

# **Disaster-induced displacement and gender: a study on four villages in Weligama, Sri Lanka**

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This paper analyses disaster-induced forced displacement through a gendered lens. Its strength is that it uses a rich set of qualitative as well as quantitative data, to study the medium term impact of tsunami on the livelihoods of the affected households. Further, this research sets itself apart from contemporary literature by revisiting the disaster induced IDPs, which is rarely done for disaster induced displacement studies. The data represent 396 tsunami affected internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 102 households in four villages in Weligama, Sri Lanka. Of them, the main focus was on 278 persons who were 15 years or older in July 2010, the time of data collection. The study revealed that although women had more focus and direction about livelihood rebuilding and enhancing the economic well-being of the household, men, nevertheless, earned far more income from their economic activities. In addition, the recovery mechanisms used by displaced women were sometimes more effective and innovative than those used by men, who have mostly returned to their usual livelihoods after the disaster. The study specially looked at the individual income of females and males in the selected sample in which statistically and economically significant differences between the earnings of females and males were identified, despite women being more educated than men. While initial recovery support is critical for disaster induced IDPs, the study highlights the importance of policy measures that are rigorously focused on brining the IDPs out of their impoverished status and ensuring their medium- term economic recovery by taking measures to strengthen and expand their income generating activities.

**Keywords:** Sri Lanka; Tsunami; Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); Gender; Disaster Induced Displacement; Livelihood Assets

## 01. Introduction

Internal displacement of populations could be stemming from civil conflict, development activities or natural disasters or a combination of these. While displacement itself could be catastrophic to any person regardless of age, gender, social or financial status, the extent to which it affects people is different from one to another. In its desk study in 2005, Oxfam argued that disasters are “profoundly discriminatory”, even those that are “natural” rather than man-made. While it is generally accepted that the burden of displacement is not equal among all members of a family ((Thukral 1996), it is also clear that burdens of change that come with displacement are far greater for vulnerable segments such as women, children, old and the sick (Carpenter 2005; Carpenter 2006). This paper is engaged in studying the gendered experiences of a selected group of disaster induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Mirissa in southern Sri Lanka.

The study of displaced women is important for three reasons. Firstly, irrespective of whether the displacement is conflict induced (Mooney 2007) or, development induced (Thukral 1996; Ahmad and Lahiri-Dutt 2006; Fernades 2008: 202; Ravindran and Mahapatra 2009) or, disaster induced (de Mel and Ruwanpura 2006; de Mel 2007; Hyndman 2008), the affected women have particular protection and assistance needs that exceed the needs of men. Secondly, conflict affected women in general (Olmsted 2007) and the IDP women in particular (Momsen 2004: 130) play a central role in coping and recovery. Sometimes, as is shown in this paper, the coping roles played by women can be more effective than those of men. Thirdly, the above characteristics of engendered displacement—the distinctiveness of female needs and the importance of female coping mechanism—have critical policy fallouts. The present paper is therefore important for all three reasons.

Further, this research studies the medium term recovery of the disaster-induced IDPs. While much literature is available studying the links between gender, conflict and poverty (Olmsted 1997; Palmer and Zwi 2002; Giles and Hyndman 2004; Bouta, Frerks and Bannon 2005; Olmsted 2007), there is a noticeable dearth of literature that is particularly

focused on economic implications of displacement due to tsunami (Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2008). Further, we notice that longitudinal studies pertaining to the tsunami disaster are particularly lacking in contemporary literature. However, these works for methodological reasons cannot achieve any degree of the quantitative rigor, which has been problematic of the literature. The use of gender sensitive field methods has enabled us to make a unique contribution to a literature dominated by qualitative research and secondary data. The data used here, with primarily economic/livelihood focus, enables us to look at these issues at a level of detail that was not possible before. Economic issues that surface in situations of displacement have been examined only on a few occasions before this (Daley 1991; Olmsted 1997; Al-Ali 2005; Olmsted 2007; Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2008). This is primarily because more dramatic issues/problems that need urgent attention of the displacement literature are abundant (Daley 1991: 248). However, it is important not to neglect economics issues, as they are pivotal for the recovery, resettlement, and rehabilitation that should eventually follow cataclysmic displacement experiences.

The main constraint in doing economic analysis in affected regions is the availability of data (Närman and Vidanapathirana 2005: 14; Muggah 2008: 139; Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2009; Amirthalingam and Lakshman 2010). For instance, to our knowledge, no reliable secondary data is available for the region we explore in this study after the tsunami disaster. Then to perform any kind of economic analysis one has to rely on primary data. In that regard Bohle and Fünfgeld (2007) highlight another problem: the “need for protecting the security of research participants.”

Literature on feminist research methods is critical of ‘mainstream’ economic methods that rely only on quantitative data, as they are inadequate for analyzing feminist concerns (Benería 1995; Olmsted 1997; Pujol 1997). According to these critics “the survey data could tell only a very limited story, leaving out much important information” (Olmsted 1997). Moreover qualitative techniques are useful to explore how market decisions and behavior interplay with non-market activities of a household (Strassmann 2008). These techniques can be used to show that non-market activities performed by women in a

household are a decisive factor in determining market based—mostly male dominated household incomes. For these reasons we have gathered qualitative information on our sample based on lived experiences. These measures have greatly enriched (sometimes even altered) our research experience and have answered different type of questions than our quantitative or statistical analysis did. As a result we were able to uncover many asymmetric burdens and impacts of displacement borne by women.

