



WORLD FORUM OF FISHER PEOPLES (WFFP)

Forum mondial des populations de pêcheurs

Velankanny Junction ,Valiathura P.O. ,Thiruvananthapuram-695 008 KERALA, INDIA

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World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) is a Forum of 34 mass based organizations representing traditional fisher peoples of the World particularly in Asia. We are the victims of tsunami in Asia. Our dear ones are lost and many are left without homes and fishing implements. WFFP has four members in SRILANKA. They are National Fisheries Solidarity, United Fishermen and Fishworkers Union, Women's Development Federation and National Union of Fishers. The General Secretary of WFFP is Herman Kumara from SRILANKA. Thomas Kocherry, permanent member to the WFFP Coordination Committee after visiting tsunami affected areas in the South, West, North and East during the last 4 days in SRILANKA makes the following statement.

First my heart goes with our dear ones who lost their lives. My condolences and deepest sympathies and prayers. May their surviving ones see a better future. It is almost a month today. I was in Chellanam Coast in Kerala of India when tsunami occurred. Water came up four times. Many lost their houses. About 500 died in Kerala, about 12000 lost their lives in the whole of India. We are very happy to collaborate with German Doctors and MUHIL HEALTH CENTER and the generous contribution by Dr. Bernhard Ehlen and his team. Also we collaborate with SIFFS.

But casualties here in SRILANKA are much greater. A small country like SRILANKA cannot bear such disaster. About 30000 lost their lives and 500000 are victims without houses and fishing implements. Yes we are still surviving due to the sudden help from the public, NGOS, SRILANKAN Government and the many other countries from all over the World. It is a great sign of HUMAN SOLIDARITY. Let us continue this solidarity till all the victims are rehabilitated. Wherever I went the victims have been acclaiming the work done by the WFFP members in SRILANKA. Congratulations and thanks to all particularly the leadership given by the WFFP General Secretary, Herman Kumara.

We read and hear that many countries are outpouring their contributions to SRILANKAN Government. But even after a month the debris, shattered houses are still kept untouched. The victims are in different camps without any proper cover from rain. No cleaning up has started. We are reading a lot for rebuilding the nations spending enormous money under the head of Rural Development (150 m USD), Rail Transport (190 m), Water supply and Sanitation(150m) Port Development (50m), HRD and social Services(135m) Housing and Townships(400m), Industrial



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Development(35m), Tourism(20m) Private Enterprise Development(50m) and the grand total is 1500 m USD). Out of this, can the government clearly say how much will go to the hands of the victims? Can the government say how much of this will go

directly for the housing, infra structure development, fishing development for the Victims? Please explain this very clearly. We also hear that the European Union is sending 4000 Industrial Fishing vessels as aid to SRILANKA. If these come to the Indian waters, all the victims of tsunami will be displaced. There will not be any fish left in the Indian waters. Not only the SRILANKAN FISHER PEOPLE BUT ALSO INDIAN FISHER PEOPLE WOULD BE WIPED OUT IN NO TIME. What the European Union could not do prior to tsunami, now they are implementing the Globalization programme under the guise of helping the tsunami victims. It is outright killing and the worst terrorism in the 21st Century. WFFP will not allow this to happen this. We also hear that water is going to be privatized. There is shortage of water in all the camps. And privatizing water, will make the victims more isolated because the victims do not have the purchasing capacity. Already JVP party a partner in the ruling SRILANKAN Government opposed this move of privatizing water. So the government itself is shaky. So the President can declare Emergency as she did it recently.

We want to make it very clear that the SRILANKA Government was in total bankruptcy before tsunami. After tsunami the Government is very rich at the expense of tsunami victims and disaster. The SRILANKAN Government has the moral responsibility before the whole World that the SRILANKAN GOVERNMENT rise up to the occasion. The World Bank and IMF are trying to make use of this tragedy for building up Private enterprises, Express high ways, and Tourism. Yes we agree that the victims have to be shifted to safer places beyond 200-300m away from the high tide line. But the empty beaches are meant for the fishing communities to keep their fishing implements, repairing sheds, fish drying etc. But please do not bring tourism hotels instead of us. We will not allow this to happen any where in Asia where the tsunami Disaster took place.

All the victims in Asia will be united to see that the money that comes to the Governments and NGOS come to the development of the tsunami victims. Every body who receives money should publish the income and expenditure before the victims. This is a must. We will be ever watchful to see that the rehabilitation takes place immediately. Also we notice certain exploitations here and there. Police is not giving the Death Certificates in time. We also notice in certain camps Police have taken away the ration cards from the campers saying that they will get dry ration. We suspect that the police are taking away their dry rations. In many camps there is



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shortage of water. Proper cleaning and water proof sheds are required every where. Cleaning up the disaster areas must begin. New sites must be acquired immediately and housing must be begun immediately. Repairing of the OBMS, boats and nets are all a must. Where there is none, new ones must be given. Once people start going for fishing, new life will start. Infra structure, roads, electricity, telecommunication in the coastal areas must reintroduced immediately. All those who are helping the victims must work in a complimentary manner and should be coordinated. Till the rehabilitation takes place, the victims of tsunami one way or other should be helped with dry ration, water, sanitation and water proof sheds. There should be very clear statistics for all these. The contribution meant for the victims should not be taken away by anybody else. Everything should be done in and through the committees of the tsunami victims elected democratically by the people.

Colin Powell of the USA was making a statement that these tsunami camps can become centers of Terrorism. This is a clear warning that if the victims oppose the Plans of World Bank, IMF and implemented by the SRILANKAN Government, they would be treated as terrorists. And the victims will not be able to fight for their rights. If they fight for their rights, the victims will land up in jails, or else they will be killed by the police under the guise of terrorists attack.

Thomas Kocherry

(WFFP Permanent invitee to the CC)

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