

VOLUNTARY HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Tsunami Rehabilitation in Andaman & Nicobar Islands:

Transition from Relief, Rehabilitation to Long Term Development

VHAI's Tsunami relief and rehabilitation programme in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, after five years of disaster, has taken a shape of long term development initiative with community participation and collaboration. A post disaster scenario usually finds aid agencies rushing to the area with relief material and often under pressure in a race against time to fulfill their organizational agenda. In most cases, existing skills and local resources are ignored and displaced with outside skills and services. Further, following

through with these activities to integrate with long term development

initiatives are rarely observed. VHAI development

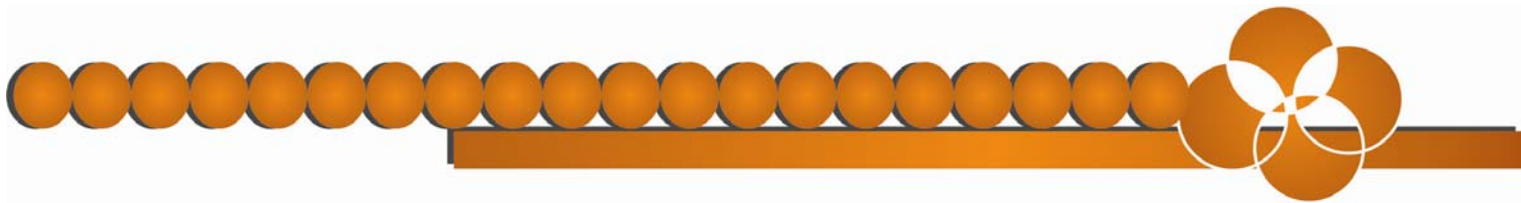
initiatives in Andaman aim to invest in vulnerability



reduction that would control adverse impacts of major disasters and allow development to resume immediately. During this phase VHAI concentrated on the following activities of infrastructure building, environmental regeneration, capacity building and empowerment so that the community representatives participate in and benefit from development process.

Resource Center: The resource center of VHAI in Port Blair is full fledged operational. The center is well equipped with books and resource materials. The center is open for the common people, researchers, scholars, development professionals and other interested readers. There are 7,522 books in the center which consists of books on Disaster Management, Health Promotion, Tobacco Control, Women Issues, Reproductive and Child Health, and various other





development issues. In the resource center there is computer with internet connection and people can access to various useful sites. There is one staff of VHAI present in the center to assist the readers and information seekers to help in getting the relevant and required information. The resource center is also linked with the government. Various departments have shown their interest to take resource materials for the training programmes organized for their staff and other beneficiaries. The Center also provides facilities to conduct training programmes by different government and non government organizations. There is availability of different training aids and facilities to organize training programmes and conferences.

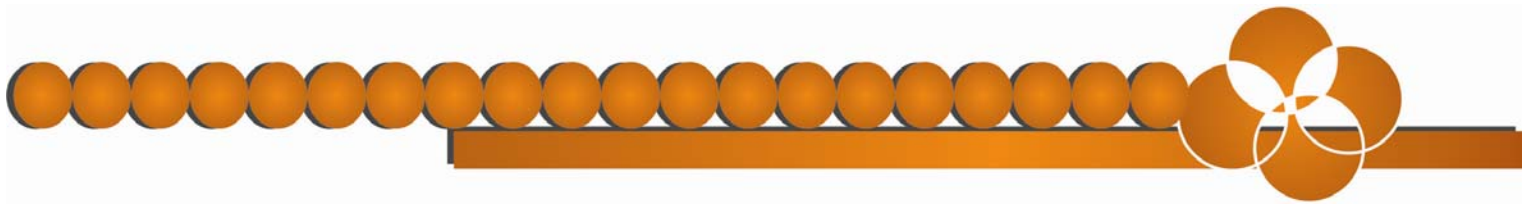
Emergency Rescue Centre: Rescue center is an integral part of disaster prone



areas. Before tsunami, there were no such centers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Geographically, the islands are vulnerable and there is need of such centers in every nook and corner. Hence

VHAI is constructing three centers in Nancowrie group of Islands and one at South Andaman.