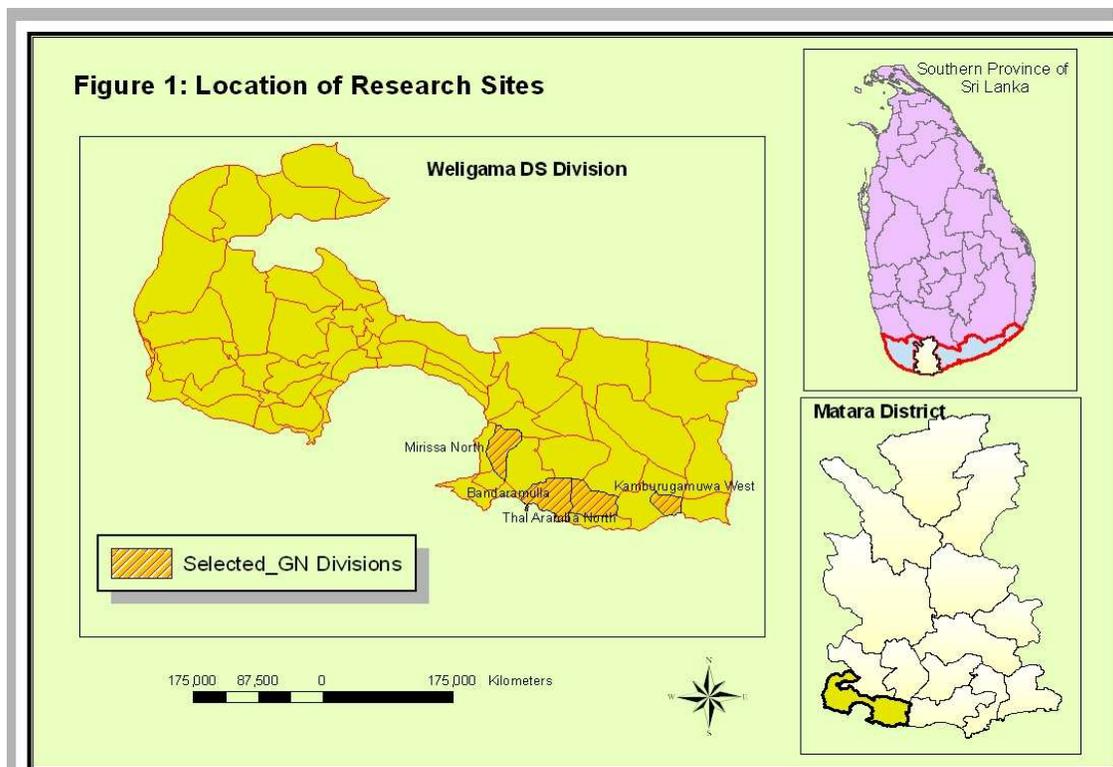
The paper is organized as follows. The introduction is followed by a qualitative assessment of data which analyses answers from the sample to two open ended questions. The next section is made up of three case studies that bring out different dimensions of gendered displacement of tsunami. Section four engages in an analysis of quantitative data, while providing detailed qualitative information on them, while section five brings out the concluding remarks of the research.

## **02. Sri Lankan tsunami: An overview of medium term recovery in Weligama**

Tsunami disaster that hit the Sri Lankan shores on December 26, 2004, was of a magnitude that the country has not experienced before in recorded history. The wave hit Sri Lanka in a ribbon destruction, as opposed to a centralized destruction (which is generally what happens in the event of earthquakes, floods or cyclones) damaging about 75% of Sri Lanka's coastal line (Stirrat 2006). Further, the majority of people that were killed in the disaster were women, while the surviving women endured rape, and sexual and gender-based violence in camps and places of supposed refuge (Pittaway, Bartolomei and Rees 2007). According to a study carried out by the World Health Organization in Aceh, Indonesia in 2005 to assess mortality due to tsunami, taking all age groups together, females were 1.44 times as likely to die in the tsunami. The reasons for higher female deaths in the tsunami were their inability compared to males to climb to higher elevations, run faster to safer locations and being diverted by carrying infants and children (Hyndman 2008).

The research site consisting of four villages as illustrated in Figure 01 was picked after discussion with several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the southern province. While the coastal villages in the Weligama DS division suffered substantial physical damage and loss of lives due to tsunami, these areas have not featured prominently on tsunami-related displacement literature available. This could be possibly due to greater attention being focused on the eastern coast where conflict-induced IDPs were again displaced by natural disaster as well.

**Figure 1: Map of the Research Site**



While official pre-tsunami socio-economic data on the selected samples is unavailable, informal discussions with the NGOs functional in the area, *Grama Niladhari* officers of the selected areas, head priests of the village temples and respondents themselves provide a rather comprehensive and multi-faceted insight into the lives of the selected respondents prior to tsunami. The majority of males were engaged in fishing, while the majority of

females were engaged in the coir industry. Although those engaged in fishing earned a significant income per day (as high as Rs 7,000 on some days), the bulk of it was spent on consuming alcohol. Women, in contrast, spent nearly all of their earnings on household expenditure. All the respondents in the 15-65 age group were literate, but only 13% had studied up to the G.C.E ordinary level examination.

NGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Women in Need, BRAC and Institute for Development of Community Strength (INDECOS) have carried out various projects, alone and in conjunction with fellow NGOs, in the locations that we have picked for data collection. However, at the time of data collection, most of these NGOs had concluded their tsunami-related projects in these areas. However, INDECOS has a microfinance project which it is continually carrying out for the tsunami affected IDPs in the research site. The project has started off by loaning out Rs 10,000 for all resettled households in the research site, six months after tsunami. The loans were advanced to the heads of the household initially at a monthly interest rate of 2.5%, to be settled in 12 months.

