



Lessons learnt for Public Policy Maker from Relocation of Tsunami Affected Villagers in Thailand

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The most notable tsunami in the Indian Ocean was the Indian Ocean Tsunami on 26 December 2004 caused by two strong earthquakes with the magnitudes of 9.3 and 7.3 on the Richter scale near Sumatra, Indonesia. It was the first tsunamis hit the Andaman Coast in southern Thailand, affected six provinces along the Andaman Coast, namely Phang Nga, Phuket, Satun, Krabi, Ranong, and Trang. The highest death toll (78.3% of the total 5,395 including unidentified bodies) and number of homeless victims were reported from Phang Nga Province. Following the December 2004 disaster, financial aids and land donations from many public and private sectors were used to support the renovation of damaged houses and new constructions in both same and new locations.

Based on our field surveys and interviews with tsunami impact villagers in Phang Nga during 2005-2010, more than 1,600 houses were constructed in 29 locations and donated to tsunami homeless victims. Although the house supporting from government and other charities had fulfilled the homeless suffer of tsunami impact villagers, some socio-economic problems had revealed as summarized;

1) Many fishermen villages had illegally located in the conservative zones under the Department of Marine and Coastal Resource (DMCR), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), though many villagers stayed in this area long ago. Aftermath of 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, such illegally occupancy has no longer permitted in many locations. In addition, the governmental support especially for house construction and fishing equipments were priority approved for the villagers who occupied the land with certificate of ownership. Some fishermen villages were forced to relocate while a lot of villagers tried to stay illegally at the same locations.

2) Locations of new house donated by government and other charities had located far from the coastal area, moved to upper ground or rubber plantation area (outside tsunami inundated zone). Basic facilities such as water, electricity and dumping area were not enough supported in some donated areas.

3) A lot of fishermen had turned to wage-earners or unfamiliar jobs to earn for their living. Some were jobless more than a year after relocation because of less skill for other jobs, high competition for less vacancies and no capital to start their small business.

4) After a few years of relocation and adaptation in the donated houses, we found that old and young generation became a major residence while much of the working generation fishermen went back to their villages for their fishing career. Some of them leaved the right of living in the donated houses by renting out to non-tsunami impact people or leaving their houses abandoned.

As a lesson learnt from the relocation of the tsunami impact villagers in Thailand during 2005 – 2010, we could summarize some critical concerns for government policy makers as listed;

1) The government may support the certificate of the ownership or title deed with some conditions to the villagers who occupied on their lands before the conservative zones were announced. They should have the right to stay further and do eco-friendly activities for earning their lives. The villagers have no right to transfer the title deed or certificate to the third parties. Only eco-friendly equipments are permitted for fishing in this area.

2) After relocation to the higher ground, basic facilities (such as water, electricity and dumping area) should be sufficiently furnished.

3) Not only skill practicing for career options should be supported, finding job vacancy should run in parallel to ensure that the tsunami impact villagers can afford their living.

4) For reducing the right transfer or leaving the donated houses abandoned, annual or continuous survey to these residences should be conducted by government sectors until 80% of them had settled on their careers and adaptations.

Location analysis should be conducted before construction of houses for disaster impacted villagers. By using multi-criteria analysis in Geographic Information System (GIS), proper location for new houses could be

analyzed based on any concerned physical and socio-economic factors.