The South Andaman Centre was inaugurated by Shri S. N. Jha, Deputy Commissioner, Andaman in the presence of Shri Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHAI Shri.Kesper James Tehesildar, Ferarganj, Shri Inderjeet Mistry, Pradhan Chouldhari, PRI members and other community representatives on 24th November 2009. The centre was handed over to the



Panchyat to make it operational as a disaster resource centre. During normal time the centre will be operational as a community development centre by organizing vocational trainings, group activities and social gathering of the community members.

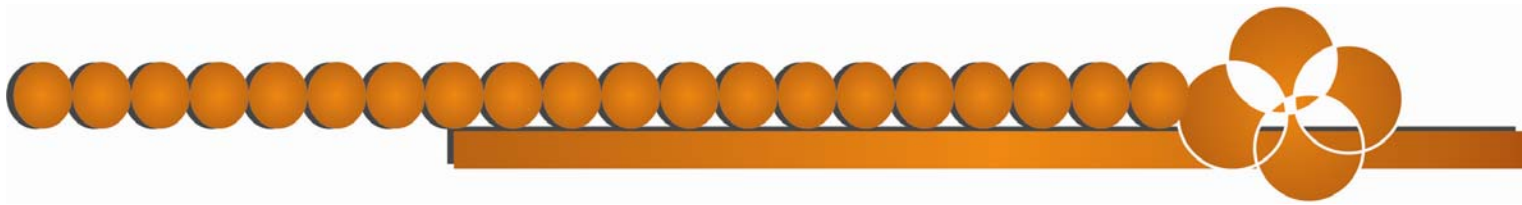
Capacity Building on Disaster Management: VHAI in collaboration with Andaman and Nicobar Administration has prepared the disaster mitigation contingency plan for different islands of Andaman and Nicobar. In this process, entire community was involved through a process of village based micro



planning and hazard mapping.

The process attempts to create a data base and analysis of capacity and vulnerability analysis of the community.

A door to door survey was organized to collect information on vulnerable communities like women headed household, disabled, pregnant women and aged etc. This exercise was performed by a team of volunteers selected, intensively oriented on the development of micro plan, vulnerability and hazard mapping. In each community mock drills were organized and task forces formed with specific roles and responsibility. VHAI has taken it as a continuous process integrating this with the disaster and development plan of Andaman.



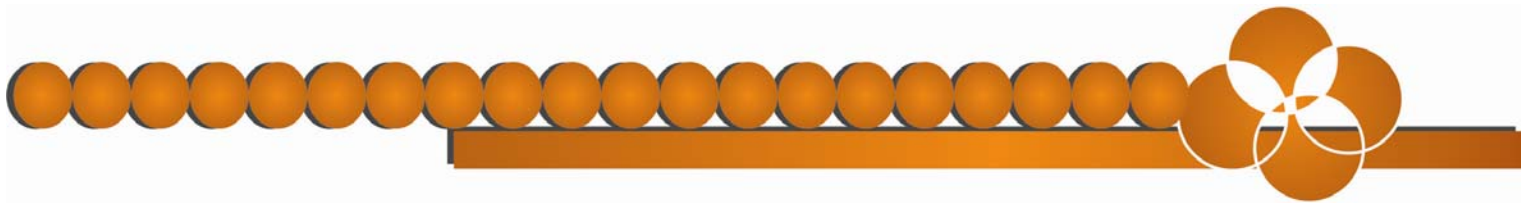
Environmental regeneration and Restoration: environment degradation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a major challenge. The waste disposal systems are not in place for which tons of polythene and non-disposable materials are piled up. Every day thousands of tourists are visiting different Islands of Andaman and Nicobar Islands littering tons of plastic bags and bottles irresponsibly. It has not only environmental implication that takes hundreds of years to decompose but also is a threat to wild life like mammals