According to the project officers, the first round of loans were a failure as a proper monitoring mission was not in place to observe to what purpose the loans have been utilized. Therefore, subsequently, the project has been redefined in several ways. Thus, to be eligible for a microfinance loan from INDECOS, the borrower has to explain the purpose of the loan, which could be livelihood improvement, skills development or improvements to the household, or in other words a capital expenditure that would likely enhance their standard of living. After the loan is granted, project officers visit the borrowers' households every month to collect the monthly dues. These visits, according to the project officers, provide a window for building up a good rapport with the IDPs, to better understand the problems faced by households and to develop new projects to overcome them<sup>1</sup>. At the time of data collection, the loan amount granted was from Rs 12,000 – Rs 24,000 and the interest rate was 5%. When screening potential borrowers,

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<sup>1</sup> One such project developed after these field visits was *Kantha Saviya* (Women's strength) in which workshops are organized for females to educate them on banking activities, skills development, marketing their products and services such as counseling, legal advice etc.

amounts closer to the upper limit of the loan amount were generally granted to those with a sound repayment history and had shown concrete progress over time.

### **03. Data and Methodology**

The paper is mainly based on primary data, in the absence of reliable secondary data. The primary data was collected through a questionnaire of 20 questions, including two-open ended questions. The respondents for this survey were selected using a random sampling method, and thus, interestingly includes households that have benefitted from the disaster without having fallen victim to it. 102 households participated in the survey, which consisted of 213 income earners and 163 dependants, resulting in data from a total of 396 persons being collected for the purpose of this research. Of the selected sample 85 were male-headed households, while 17 were female-headed households. The general household size was 4 members, while the largest household consisted of 9 members, and the smallest, of one person.

In addition to collecting data through questionnaires, in depth interviews were carried out with selected household members based on the following three criteria.

1. Loss of main income earner in the tsunami disaster
2. Loss of income earning assets in the disaster
3. Loss of dwelling due to the disaster

In fact, we have been able to identify households which have suffered from more than one of the above three criteria. Informal interviews were also conducted with the project officers from non-governmental organizations carrying out livelihood related projects particularly towards resettled IDPs. Field visits and observation methods were also used over a two-week period in August, 2010.

Even though the data sampling has been based on households, we have collected data on the members of households as well which has allowed us to look at economically active men and women of these households in this research. Hereinafter all references to

individual data would refer to the data on these individual income earners. A research team consisting of two field research officers was used to gather data, and they were guided by the first author. The case studies and informal interviews, however, were carried out by the first author herself. A key limitation experienced in the process of data collection was the questionability of individual earner income of the surveyed households prior to tsunami. In the absence of secondary information pertaining to income level of the sample, we were confined to the information provided by the individuals themselves, and where relevant we have cross checked the accuracy of this information with several non-governmental organizations working with these households, it should be highlighted as a major limitation we had to face in conducting the research.

The feminist economists stress the limitations of quantitative/survey methods in investigating feminist issues (Berik 1997; Olmsted 1997; Pujol 1997). The present study therefore focused much on the qualitative methods and how they could complement and enhance the survey method as suggested by Berik (1997). Here considerable emphasis is given to qualitative data whether gathered purposively or incidentally as has been done by Patricia Daley (1991: 253). Nevertheless the qualitative analysis is followed by a quantitative assessment of the pre- and post-tsunami livelihoods to better understand the dynamics of gendered displacement.

#### **04. The gender issues of displacement: A qualitative analysis**

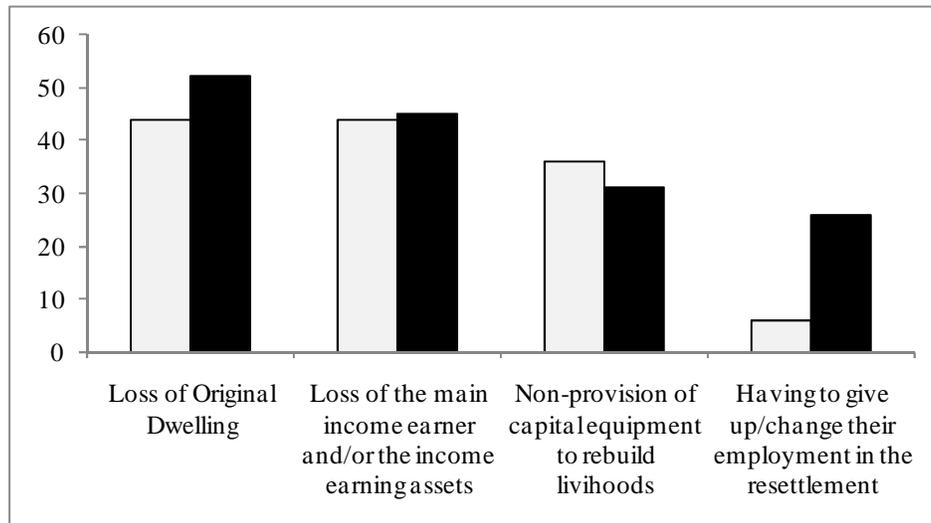
This section uses qualitative data to engender displacement. This analysis is nurtured by the responses to two open-ended questions as well as three detailed case studies which set the tone for the rest of the paper.

*What is the greatest difficulty you have faced in rebuilding your livelihoods after the disaster?*

This question was posed at the individual level of the household survey. The responses obtained in an open-ended format were then coded and put into five broad categories. Figure 2 presents these responses in ascending order of commonality as well as the

gender of the respondent. Here we have mapped the various impacts identified by males (white bars) and females (black bars). The bars capture the number of men and women who expressed that the particular issue was the most serious problem for them.

