

## **Update on CASA's Response to Cyclone Thane, as of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

Not much could withstand a wind speed of 150km/hr. Thane cyclone created havoc in Cuddalore district and Pondicherry, when it struck on the fateful day of 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011. What remained after the tsunami was taken away by cyclone Thane. The cyclone blew away and damaged several of the thatched houses, neither did it spare people living in the Pucca houses. A lot damage was caused by uprooted trees falling on the roads and on top of houses. Anything that rose over 10 feet was not spared by the cyclone. The coconut trees towering a height of more than 20 ft took the worst hit. The Cyclone did ensure its reach to the industrial sector, where industrial workshops were blown apart. Trees and Electrical poles along the highway and other roads were uprooted. The damage to the electric poles plunged Cuddalore in darkness for more than ten days with electricity supply just coming back to a few places.



The cyclone has devastated the life and livelihoods of the people, a large portion of the agricultural crops have been damaged, leaving no scope for agricultural activities in the next few months. The villages are limping back to normalcy as power and water supply is not yet restored and removal of debris, cutting of fallen trees is still under progress. The worst

affected by the cyclone, are families who do not have any regular source of income and were engaged as labour in agricultural and other unorganized sector for survival. Due to the loss of employment and assets during the cyclone, they are still struggling to revive any livelihood means. Single women headed households, physically challenged and elderly people are further vulnerable

### **CASA's preparedness**

CASA has been working on Disaster Risk Reduction in the coastal areas in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam district in Cuddalore, Chidamram, Vedaranyam, Tranquebar and Srikali Taluk much before the cyclone Thane struck. Early warning was given by our disaster management task force (DMTF) to everyone in the village. Information was received from television, radio and the internet. Some of the young volunteers were able to browse the web and give detailed information of the upcoming cyclone. Community Shelters built by CASA were prepared by the DMTF members in case of an emergency. Immediately after the cyclone, with the emergency fund available, the DMTF members organized the people and began community cooking. They kept in touch with CASA office until the charge in their cell phones would hold through.

In Nanjamugathuvazhkai, the DMTF members did not stop with warning and feeding, they organized themselves and began clearing the debris of fallen trees using some of the implements given by CASA along with some saws that they hired. Fallen electric poles were also fitted back to position, this eased the work of the overburdened electricity board workers. They also arranged for water to be brought from the nearby villages.

The DMTF members' houses were also damaged, however, they felt good that this was a good opportunity for them to practice what they have learnt and help alleviate some of the suffering of their people.

### Feeding

In the aftermath of Cyclone Thane, CASA has been involved in feeding directly and through its local partners since 31.12.2011 and has been implementing relief distribution through its local partners. In villages where CASA works, we were able to feed 1717 persons in about 12 villages through the sector office in Sirkali. One of our resource centers in Uthukadu fed about 310 people. Through church partners CASA was able to support the Arcot Lutheran Church in feeding 3792 persons, the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church feeding 2321 persons, the CSI Madras diocese fed 3792 persons and the CSI Trichy- Tanjore diocese fed 945 persons.



Food was cooked and served to the people or packaged and distributed to the people. Feeding which began on the 31 December went on until the 3 January.

### Field visit

Project Officer of CASA south zone and Srikali sector incharge visited the affected areas on the 31 December. They were part of the feeding program. On the 1 January CASA South Zone's Chairperson Rt.Rev.Vijayakumar, Chief Zonal Officer Dr. Mrs. Florina Benoit and Additional Emergency Officer visited the affected places in Nellikuppam area and Chidambaram area in Cuddalore District were visited. Many of the trees along the highway and other roads were uprooted. There was debris everywhere, the villages wore a gloomy look. Housing, electricity and drinking water came up as the most needed intervention. Several houses were either partially or fully damaged and needed intervention.

The Head of Emergency along with staff from the Zone visited the affected places in Cuddalore on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012.



Apart from this CASA, being the Convener of the Inter Agency Group in Tamil Nadu, where the Addl. Emergency Officer Mr. Joseph Sahayam is the convener, organised 2 meetings -one on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2012 in Chennai and the second on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012 in Cuddalore. The first meeting had 11 participants and the second meeting had 84 participants. The meeting broadly focused on issues concerned with assessments and immediate humanitarian need.

Some of the outcomes are as following.

## Rapid Assessment

During the course of Feeding and Relief distribution, CASA has been assessing the damages both directly and along with local partners. The assessment takes into consideration of impacts of the cyclone in the village which predominantly have marginalized communities.

Its been just more than 2 weeks since the Cyclone Thane hit the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. The cyclone damaged the entire communication network, infrastructures and houses, cultivated lands (paddy, banana, and sugar cane), plantations (coconut, cashew, jackfruit and other trees) and fishing hamlets. It also affected the relief and rescue services.

Information regarding the extent of damage have been collected from different agencies and rapid assessment of Thane cyclone affected areas Cuddalore, Villupuram and Puducherry were carried out. However, the damages of Coastal districts of Tamilnadu and Puducherry had different level of intensity with respects to infrastructure, agricultural, fishing and livelihood.