and turtles in the sea. The emission of toxic gas also has effect on this eco fragile Island and corals. The Islands being vulnerable to different types of disasters, such massive degradation of the

environment is a threat to the island. In our efforts to control this problem VHAJ is engaged in creating awareness among the public through volunteers, PRI members and members of the self Help Groups. Our efforts to get more stringent laws passed by the administration were not successful due to the limited legislative powers vested with this union territory. This made us to approach the Hon,ble High Court of Calcutta Circuit Bench at Port Blair to file a Public Interest Litigation on 23rd July 2009.

Mean while the Andaman Administration has approved the banning of less than 70 microns thickness made of virgin or recycled plastic through out the Island. The Administration has also imposed a complete ban of Plastic bags of any make in all National Parks, Wild Life Sanctuaries, Beaches, tourist spots and selects Islands like Ross Island, Viper Island Jolly Buoy etc. A notification to this effect had been issued by the Administration in the Gazette. The shopkeepers,



wholesale dealers of polythene carry bags, vendors, grocery merchants, hotel & restaurant owners and general public warned not to use such poly bags and have been directed to deposit all the polythene carry bags in their stock which are less than 70 micron thickness, in the office of Pollution Control Committee, Department of Science & Technology. The violation of the directions issued by the A & N Administration in this regard is punishable under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Further to discuss modalities to carry out extensive strategy for sensitization and spread awareness among the people, the Pollution Control Committee is organizing meeting every week. VHAI is taking a lead role in this.

Health Promotion: Health promotion is known to be the most cost effective health measure. If good and healthy life style is inculcated at an early stage of life there is less likely of occurrence of any chronic diseases. This needs to be strengthened and owned by the community in long-term. Tobacco is one of the leading public health concern and a serious non-communicable disease in the



Island. VHAI-Aparajita has been involved in tobacco control advocacy efforts at various levels since we believe that awareness about the ill effect of tobacco is the best means in restricting its use and encouraged the users

to quite smoking.

From our past experience we have realized that the SHG & PRI members can play a major roll in spreading awareness about the ill effects of the use of tobacco and help in controlling its use. Keeping this in mind we organized series

of awareness programmes and workshops on tobacco control issues. VHAI is a member of the monitoring and enforcement committee of tobacco control in

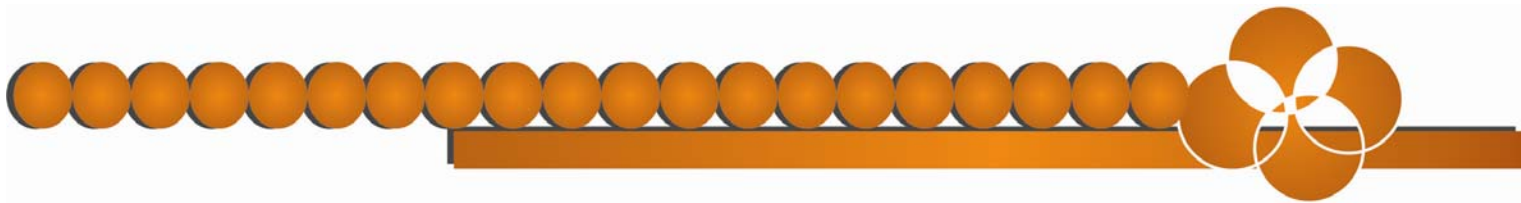
Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Team members from VHAI along with enforcement officials from the Directorate of Health Services and Police Department visited education institutions and other public premises to ensure effective implementation of tobacco control law.

The Andaman music Choir Group, a local cultural group has been engaged by VHAI- Aparajita in its campaign against use of Tobacco, environment



and health hazards. The group has composed several songs highlighting the benefits of not smoking and hazards of uncontrolled use of plastics which was performed on various occasions.