**Figure 2: Difficulties faced in rebuilding livelihoods after tsunami**



The single most common problem identified by respondents at the time of the survey was the loss of their original dwellings. Although 92% of the households surveyed were resettled within 1km-2km of their resettlement (often on the landside of the village, as opposed to the sea side where they lived before the tsunami disaster), they still felt alienated from the surrounding that they were used to. This was rather surprising that even after five years of the disaster and three years after resettlement, the nostalgic feeling was so predominant among some IDPs that they were moved into tears when talking about their original dwellings. Informal interviews with the INDECOS project officers suggested that the loss of their original dwellings was a complicated issue that was more serious than a mere nostalgic sentiment; for the respondents, the original dwellings were the crust of their lives, with their livelihoods, and family and social networks orbiting around their dwellings. Resettlement after the disaster even within the close vicinity of their original was, therefore, for most IDPs, meant a change in all that

helped them economically, socially and emotionally. To quote a widower from the sample (Household 41) “Back at home, I was free – I had a job, I had family, now I am all alone. Had I died in tsunami, I would not have to go through this ordeal. I will go back there some day, when I earn enough money”. It is important to note here that after 3 years and 4 months in the new resettlement, his “home” was his shanty near the sea which was washed away in tsunami<sup>2</sup>. Although he claims to be too physically ill to return to the coir industry, he seemed to be used to a dependant life – made clear by the fact that she had given up a job as an assistant cook in an elder’s home in Mirissa. On the contrary, a correspondent from Household No 62 had the following reason to return home: “I never saw my son’s dead body. I am certain he must be still alive. If I go back to where we were before tsunami, he may be able to find me”.

On the whole, a clear distinction is discernible in their problems with the resettlement. For men, the loss of original dwellings was a discomfort – they were out of their comfort zone. But for women, it was a more complex maze of problems – emotional attachment to the life before tsunami, loss of their friends and companions who provided them an essential safety net, and loss of financial security as the male head of the household showed a lack of enthusiasm for economic upliftment. To put it bluntly, women’s responses showed hope and optimism, whereas for most (over 65%) of male correspondents expressed pessimism and a sense of resignation.

The second pressing issue faced by the respondents was the loss of the main income earner and/or the income earning assets. Out of the income earners among the respondents, most women were engaged in the coir industry, while most men were engaged in fisheries related activities (mostly fishing) before tsunami. Only 16% of the respondents were fixed income earners. All those who were self-employed had, to some extent, sustained losses to their income earning assets.

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<sup>2</sup> The respondent was a fisherman who lost his house and wife to tsunami. Since the disaster he has given up fishing and lives on the financial support of his two sons and daughter, all of whom are married with children

At the time of the disaster, all of the households did not have any monetary savings in excess of Rs 10,000 except Household No 76. This was the most educated household in the sample, where the male head of the household (Menaka) was a graduate and both his wife and him were teachers in government schools. Their savings were close to Rs 200,000 at the time of the disaster. Common livelihood assets among the respondents were fishing boats (either rented or leased) three-wheelers (mostly leased), motor cycles and bicycles. Motor cycles and bicycles were mostly used to sell part of the catch of fish door to door. Those who owned three wheelers earned income by transporting people in them. While women did consider jewelry to be an asset, most of them, at the time of the disaster, did not possess any valuable beyond a pair of gold earrings, and a gold chain. Thus, when their assets were fully or partially damaged by the tsunami disaster, the respondents (except the fixed income earners) were completely economically paralyzed, with no monetary savings to help rebuild their livelihoods, nor a strong social network as most of their near and dear ones were also handicapped in the disaster. Menaka of Household 76 stated that the sheer novelty of the disaster may have played a significant role in leaving most people economically vulnerable after the disaster. He elaborated as follows: “Women are the most vulnerable. The fishing men can be very violent when they are stressed out without work or money. The only thing they do when they are workless is getting into fights with others and adding kids to the family”. Factually, the last phrase was true for 27 Households whose head of the household was a fisherman. They had the largest families with the age of children sometimes spanning from 15 years to less than a year. Interestingly however, most of the women of these households consider kids to be “assets”.

Of all the correspondents in the survey group, about 40% of the women had a definitive idea of what livelihood assets they required to rebuild their livelihoods. In contrast, most men (approximately 65%) worked simply to fulfill the daily requirements of the family, and had little or extremely vague economic plans for the future of their families. The resilience and the courage exhibited by women in rebuilding their income level were clearly above those of the men interviewed, although their income is still significantly

below those of the male. Interestingly, even in 53% out of the 83 male-headed households, the rebuilding of livelihoods was spear headed by the female. For example, in Household 30, the husband had owned a garment factory with 15 workers prior to tsunami. The entire factory and the equipment have been destroyed, and even after five years he claims he lacks the stamina to start yet another business. However, his wife has loaned money from two NGOs to purchase two sewing machines, and has started supplying kids' clothing to a clothing shop in Ahangama. She claims to earn about Rs 30,000 per month, which has sometimes even been as high as Rs 55,000. The husband, we have learned through our contacts with INDECOS, is still unemployed and disgruntled over the loss of his business.

While 21 respondents listed the loss of the key income earner as their main problem faced in resettlement, the issue was more of an emotional nature for most of them – the loss of the life itself, and not necessarily the income. Household 29 had a unique story in answering this question.

Household 29 is made up of a mother (Leela 56) and a son (Jeevan 27) who is mentally challenged. The father of the house was engaged in the fishing industry (sewing and repairing fishing nets). He was missing after the tsunami disaster, and his body was never recovered. Leela who has been a very domesticated female tending for her mentally disabled son prior to the disaster is now faced with the additional burden of earning a living. While she lacks skills that could earn her a decent living, she earns a meager income of Rs 100-150 per day (she has work for about 12-15 days of the month) by providing assistance at a family-run coir factory in Mirissa. She said that though she could have worked at a house as a maid/servant for about Rs 10,000 per month, she could not leave her son all alone for too long. She added that had she been at her original dwelling, which was more familiar to her son, and which was surrounded by her and her husband's family, she could have considered an opportunity like that.

