materials

Habitat for Humanity India Resource Centre in Chennai has formed a purchase committee comprising staff representing the Program, Finance and Administration units. The Committee collected quotations from vendors, analysed the cost and transportation feasibility and procured the materials from the reliable vendors. All the materials were stockpiled in Pondichery and transported to the sites for distribution.

## Program Implementation

The distribution of Emergency Shelter Materials was implemented by Habitat Resource Centre in Chennai in partnership with Rural Education and Action for Liberation (REAL) a locally based Habitat Partner who is working in this region for a long time and who also has long term plans for these communities. REAL has good experience in delivering development, housing and Disaster Risk Reduction Programs.

Family Selection: Habitat wanted to reach out to the neediest communities and deserving families with the Emergency Shelter Kits. Habitat has developed criteria and the required tools to identify the needy families for the program. The criteria set were:

- ❖ Widows
- ❖ Women headed families
- ❖ Families having persons with long term illness
- ❖ Families having less than INR 3,000 income per month
- ❖ Physically Challenged people
- ❖ Families not covered by Government or NGOs in the relief programs

HFH Partner assessed the needs and collected the relevant information with the help of local self help groups and small NGOs working in the grass root level, using the tool (questionnaire) developed by the HFH Disaster Response Desk. 1000 families were selected and Revalidation of these assessment reports/family details of the needy families was done. The selected families were given a Commitment card to be shown at the time of ESK distribution. Orientation programs were organised for the family members on how to use the Chlorine tablets and the hand tools.

## Volunteer involvement



Habitat always encouraged volunteer involvement in its programs as this is the uniqueness of Habitat's work. In the Thane Cyclone Response work, Habitat provided opportunity for the volunteers to participate in the ESK distribution work. The Volunteers from the following corporates, civil societies and educational institutions had participated in the program.

- ✚ DELL India
- ✚ Tanfac
- ✚ Vedamari Community college
- ✚ Rotary Club of Cuddalore
- ✚ Volunteers from the Communities/NGOs



An orientation program was organized for the Volunteers on how to use the ESK materials and other logistic aspects.

## Program Outcomes

- 5000 people from 1000 families were helped to improve their shelter and live in a safe environment
- The families were trained /oriented on house repair/use of hand tools for attending to house repairs and maintenance
- Orientation on safe drinking water and safe environment helped families to access to improved general health condition of the families – through safe water & debris cleaning
- Families started resuming their employment
- Women and children were able to stay in their houses in the repaired houses.

## Areas of Operation

The Emergency Shelter Materials were distributed in Elangadu, Siruvandhandu and V.Agram in **Villupuram district**, Cuddalore (Town & rural areas), Ambedkar Nagar, Vallalar Nagar **Cuddalore district** and Thirubuvanai, Thiruvandarkoil, Sanyasikuppam Kothamurinatham & Kalitheerthamkuppam in **Pondichery Union Tertiary**.

## Time Frame

- 28th – 31st Jan 2012 : Material procurement & Revalidation of home partner's data and issue of Identify card
- 02 Feb 2012 : Orientation to Volunteers & Distribution of ESK materials in Siruvandhandu, V.Agram and Elangadu in Villupuram District
- 03 Feb 2012 : ESK Distribution work in Thirubuvanai, Thiruvandarkoil, Sanyasikuppam in Puducherry
- 04 Jan 2012 : ESK Distribution work in Gnnapuram in Cuddalore District
- 22 Mar 2012 : ESK Distribution work in Ambedkar Nagar, Vallalar Nagar in Cuddalore District

## Thanks to Donor

We are indebted to the following Donors for their generous support towards this Humanitarian effort.

1. Krishti (Sandip Kundu) : INR 1,00,000
2. JM Financial : INR 2,00,000
3. MK.Tata Trust : INR 1,00,000
4. DELL India : INR 22,00,000

Report Submitted By:

Habitat for Humanity India

Disaster Response Department