Training of SHGs on Micro Finance and Linkage: During its relief and rehabilitation phase VHAI has formed a number of Self Help Groups in Little Andaman and South Andaman. The initial entry point for these groups were micro finance but in due course varieties of grass root level development initiatives have come up. Even if most of them became self-sustainable but few of them were in need of further support and guidance for their progress and success.



VHAI had meetings with NABARD, Banks and other resource institutions to establish linkages and strengthen their technical skill.

As a result 19 groups have received seed money and revolving fund from different banks. These group members were imparted training on different vocations to sustain the initiatives. Establishing forward and back ward linkage from production to marketing was one of the very successful steps taken by

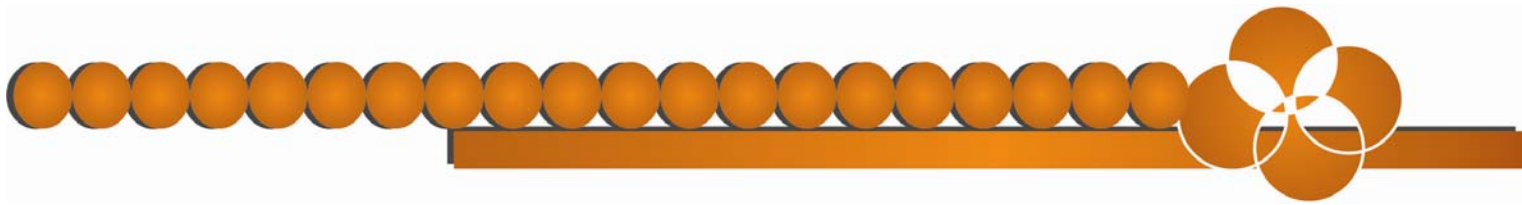


VHAI in collaboration with different resource agencies.

VHAI is also actively involved in the development and income generation activities of South Andaman

after the tsunami disaster in 2004. There was also a demand from the local community to start some vocational training programmes like computer education etc. VHAI has set up a computer training center at Chouldari village in technical collaboration with ET&T Computer Education & Training Centre. A six month Diploma in 'Computer Software Technology (DCST)' has been designed for the trainees. A total of 22 trainees are under going training on Fundamentals of Computer, M.S. DOS and M.S. Word, Tally, Photoshop, internet browsing etc.

VHAI-Aparajita registered as Vocational Training Provider (VTP): The Regional Directorate of apprenticeship Training Chennai has given approval to VHAI as a Vocational Training Provider under the Skill Development Initiative Scheme(SDIS) of the Ministry of Labor and Employment Government of India. The objective of the scheme is to provide employable skills to the school



dropouts, masses and marginalized sections of the society who are not covered under any institutional arrangement. Courses are available for persons having completed 5th standard onwards. The trainings are offered as part time, weekends, onsite etc. The successful persons are awarded certificates issued by National Council for Vocational Training. VHAI has recognized for conducting courses in Garment Making, Information & Communication Technology and Electrical Streams.

Restoration of Mangroves: The tsunami has badly damaged the fragile ecosystem of mangroves especially in Southern Groups of islands like Katchal, and

Nancowrie group of Islands. The magnitude of destruction was so high that in some pockets not even a single Mangrove tree left out. VHAI teams in cooperation with local tribals are able to restore 20 hectares



of Mangroves in Nancowrie group of Islands. VHAI also mobilizing school students to generate awareness towards restoration of mangrove forests. Eco clubs are also formed in different schools for the sustainability of the programme. Even if VHAI team as completed the task of restoration of 20 hectares of mangroves destroyed during the Tsunami, it is going to transplant another 20,000 seedlings to replace the damaged saplings.

Conclusion: This process of development needs to be sustained. VHAI has now established its permanent office and planning to integrate all its activities with long term development activities of the Government. It is planning further linkages to create a resilient and prepared community.