The third reason was the non-provision of capital equipment to rebuild their livelihoods. Strikingly, all the respondents stated that none of the donors provided them with any capital equipment to rebuild their livelihoods. While dry food rations, clothing and even kitchen and household equipment were distributed, they stated that livelihood assistance has been, at most, insignificant. To quote Baby Nona of Household 71 “One NGO distributed candle wax among us and some equipment to make candles. I told a foreigner that I wanted a machine to manufacture coir rope. Then they got me a machine. But it is of such low quality that the ropes I manufacture now fail to capture the prices I earlier charged. I complained again, but to no avail.” Obtaining livelihood equipment has been more of a challenge to women as opposed to men in the surveyed sample. This could be mainly because most men engaged in fisheries did not in fact have to own the required assets to return to their livelihoods. They could go fishing in another person’s boat for a share of the profit. Similarly other men who worked as painters or laborers did not require capital assets to earn income. Most women, on the other hand, were self employed and required some capital (e.g. Sewing machines, coir machines etc) to recommence their livelihoods.

The fourth and perhaps the only factor affecting exclusively females was having to give up their source of income in the resettlement. This was mostly a forced decision triggered by the loss of their family and friends within close vicinity. For most of the women, the problem was the distance between their new dwelling and the place of work. Yet another important reason was the emotional trauma of the disaster which had taken away desire to do well in life. To quote Vinitha (60) of Household 01 “Everything we built over our lives was washed away. I don’t have the energy to rebuild anything anymore.” Even relatively younger respondents shared the same views – for most of them rebuilding their lives to what they were before tsunami was beyond comprehension. While older male respondents expressed similar views, about 90% of the younger (50 years and younger) male correspondents have returned to income generation activities over the five years since the disaster.

## **05. Beyond Economics: Case Studies**

In this subsection we draw upon some of the rich qualitative information that we were able to gather, either purposively or incidentally, on the IDPs, and attempt to describe some of the very sensitive and non-quantifiable issues that have surfaced. This subsection includes four case studies which provide certain gendered perspectives on displacement. The selection of households was subject to a selection bias in order that we are able to highlight gendered post displacement experiences. Accordingly, two female headed households and two male headed households, all of which had seen the loss of an income earning family member to the disaster, and experienced damage to their livelihood assets were chosen to assess how each household had progressed thus financially and socially post-disaster. However, how these households have responded in rebuilding their livelihoods and the role of gender in each scenario is widely different from one another, perhaps highlighting the fact that more than every variable that we have looked at, individual attitude and courage, which lie beyond the scope of economic analysis, play the most crucial role in determining how well off they are after five years of the disaster.

The first case study was that of Household Number 14, where Heen Menike (66) heads the household. Her father (90), unmarried sister (62), her youngest son (36) separated from a marriage of eight years and her grandson (15) live with her in her house. Her husband who was 59 at the time of death to the disaster was a fisherman and brought in a monthly income of about Rs 20,000-30,000.

Heen Menike, a slim but energetic woman for her age was engaged in the coir industry since her early 20s. In her village, Pol Athumodara, she is, even at the time of writing, a much respected and a strongly entrepreneurial woman. Before tsunami, nearly 15 women in the village worked in her coir business, which consisted of five coir machines. She earned about Rs 1000-2000 from one bunch of coir, and she had managed to produce 20-25 of such bunches in a month with the assistance of those 15 women, who were either paid on a daily basis or a profit share of each bunch of coir sold, whichever was preferable to each woman. Thus with a combined income of approximately Rs 60,000-

70,000 per month, this household was the financially most outstanding before the disaster, amongst the households surveyed.

Heen Menike and her family have resettled within 1 km of her previous dwelling, but was not satisfied in her resettlement. While she seemed to have gotten over the loss of her spouse, she was sorrowful that she would never be able to bring back her coir business to what it was before. Only five women work with her now, while the others have given up working either due to the distance from their houses to hers, or had simply lost interest after the disaster.

She complains that the two new coir machines donated were extremely low in quality and had to be repaired every now and then, compared to the much sturdier equipment she owned and which were destroyed in the disaster. Further, she argues that the husks that she now gets from the suppliers are of much weaker quality. This is because the holes that have been dug to season the coconut husks have been spoilt after tsunami, with dead bodies and debris from the disaster getting lodged inside those holes. Even after five years after the disaster, no one from the village has taken any action to clean up those holes in fear that they were haunted by dead bodies. Not even requests made to government officials or NGOs have been answered, according to her. This has resulted in a low supply of husks as well as a drop in the quality of the raw material, which affects the end product's quality and therefore the prices it can fetch.

Nevertheless, Heen Menike is listless in her efforts to come out of poverty and rebuild their income. Her only concern is that her son who is already separated from his wife and is an able man has no interest in finding a steady source of income. According to her, he goes off to Galle or Matara once in a way to work as an assistant in building/house construction activities. But he never supports the family or his son, and spends any money he earns on alcohol. Her father is bed ridden and it is her unmarried sister who attends to the requirements of him. Being far from entrepreneurial like her sister, she plays the motherly role in the household – cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and

carrying out other chores around the house. Heen Menike's grandson goes to school and plans to learn welding when he turns 18, a job she believes has enough earning potential to help the family stabilize financially.

