

**ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY IN POST-TSUNAMI
RECONSTRUCTION – ACTIVITIES OF
TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL SRI LANKA**

Donor Forum, an engagement of Civil Society with Donors – 28th of January 2005

A Donor Forum was organized by TISL in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation and in collaboration with the two leading community level NGOs in Sri Lanka – Sarvodaya & Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies and with a Policy level NGO, Center for Policy Alternatives. The main aim of this forum was to ascertain initial measures taken by the Donor Community towards ensuring accountable aid disbursement and to generate some benchmarks in this regard amongst Civil Society in Sri Lanka.

This forum was attended by a small yet focused audience of approximately 60 persons. Representatives from International Donor Organizations and Banks, the Diplomatic Community, including Government Aid Departments, Civil Society and the Media were present.

The Agenda covered presentations from a wide representation of the different elements in this movement and measures taken by them, their expectations and their commitment towards developing an Accountability Framework for aid disbursement.

- **Guidelines on Accountability in handling Tsunami Aid – Justice Mark Fernando. Former Judge of the Sri Lanka Supreme Court**

This presentation covered key fundamental issues in Sri Lankan context to improve accountability in handling foreign aid in post tsunami scenario

- **Accountability in aid disbursement in the Provinces – Asoka S. Gunawardena**

Chairman, Finance Commission of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gunawardana covered the legal framework and practical realities of foreign aid disbursement to Provinces.

- **Measures taken by Donors and their expectations of Accountability – Peter Harold, Country Representative, World Bank, Sri Lanka**

The Head of the World Bank in Sri Lanka initially described the sequel of events in aid disbursement following the Tsunami disaster. With regard to accountability in specific and he highlighted that accountability is expected at the 3 levels of aggregate reporting, implementation accountability and grass-root level entitlements. He explained that the Guiding Principles of the World Bank, which he quoted explicitly calls for a stringent accountability framework and advocates a zero-tolerance of corruption in this instance.

- **Government's commitment towards Accountability – Lalith Weeratunge, Member, TAFREN & Secretary to the Prime Minister**

Mr. Weeratunga, highlighted that his Task Force's responsibility is monitoring of selection and implementation of the projects, and will not be involved with handling finances. He indicated that the existing oversight mechanism and auditor general will take care of the accountability. He also stated that professional bodies will be invited to help the government in the second stage.

- **Responsibility of the Humanitarian Community in enhancing Accountability**

Jeevan Thiagarajah, Executive Director, Center for Humanitarian Agencies. As the co-ordinating body for Humanitarian Organizations, The Executive Director reiterated the need for a concerted action plan to enhance accountability and the transparency of NGOs themselves..

- **Measures taken by Sarvodaya towards accountability – Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, Executive Director, Sarvodaya**

Sarvodaya is the largest local NGO with wide coverage across most of the Island. Following the disaster, Sarvodaya was the pioneering Organization to implement a co-ordinated relief effort, including coordination of voluntary services. The Executive Director highlighted the measures taken by Sarvodaya.

- **Weaknesses in the existing framework in handling Aid –J.C. Weliamuna, Executive Director, TISL**

This presentation highlighted why the prevalent administrative set-up of Sri Lanka does not equip the Government to effectively handle the vast amounts of aid money that will be receive. Reasonable conclusions were drawn that a few focused changes need to be implemented to enhance accountability in the process.

- **Roadway to Accountability – a TISL action plan – M.D.A. Harold, Chairman , TISL**

The proposed project planned by TISL was briefly covered by the Chairman, TISL, with more specific action plans under each anticipated activity. TISL's expectations from the Donor Community was also briefly touched upon.