

Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC



Humanitarian Policy



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Humanitarian Policy

1. Introduction

Humanitarian crisis be it manmade or natural disasters continue to dominate world attention despite decades of efforts to prevent or mitigate the occurrence of such disasters. The Global Assessment Risk report (GASR) 2015 mentions that losses from natural disasters are now reaching an average of US\$ 250 to 300 billion each year. The same report mentions another study done by them that the average annual losses (AAL) from earth quakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones and river flooding are now estimated at US\$ 314 billion in the built environment alone.

Losses due to armed conflict make equally disturbing reading. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in a survey of armed conflict in 2015 quoting the UN High Commissioner for Refugees mentions that for the first time in 2013, the global number of displaced persons due to conflict exceeded 50 million persons. (Armed Conflict Survey 2015)

In the majority of such occurrences the reasons are believed to be the prevalence large scale inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, unplanned urban development and poor governance structures. The long term consequence of such a situation creates extreme social imbalances leading to social divisions which exacerbate conflicts.

2. Sri Lankan Context

Sri Lanka has become increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters and the losses due to the outbreak of such disasters especially in the past decade have been very high. These include;

- The Tsunami disaster of December 2004 which resulted in the loss of over 31,000 lives and the displacement of nearly 500,000 families. The economic losses due to this disaster are estimated to be over US \$ 1 billion.
- The outbreak of floods interspersed with drought and the occurrence of landslides in several hazard prone areas as been recorded in recent years. For e.g., in December 2014 over 1,145,618 persons consisting of 318,276 families were affected by floods.¹ 35 lost their lives. In August 2014, One

¹ Disaster Management Centre – 30/12/2014

estimate of the damages of flood outbreaks over the last decade mentions that Sri Lanka during the past 10 years faced 23 flood occurrences with over 500 loss of lives and 9 million people affected and these floods caused an economic loss of US\$ 1 billion (OCHA- Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 03/Aug 2014 quoting the International Water Management Institute –Feb 2014)

- Sri Lanka was also plagued by a long drawn out conflict which came to an end in May 2009. Over 800,000 persons were displaced by this conflict and about 90,000 persons are believed to have lost their lives over three decades that this conflict prevailed.²

3. Caritas Sri Lanka – Mandate

Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC is an expression of the concern of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka for justice peace and human development. It operates on the mandate of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) which is conferred to the Board of Management.³ As the social arm of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) it has striven to serve humanity since 1967, inspired by the social teachings of the Catholic Church which has been acknowledged by the Government of Sri Lanka and Civil Society. Its mandate includes integral human development, **emergency relief**, advocacy & lobbying, peace building and reconciliation, respect for human rights, promotion of human dignity and proper stewardship of the planet’s environmental resources.

Providing emergency relief assistance to those affected by natural and manmade disasters, Caritas Sri Lanka is also responsible for transition and recovery assistance in order to rebuild and reintegrate displaced communities in a sustainable manner in their own villages. Support apart from immediate relief includes livelihood development, housing and sanitary support, support for obtaining personal documentation, psychosocial support and strengthening community institutions.

² P.R. Anthony Mark – Thinakkural Tamil Daily News paper – P. 04, - 17/03/2011

³ The Rules – The Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Sri Lanka

As a member of the Caritas Internationalis Network of 162 countries, Caritas Sri Lanka has striven to address the humanitarian needs of the affected communities with excellent support and solidarity from its network partners. Underlying this mandate is the overall vision of Caritas Sri Lanka which states; **“Realization of a Just Society based on Gospel Values of Love, Forgiveness, Peace, Unity, and Equality Lived, promoted and Protected irrespective of race, caste and religion.**

Acknowledging the present uncertain and dangerous consequences of the impact of natural and manmade disasters, Caritas Sri Lanka has in its Strategic Plan for period 2015-18, has made explicit reference to this and measures to address this situation. Strategic concern 3 refers to natural and manmade disasters and the measures that need to be taken to address such concerns.

Strategic Goal 3.1:- Adverse impact in terms of loss of life and damage to properties, assets and environment will have been reduced

Strategic Goal 3.2:- Emergencies are responded to efficiently and effectively

Strategic Goal 3.3:- Families affected by natural and manmade disasters are reinstated to normal and dignified life.

4. Goal

Traditional practice in responding to disasters was to improve the emergency response capacities to help affected vulnerable communities. The three objectives related to the three goals mentioned above focus on helping communities to move beyond the practice of merely receiving emergency support as a response to disasters but to focus more on disaster mitigation and risk reduction. In such a process vulnerable communities are involved as active participants in the decision making process of developmental and risk reduction programmes along with effective communication strategies. Such an approach will enable people in at risk environments to gain mastery of their own lives and overcome their vulnerabilities that inhibit social and economic development.

5. Humanitarian Principles

Our humanitarian actions have been carried out by striving to uphold the core values of humanitarian response based on the singular motivation of alleviating suffering in a manner that respects and restores the dignity of human beings. Accordingly Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence are the core values that guide Caritas Sri Lanka. The inspiration for such intervention is derived from following Gospel values. As Pope Benedict says in his Encyclical Letter “**DEUS CARITAS EST**”, for the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being”⁴

Humanity – the purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life, alleviate suffering and restore and preserve the dignity of affected communities. Caritas Sri Lanka and the respective Diocesan Centres reiterate their commitment to this purpose.