The second case study is on Household 28, headed by Nimal (34) a fisherman, with his wife Nilani (28), their son Tharuka (5) and Nilani's mother (55). Before tsunami, Nimal used to earn a monthly income of Rs 20,000-Rs 30,000, but according to Nilani, he hardly gave her any money for household expenditure. Nilani ran a salon and did some sewing for neighbours. She also earned about Rs 10,000 from the business. Before tsunami her parents were living separately. Her mother used to prepare string hoppers and sell them to a near-by food outlet, which would fetch her about Rs 2,000 a month. Nilani's father who died in the disaster worked in a fish stall earning about Rs 7,000 per month.

Nilani's salon was completely washed away in tsunami, while the house was only partially damaged. The family is resettled within 2 km of their original dwelling, and Nilani has plans of rebuilding their destructed house someday in the future. After the disaster, Nimal returned to his occupation, earning about Rs 30,000 per month. Although he still did not give her more than Rs 6,000 per month for the son's expenses, he spent less on alcohol and spends his spare time mending fishing net from which he earns an extra income. Nilani runs the salon once more at her new house, and has also purchased a sewing machine loaning funds from a microfinance project carried out by an NGO. She earns Rs 10,000-15,000 per month and claims that during wedding seasons, she sometimes earns even Rs 25,000. She has also started a separate business to dry fish and sell packeted dried fish to retail shops. She has even been abroad twice, on both occasions to Chennai (2007 and 2009) for training on beauty culture, having been nominated for these overseas training by the NGO officials for her innovative business skills among her community peers. Quite confident and articulate in her words, she stated that no training or skill development was offered by any organization in their resettlement activities. She added that while attention for the IDPs immediately after the disaster was

almost overwhelming, most programmes that were carried out for resettlement purposes did not focus on rebuilding their livelihoods. Even though housing was provided, help available for securing a means of income was hardly available for almost all IDPs. In fact this was an opinion that reverberated through almost all the households surveyed.

The third case study is of Household 67, a female headed household, against which we observed much hostility by the fellow IDPs. Although, Thilakaa (49) claims her house was partially damaged in tsunami, her neighbours stated that she was the only person in Bandaramulla North who was given housing assistance without her house being affected by it. Through our unofficial contacts with NGOs, we came to know that although her husband died in the disaster, her house was intact after the disaster. Before tsunami, her husband was a fisherman, who spent nearly all of his income on alcohol, while Thilakaa supported her two children, aged 14 and 11 respectively by working in Heen Menike's coir business. While she earned about Rs 5,000 per month from the business, her relatively richer brother has also helped with the children's expenses and education. Their original house, according to the officials at the NGO, was of a severely dilapidated condition. In contrast, now she owns a permanent house with cemented floor, and tiled roof. However, she no longer gets to work at Heen Menike's coir business because her resettlement is much farther away from Heen Menike's house, and she cannot leave her children alone at home in the evenings. She has taken up sewing after the disaster, but complains that she is not aware of a supplier to sell her garments. Her concluding comments were "If there are more donations, I will be more than happy to accept them", starkly exposing her dependent mentality even after five years of the disaster.

The fourth case study is of Household 82, a male-headed household of four members – Sumanadasa (74), Kalyani (68) and their grandchildren Niluksha (13) and Ruvini (9). Their mother, Lalanthi (34) was killed in tsunami, while the retail shop she owned and ran was also completely destroyed in the disaster. Lalanthi was the sole income earner of the family, while her husband had left her in 2000 for another woman. Both Sumanadasa and Kalyani were in tears at the memory of their daughter, whom they described as

courageous and caring. Prior to the disaster, Lilanthi's shop fetched about Rs 30,000-40,000 per month, while Sumanadasa earned a monthly pension of Rs 8,500. Kalyani took up sewing orders which brought her a monthly income roughly about Rs 3,000. Combined, the income was "more than enough to live", in Kalyani's own words.

However, tables have turned for them after the disaster. In addition to having to cope with the loss of their daughter, they are also affected by the loss of income. Kalyani claims that she no longer has the energy or the health to engage in sewing. She prepares string hoppers and sells to food outlets on three days of the week, which yields about Rs 5,000 for the month. In addition, Sumanadasa still gets his pension, over 50% of which, according to him, is spent on his own medicine. The two children are still schooling and Kalyani's sister-in-law who is unmarried and abroad sends them about Rs 10,000 roughly once every two months for the children's studies. Still completely devastated by the disaster, Sumanadasa and Kalyani are clueless as to what the future holds for them, or how to support their two grandchildren when they grow older and their requirements increase.

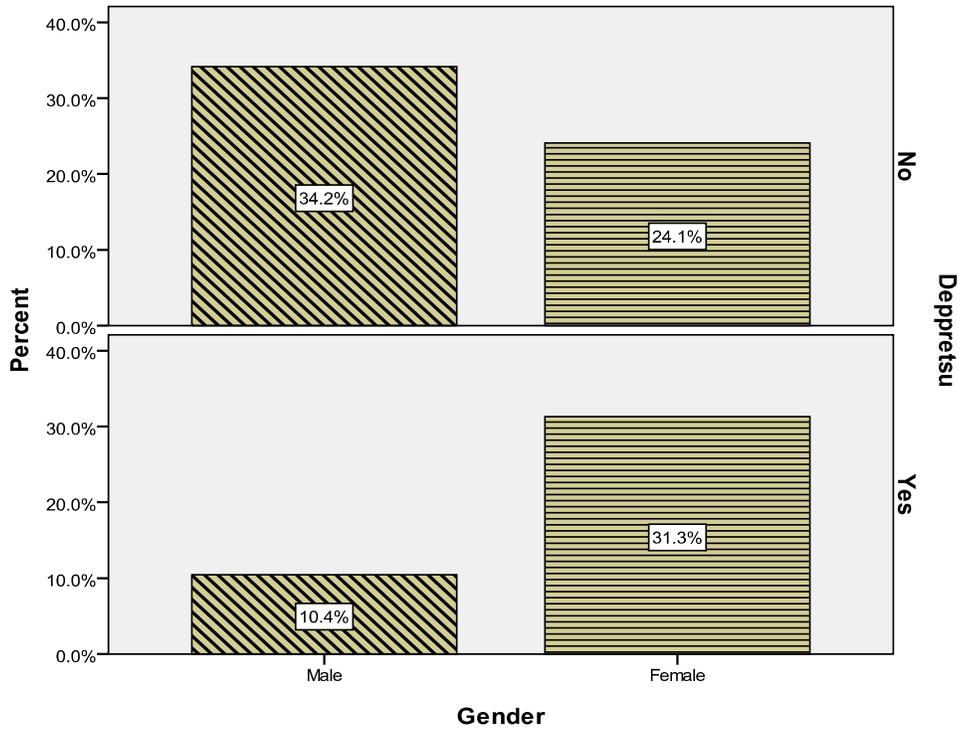
## **06. Gendered Displacement: Through a Quantitative Lens**