<b>PARTICULARS</b>	<b>CUDDALORE DISTRICT</b>	<b>VILLUPURAM DISTRICT</b>
Death toll	40	
Live stock	343	8692
Damaged houses/huts	3,49,217 no	66,543
Boats fully damaged	369	
Boats partially damaged	1553	
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>		
1. Paddy	96391 hectares	13637 hectares
2. Ground nut	9394 hectares	
3. Black gram	14132 hectares	10258 hectares
4. Sugarcane	29200 hectares	4928 hers
5. Co-co nut	2363 hectares	557 hectares

6. Turmeric	652 hectares	
7. Oil seeds	11000 hectares	2685 hectares
8. Betel wine	128 hers	
9. Ginger	94 hectares	
<b>HORTICULTURE</b>		
• Cashew	30469 hectares	
• Banana	4805 hectares	
• Jack fruit	811 hectares	
• Mango	663 hectares	
• Guava	446 hectares	
• Tapioca	4154 hers	
• Sapota	60 hectares	
<b>FLORICULTURE</b>	<b>576 hectares</b>	

### Additional Relief measures by CASA

CASA also collaborated with three partners to provide dry rations and Non food items to the cyclone victims as follows:



Arcot Lutheran Church worked in the Nellikuppam Area among 550 families providing dry ration and tarpaulin

CSI Madras provided non food items like bedsheets and utensils for 300 families in Anukkampattu, Thathankuppam, Poovanikuppam, Thangalikuppam, Manakkudi and Alambadi in Kurinchipadi

OfERR worked in 20 villages covering more than 5828 families in Parangpettai, they conducted medical camps in 10 villages and provided mats,

blankets and tarpaulins for 225 families. Cleaning and first aid kits were distributed in 20 villages

### **Detailed assessment**

To further ascertain damages, CASA conducted a detailed assessment. The CASA staff divided themselves into three teams and did an in-depth survey in nine villages which were identified in the initial assessment. Each thatched house was physically visited and the following parameters were used to assess damage

Type of Damage	Standard score	Score of damaged house
Damage to roof panel	25	
Damage to wall panel	20	
Damage to roof structure	30	
Damage to wall structure	25	

Maximum scores were given to the most damaged houses thus assessing the extent of the damage. The information from this study is presently being consolidated

Secondary source of information from the newspaper and internet was used. Interaction with church groups helped gauge the extent of damage and helped in identifying areas that needed to be assessed.

In the second phase more villages were visited and assessed.

### **Present scenario**

- People are trying to come back to normalcy. In Tamil Nadu Pongal - the harvest festival is celebrated by people of all religious back ground. Since it is a time of newness, several families attempted to patch up the damages to the houses in an attempt to move on with life. However several villages have not come back to normalcy. The communities are still in the process of repairing their houses and some of them have not started to repair, those who have begun were expressing their difficulties in repairing/rebuilding their houses. The government has given a compensation of 2500 to Rs.5000/ per house irrespective of tiled roof houses or huts.
- The villagers mentioned that it was difficult to get thatched leaves and sugarcane leaves which they normally use for roof. As there is shortage due to the damages to coconut trees and sugar cane the prices have sky rocketed.
- Those villages that did not receive compensation have been participating in road blocks to draw the attention of the government.
- Some villages face shortage of water for which they have to walk to collect water.

## Emerging Issues

- The Government's compensation of Rs.5000/- for fully damaged and Rs.2500/- for partially damaged is not a substantial support for the communities as even in normal times this amount of Rs.5000/- would not be enough for repairing / rebuilding a fully damaged house and the amount of Rs.2500/- would not be enough for repairing a partially affected house. In the present scenario, where the cost of raw material has increased substantially. Added to this is the fact that the loss of livelihood where the communities are finding it difficult to repair their houses. S
- Some of those who were affected live in tiled houses, however at this point they are unable to repair their homes due to financial reasons. Cases of women headed households, widows and elderly persons are of concern.
- Due to the cyclone, Paddy Cultivation and horticulture like Cashew Cultivation, Jack Fruit Cultivation etc. have been badly affected. Jan/Feb being the harvest season for paddy, most of the paddy flowers were blown off thus resulting in lack of production of rice. On the other side the Horticulture activities such as Cashew Cultivation bore the brunt were around thirty thousand hectares of cashew cultivation was totally damaged. The situation thus set the horticulture farmers back to 10 to 20 years. Most of these horticulture farmers also include small farmers who are dalits and Vanniars – a most backward community who are socially and economically vulnerable with a land measuring from 30 cents to just a little above one acre of land.. The impact of cyclone has put forth a question mark on their future and survival since it is not possible to revive Cashew/Jack Fruit Cultivation in the short term. Alternate short and mid term strategies for their livelihood will have to be worked out and implemented.
- With cashew and jack fruit plantation uprooted beyond recovery the task of clearing the land by itself is of colossal dimension. Apart from reclaiming the land the need to do re-plantation also is a long process as it is believed that the dividends of cultivation could take at least 10 to 20 years and this also depends on the availability of water. The sector also has daily labourers who are without employment. The poor prospects of employment for at least 3 to 6 months have aggravated the affected communities' plight in terms of survival in an emergency situation.

- ***Submitted by the Emergency Department of CASA  
with inputs from the webmaster.***

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