Impartiality – Caritas Sri Lanka serves affected communities irrespective of ethnicity, religious affiliation, political opinions and class and caste distinctions. In this context, CSL recognizes the need to balance the needs and interests of different stakeholders and strives to uphold the principle of impartiality while giving priority to the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

Neutrality – We are aware of the need to not take sides in hostilities or in any outcome related to a disaster or conflict situation or engage in controversies related to any ideological, religious, racial or political issues when serving the affected communities.

Independence – Caritas Sri Lanka is committed to the principle of independence when or wherever it is serving. While recognizing that the state must take the lead in any initiative is supporting humanitarian activities and the need to follow the guidelines and policies set out by the state, Caritas Sri Lanka will remain independent of political, economic, military or any other objectives that any other actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

⁴ Section 25 (a) of the encyclical “*DEUS CARITAS EST*”

The Second Vatican Council has made these points clearly that charitable activity should embrace all people and all needs. (Section 24 of the Vatican Council report quoted in DEUS CARITAS EST section 30 a))

Caritas Internationalis and member organizations follow Sphere and other international standards in humanitarian response. With the introduction of the Core Humanitarian Standards which is a joint Standards Initiative in which HAP, People in Need and Sphere project, Caritas Sri Lanka now strives to follow the CHS on Quality and Accountability which sets out Nine Commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. The four humanitarian principles mentioned above are integrated into the commitments, quality criteria, key actions and organizational responsibilities.

6. The Quality Criteria

1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant

2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is effective and timely

3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at risk as a result of humanitarian action.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects

4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback

5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.

Quality criterion: Complaints are welcomed and addressed

6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance

Quality criterion: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organizations learn from experience and reflection.

Quality criterion: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well managed staff and volunteers.

Quality criterion; Staff are supported to do their effectively and are treated fairly and equitably.

9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organizations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.

Quality criterion: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.

In a post disaster situation Caritas Sri Lanka follows a set of guidelines as formulated by Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Internationalis Member Organizations (CIMOs) which have helped in addressing the needs of affected communities.

7. The operational mechanism in a post disaster situation

Coordination – To make our response as effective as possible, coordination between CI members in humanitarian response through clearly set out rules and responsibilities with required actions of the different actors is important. The actors include the CBSL, the national Caritas, and the General Secretariat Humanitarian Department of CI, CIMOs responding to the emergency, dioceses, parishes, congregations and regional Caritas.

In times of a crisis, the national Caritas in will seek to coordinate its response in collaboration with CI and CIMOs in consultation with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka. Together the governing body will decide on whether an Emergency Response Solidarity Team (ERST) should be present to assess the situation and also request for a facilitating partner.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- a) The national Caritas organization/National Secretariat – Caritas Sri Lanka is responsible for coordination of the response and plays the primary role in information sharing and coordination with the dioceses and CIMOs. Depending on the scale of the emergency and the existing capacity, Caritas Sri Lanka will seek the support and advice of the Humanitarian Department of the General Secretariat to set up the appropriate mechanism up in the country. The national Caritas has the responsibility and mandate to update the Catholic Bishops Conference as well since Caritas is the social arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka. (in the context of Sri Lanka, the CBCSL is registered with the GoSL to respond to any emergency situation in Sri Lanka)

Caritas Sri Lanka will participate at relevant emergency coordination and planning meetings at the national level. It will also participate in the meetings convened by the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) or by the UN agencies. National Caritas will report the outcome of these meetings to the Chairman of Justice, Peace and Human Development Commission.

- b) The dioceses implement the response and have a responsibility to report their activities to the national Caritas and if necessary to CIMOs physically present in the ground or other partners who are supporting their activities. At the ground level it is the DCs and parishes that provide relevant information as they are in contact with village and district government officials including relevant Provincial ministries. The DCs participate in all coordination meetings related to disasters in which the District Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and other humanitarian agencies are also present.

- c) CIMOs support and accompany the national Caritas and the dioceses where required. They will be represented at the field level depending scale of the humanitarian situation. In all such activities the CIMOs have the responsibility to share their plans with the national Caritas, Catholic Bishops Conference and the respective Bishops of the affected dioceses. Communication of information will be coordinated by the communications department of the General Secretariat. At the outset it is the national Caritas with information from the affected DCs and other sources that will feed the CI and CIMOs about the situation. If required based on scale of emergency the communications department of the general secretariat in coordination with national Caritas will name a communications focal point or a CI a CI communicator in order to have system in place to communication material
- d) The regional Caritas/Caritas Asia – as the coordinating member organization for Asia they are well aware of the unfolding situation and are well placed to support the national Caritas. Their assistance will be sought to build emergency response capacity and train staff for emergency response deployment periodically. In case of a major emergency Caritas Asia will be able organize the relevant expertise in the region for support if and when requested by Caritas Sri Lanka