The peculiar yet interesting issue that we need to highlight in this research is that the individual strengths of the female IDPs that were identified during the data collection period tend to get lost in the bigger picture – the quantitative study.

In terms of the properties of the surveyed sample of 378, 46% were females, while 54% were males. Further, in the sample, 30% was 15 years of age or younger, 63%, between 15 and 65, and the remaining 8%, 66 years or older. In terms of a gendered analysis of the sample, of the 378 respondents 34% are females in the 16-65 years age group, while 29% are males.

Of the surveyed sample, 58% was employed prior to tsunami while 42% were unemployed. Of the employed, 59% were males, and 41% were female.

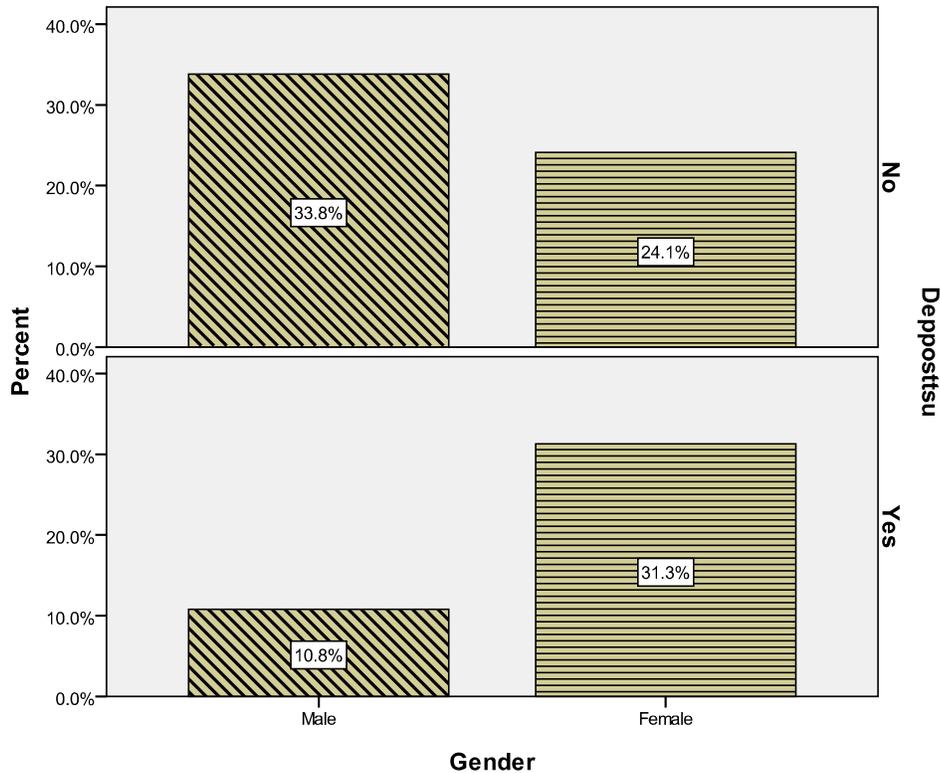
**Figure 3: Gender composition of economic dependency before tsunami 16 years and older**



While 25% of females aged 16 and older were employed prior to tsunami, their main occupation is the coir industry, followed by sewing. Amongst males, 73% aged 16 years and older were employed, with 51% of them being engaged in fisheries.

The composition of the employed and the dependent had not changed much after tsunami, with the number of employed persons in the population at 59% and the number of dependents at 41%. Of the employed, 58% were male.

**Figure 4: Gender composition of economic dependency after tsunami 16 years and older**



In terms of a gendered age analysis of the employed after tsunami, a total of 15 women had given up work after the disaster, in contrast to only 4 men. Of the females who were unemployed after the disaster, 9 stated that the decision to give up work was voluntary resulting from loss of interest, loss of livelihood assets, difficulty of engaging in an income generating activity in the new settlement, deterioration of health or a combination of these reasons. However, the remaining 6 females who stated giving up their income generating activity was forced also had similar to those that had voluntarily given up their livelihood activities. Therefore, it was quite apparent that whether having to forego their income generating activity was “forced” or “voluntary” was more of an attitudinal factor and their perspective on it, as different respondents had the same reasons for not being employed anymore, irrespective of whether they considered their situation voluntary or forced.

In contrast, all 4 men had given up employment after tsunami considered their acts voluntary. Of them, 3 lived with their children or received money from children grown up and living separately. The remaining male was an unmarried individual aged 32 who had tried over thrice, unsuccessfully to find employment abroad.

