



Rehabilitating Livelihoods in Tsunami-Affected Coastal Communities in Asia

This brief on post-tsunami rehabilitation was prepared by the WorldFish Center. It is the second in a series of policy briefs being developed by CONSRN (Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods in Tsunami-Devastated Nations) to assist in the rehabilitation efforts following the 26 December 2004 tsunami. The brief was developed under the auspices of CONSRN but does not imply endorsement by all agencies.

The tsunami of December 2004 had its greatest impacts on rural coastal communities, many of which were already poor, vulnerable and with few livelihood options. With a high dependency on a severely depleted and over-fished natural resource base and on badly degraded coastal ecosystems, few coastal communities could see a pathway out of poverty prior to the tsunami. This is not a situation to which communities should be returned as a result of post-tsunami rehabilitation efforts. The response to past natural disasters around the world has too often focused on physical reconstruction rather than rebuilding livelihoods, resulting in beneficiaries feeling unable to drive their self-recovery. Avoiding the mistakes of the past requires: (1) an appreciation for the vulnerabilities faced by coastal communities before the tsunami and how the disaster accentuated these; (2) a framework for understanding the diversity of coastal people's

livelihood strategies and the sources of their vulnerability; (3) a process for designing interventions that build on this understanding to strengthen and revitalize



Yeo Bee Hong

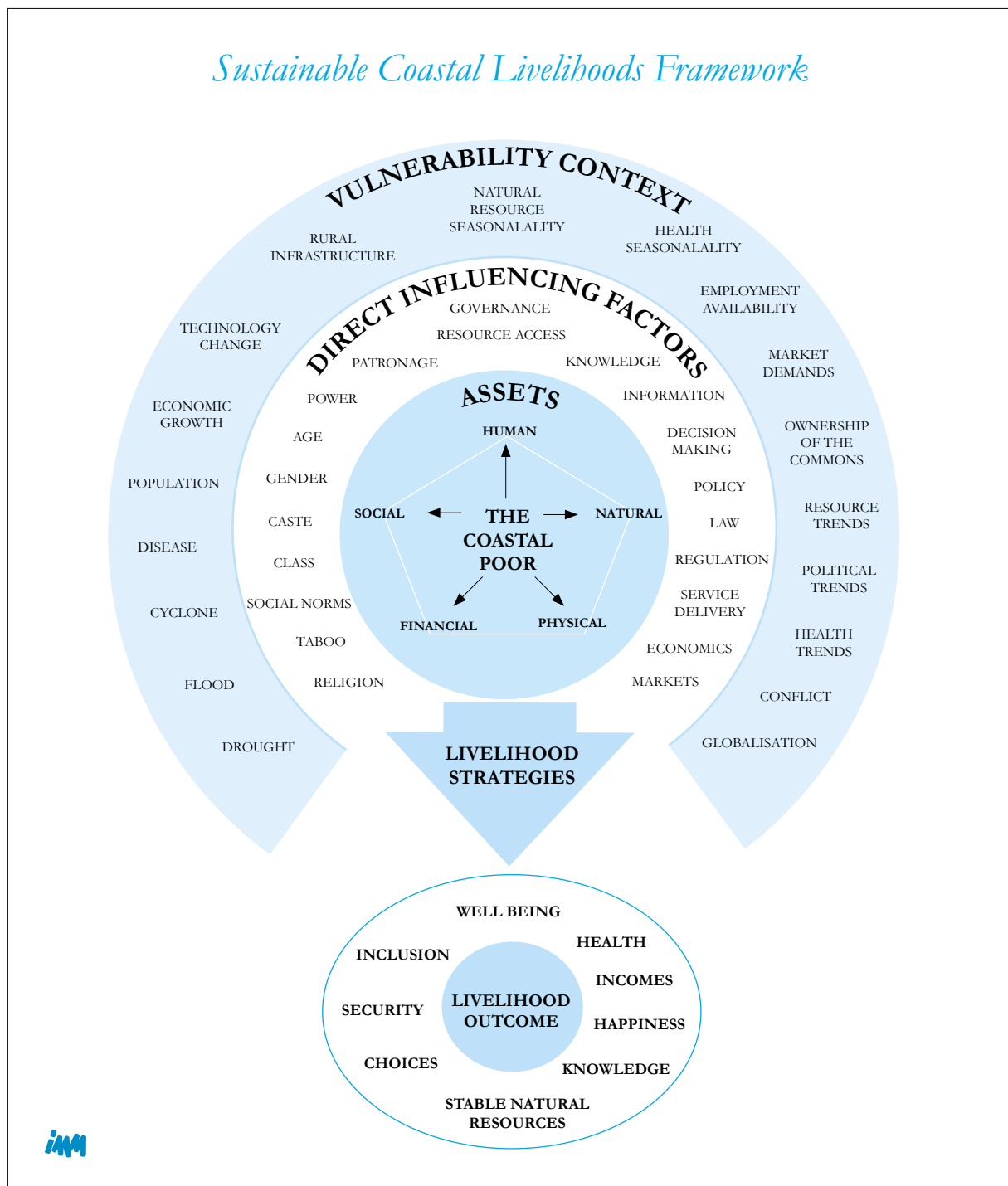
coastal communities, including a means of assessing and selecting the most promising livelihood options; and (4) a focus on building resilience and sustainability in the communities for the future.