9. Developing an Emergency Appeal

Based on the assessment of the situation and situation reports sent by the national Caritas, CI will decide on whether an Emergency Appeal to support a disaster situation is necessary. Depending on the scale of the emergency, if all concerned parties agree that an ERST team should be present to assess the ground situation, the ERST together with the affected DCs will be involved in conducting need assessments in order to develop an EA. In case of disasters of a lesser magnitude an EA to support the affected communities is prepared by the national Caritas based on information provided by the DCs. After appropriate assessment CI will launch the appeal among the CIMOs. Individual CIMOs will upon consideration of the proposal send funds for the project. The national Caritas will send regular situation reports on the progress of the project including audited accounts to CI which will in turn circulate the reports to the CIMOs. A new tool that has been developed by CI in this regard

(tool for deciding whether to launch an appeal) outlines a series of steps that should be taken before the launch of an appeal. One of the main criteria is that not less than 50,000 people or in the case of small nations not less than 10% of the population should be affected in case an appeal is to be launched. (section 2 – criteria 1 – scale of damage exceeds the local capacity to cope – tool for deciding whether to launch an appeal)

10. Appeal to other non-Caritas Donors

Caritas Sri Lanka's work in the humanitarian sector has gained recognition in the country and as well as externally and apart from the Sri Lanka Government, other donors including foreign and local institutions, leading private sector business establishments, philanthropists and lay individuals in non-affected Dioceses/Parishes and Congregations have provided donations to support the humanitarian work of Caritas Sri Lanka. As humanitarian crises increase there is a need to obtain support from other sources as well to help affected communities.

The National Director in consultation with the DRM unit will decide on whom to approach for such a purpose. For this purpose the National Centre will in consultation with the respective Diocesan Centres develop a supplementary project proposal according to the requirements of the concerned non-donor. Assistance will be provided to communities avoiding duplication of assistance and will comply with the minimum standards prescribed by the government. The spirit of cooperation and solidarity that is displayed by the Caritas actors and other donors in supporting humanitarian actions provides added strength and enables the national Caritas to maximize its potential in supporting the affected communities.

11. Selection of sub-sectors as response

Depending on the needs assessment, the needs are prioritized in consultation with the respective diocesan directors of the affected areas and their teams, the local government authorities of the affected areas, the respective District

Disaster Management Centres and community leaders/CBO representatives for effective, appropriate and timely response and also to avoid duplication.


The Sectors could be among the following:

- a) Food
- b) Non- Food Relief Items (NFRI)
- c) Water & sanitation
- d) Shelter
- e) Health
- f) Psychosocial support
- g) Transport/evacuation

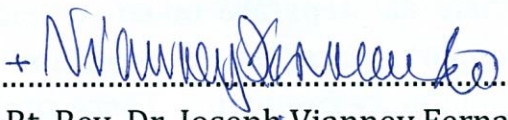
- ≠ The chosen support will ensure reducing the risk of vulnerability of the affected communities without any negative consequences. (Zero damages) – (CHS No. 3)
- ≠ Designing the type of needs (food, non-food, shelter items) could be aligned to the socio-economic and cultural practices of the local area (CHS 1)
- ≠ If the available resources for support are limited, the target area/communities or geographical area could be prioritized depending on the available resources and access and also the level of vulnerability of the communities in consultation with the respective diocesan directors, the national director and local government authorities.
- ≠ Affected communities are provided with all information relevant to the proposed response including the type of assistance to be given and quantities. Names of beneficiaries selected for support are displayed in public notice boards. (CHS 4)
- ≠ While all steps are taken to select the most vulnerable community for support appropriate complaints mechanisms are put in place to receive community comments. These could be written complaints, complaints via media (including electronic media), direct telecommunication contact and personal meetings with staff of diocesan centre and diocesan director. Feedback is recorded and the type of action taken to address the particular issue is also recorded. (CHS 5)

- ≠ CSL and the DC will participate in all coordination meetings convened by the district government authorities and at the national level in order to coordinate assistance and possible duplication of assistance in the event of more than one agency working in a particular area. This is to provide more effective and wider coverage in an affected area. (CHS 6)
- ≠ Effective feedback mechanism from communities is encouraged in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance. Such feedback is recorded and the findings are shared with the DCs for future responses. Internal & External evaluations are done by recognized organizations as per the requirements of the donor agencies and the recommendations of such evaluations are taken in to consideration in future activities.
- ≠ Competent staff is recruited and they are given an awareness of the mandate and values of the organization and are expected to work according to this mandate which is clearly stated in the Caritas Strategic Plan (2015-18). A human resource manual give details of the about the recruitment and competence level of the staff and the disciplinary procedures that are followed. A staff code of conduct is in place and staff are expected to adhere to this and are aware of the consequences of not following the code CHS - 8
- ≠ The Caritas Sri Lanka finance manual gives details of the policies and processes governing the use and effective management of resources that are in place including procurement procedures and procedures for dealing with corruption, fraud, conflict of interest and misuse of funds. – (CHS 9)

Approved.



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