In terms of occupation, both before and after tsunami, over 60% of the males were engaged in fisheries. In contrast, the occupation portfolio of females was diverse both before and after tsunami. Further, while about 45% of the women were engaged in the coir industry prior to tsunami, only 32% were engaged in it after tsunami.

Analysis of individual income pre- and post-tsunami indicates that in both scenarios, the gender of the individual and the income level share a statistically significant relationship, as illustrated in Table 01.

**Table 1: Gender and Income**

Gender and Income (Pre-Tsunami)				
		Dependent		Total
		No	Yes	
Gender	Male	95	29	124
	Female	67	87	154
Total		162	116	278
Pearson Chi-Square	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)	
	99.431	30	0.000	
Gender and Income (Post-Tsunami)				
Gender	Male	95	28	124
	Female	67	88	154
Total		162	116	278
Pearson Chi-Square	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)	
	117.563	38	0.000	

Nevertheless education does not share a statistically significant relationship with both pre-and post-tsunami income levels.

**Table 2: Education and Income**

Education and Income (Pre-tsunami)			
Education	Nil		8
	Year 1-5		49
	Year 6-11		184
	Year 12-13		36
	Higher studies		1
Total			278
Pearson Chi-Square	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
	88.354	120	0.987
Education and Income (Pre-tsunami)			
Education	Nil		8
	Year 1-5		49
	Year 6-11		184
	Year 12-13		36
	Higher studies		1
Total			278
Pearson Chi-Square	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)
	127.87	122	0.930

This could be attributed to the fact that despite women in the sample selected being in general being more educated than men, they do not have the exposure to higher income generating activities.

**Table 3: Gender composition of education**

		Education					Total
		0	1-5	6-11	12-13	Higher studies	
Gender	Male	3	21	90	11	1	126
	Female	5	28	94	25	0	152
Total		8	49	182	36	1	278

Fisheries are the most lucrative occupation among the livelihood activities of the sample, a livelihood taken up only by males. In contrast, women are engaged in activities that generate less income, even though they may work an equal number of days as men. Further, unless females are paid employees of the formal sector, their income generating

activities are constantly disturbed by having to attend to day to day chores of the household, a hindrance not faced by men in the selected sample. Under these circumstances it comes as no surprise that there is a significant statistical difference between mean male and female income both pre- and post-tsunami.

**Table 4: Gender based comparison of pre-and tsunami income level**

Levene's test <sup>a</sup>		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means				
<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
<b>Pre-tsunami</b>						
10.941	0.001	7.372	275	0.000	8310	1304
<b>Post-tsunami</b>						
7.158	0.008	3.925	276	0.000	1088	277

Note: <sup>a</sup> The Levene's test for equality of variance. The equality of means test reported is performed with or without the assumption of equality of variance depending on the outcome of the Levene's test.

However, it has to be noted that irrespective of gender, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean income pre- and post-tsunami income, indicating that recovery from tsunami disaster has been slow and that after five years of the disaster, the respondents are still below their pre-tsunami per capita income level, as indicated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Comparison of overall pre-and tsunami income level**

		Paired Differences		<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	Incpre - Incpostadj	7011	11045	10.564	276	.000

The lower post-tsunami income level could partly be attributed to weaknesses in the recovery measures undertaken by various donor organizations and individuals. While all the households have received housing from the government or donors, as well as household equipment, only 26% of the respondents had received support for their

livelihood reconstruction. Further, discussions held with project officers from NGOs revealed that due to lack of supervision and monitoring, some of the low-interest loan facilities that were granted during the first year by various organizations after the disaster were used for consumption purposes. A further point that we inferred from interviews with the respondents was that the two years they spent in temporary shelter after the disaster had gotten them used to a dependent and purposeless life style. Returning to a normal life style of earning one's own income was a situation that needed getting accustomed to after their stay in IDP camps.

## **07. Concluding Remarks**

It is a point that is unlikely to be disputed that tsunami was the most severe natural disaster to affect Sri Lanka. The overall picture indicates that economic recovery, irrespective of gender, has not been impressive in the selected research site. In fact, even after five years of the disaster, they are still below their pre-tsunami income levels. The gendered perspective we have taken shows that although some charismatic individual female respondents could be identified in the qualitative analysis, the avenues available for them to enhance income levels are limited. Despite their better education, and relatively more diverse range of the income generating activities compared to men, women in general earn much less than men.

The absence of focused support from the donor environment, difficulties faced in their new resettlements and the emotional trauma of facing the disaster and losing their loved ones and assets in the disaster has left more of a permanent dent in their economic lives irrespective of the gender. After five years of the disaster, the IDPs still feel alienated in their new surrounding which is a key drawback for enhancing their livelihoods, pointing to possible lapses and shortcomings in resettlement plans that were drawn up for them.

What we learn here about gendered nature of the disaster induced problem, in most cases, can be generalized into all IDP situations. These generalized findings can be mapped onto policy recommendations directed towards improving the IDP well-being beyond the short term. Although donor support in the form of basic human requirements via humanitarian

interventions is critical, the present work highlights the importance of helping IDPs find work, and earn their way out of impoverishment in the medium term. In that regard providing livelihood support in the form of livelihood assets, planned resettlement, and focused training and skills development for the IDPs had emerged as critically important. Such facilitation has to be gender sensitive, as the livelihood challenges are clearly gendered.

Another medium term policy implication that arises from this work is the significance of the presenting programs that target skills development in growing industries for the younger IDPs, thus shifting their 'IDP mentality' which grumbles about lack of support and funding towards economically active individuals. In doing so it is important to implement measures that would widen the framework of livelihood opportunities available for them outside their traditional economic activities.

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