A Framework for Understanding Coastal Livelihoods

Rehabilitation of coastal livelihoods after the tsunami should look beyond returning to the status quo and rather seek to address the root causes of vulnerability of coastal people and communities, build resilience to cope with future threats and strength to seize on new opportunities. Adopting this approach requires understanding the diversity of coastal people and communities, especially

in relation to their livelihood strategies. It also requires understanding the means by which households adapt to reduce their risks, the incentives that drive the decisions of resource users, and the sources of their vulnerability to stresses and shocks. Applying such an analytical framework helps to reveal the distinctiveness of the circumstances that coastal people and communities face and the variety of responses individual households adopt in response.

Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Framework



A Process for Rehabilitating Coastal Livelihoods

The rehabilitation of livelihoods after the tsunami should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen and revitalize coastal communities. The focus of rehabilitation efforts should be on rebuilding the economic basis of livelihoods rather than on physical reconstruction, and on giving coastal people the skills for self-recovery. The rehabilitation of coastal livelihoods should be undertaken through a process of change that will address the recurrent factors which keep them in a perpetual state of poverty. Some of these factors can be addressed more immediately, while others, such as equity, power relations, access to resources and markets, asset ownership and sustainability of resource use, are more fundamental and difficult to alter. Social development (empowerment, organizations, education, training), economic development (job creation, private sector investment, market access, microfinance) and ecological interventions (rehabilitating coastal habitats, coastal resource management) that address these fundamental issues must be integrated. Both the public and private sectors need to be actively involved in livelihood rehabilitation efforts, seeking out and creating opportunities for both economic and social development. The process must be well-planned at the operational level and be participatory, involving consultation and collaboration with the community. Recognizing that short-term, uncoordinated action can be detrimental to sustainable long-term rehabilitation, it is also critical that any process be grounded in a longer-term strategic plan.



Yeo Bee Hong



Yeo Bee Hong

A process for rehabilitating coastal livelihoods may involve the following seven steps:

1. Define the Target Area
2. Community Entry and Integration
3. Assessments of Resources, Needs and Opportunities
4. Education and Capacity Development
5. Rehabilitation Plan
6. Long Term Sustainability Plan
7. Adaptive Learning through Monitoring and Evaluation

Addressing the Root Causes of Vulnerability

To rehabilitate coastal livelihoods in a manner that will be effective and sustainable will require addressing the fundamental factors that have led to vulnerability, insecurity, unsustainable livelihoods, increased poverty and declining quality of life. Rehabilitation of coastal livelihoods will involve not just giving a person a job, but much more importantly addressing fundamental social, economic and environmental reforms. These include:

- Securing Resource Tenure and Access
- Building Equitable Market Access
- Reducing Excess Capacity
- Protecting Ecosystems
- Reducing Vulnerability to Natural Hazards
- Social Empowerment
- Rebuilding Community Organizations
- Integrating Coastal Communities into National Economic Development
- Investing in Education and Training
- Building Disaster Management Capacity



Conclusions

In the wake of the tsunami tragedy, large volumes of aid and a vast array of actors have flowed into affected areas. There is a very real risk that rehabilitation responses will be developed without due regard for their longer term affects and may be dominated by highly visible but not necessarily well-considered options, such as replacing lost boats and gear which can lead to increased fishing capacity and further un-sustainability of stocks and threats to livelihoods, or providing equipment and infrastructure for new income-generating schemes that are poorly suited to the local context.

Rehabilitation plans need to be based on a vision that moves coastal communities beyond the problems of the past. They must focus on the pervasive underlying issues that put communities at risk

and employ methodologies that build confidence and present new opportunities for the future. Rehabilitation of coastal livelihoods is not merely about giving people jobs; it requires addressing fundamental social, economic and environmental reforms. Achieving progress in this direction means that those providing assistance must engage coastal communities in a dialogue about the future they envision, the steps needed to get there, and the lessons learned along the way. At the same time it requires engaging a broad array of actors across government, civil society, and the private sector to build understanding of the reforms needed and the commitment to undertake them. As lessons are learned, from both successful and unsuccessful interventions, they need to be shared with others for use now and in the future. ☺



Yeo Bee Hong

Brief prepared by
R. Pomeroy, B. Ratner,
S. Hall, J. Pimoljinda,
and V. Vivekanandan

The members of CONSRN include the following organizations:



Asia Pacific Fishery Commission (APFIC)



Bay of Bengal Programme - Intergovernmental Organization (BOBP-IGO)



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP)



Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA)



Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centers (SEAFDEC)



The WorldFish Center

Produced by:

The WorldFish Center

P.O. Box 500 GPO, 10670 Penang, Malaysia Tel: +(60-4) 626 1606 Fax: +(60-4) 626 5530
Email: worldfishcenter@cgiar.org Website: www.worldfishcenter.org