



universität  
wien

# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

„Gender and Tsunami –

Vulnerability and Coping of Sinhalese Widows and  
Widowers on the South-West Coast of Sri Lanka “

Verfasserin

Julia Veronika Doppler

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2009

Studienkennzahl lt.  
Studienblatt:

A 307

Studienrichtung lt.  
Studienblatt:

Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

Betreuerin / Betreuer:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Elke Mader



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all those, who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this thesis, for their support.

First of all I would like to thank my interlocutors and especially Mr. Ranjith and his family for sharing their life and experiences with me.

Especially I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Elke Mader, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna, for her advice and support.

Further I would like to thank Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva, Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, without his advice and support this thesis would never have become a reality. I would like to thank the staff at the Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, for the knowledge and experience I gained while studying there. I also would like to thank my fellow students at the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, for the great time I had while studying there. A special thank-you to Danoja Perera, Niranjani Rupasinghe, Kethakie Nagahawatte and Chaminda Jayasinghe for their support and companionship.

I would like to thank Amal and his family for caring for me after the Tsunami, they saved my life.

I would also like to thank my fellow members of Talaash, especially Sarah and Nisa, for our discussions and their motivation.

A special thank-you goes to my father for his patience and support and to Hedi, especially for our discussions, her infinite support and for motivating me. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my other family members, my mother and all my sisters for their support.



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>GENDERED TSUNAMI - AN INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>WHAT IS A DISASTER? - DISASTER RESEARCH AT LARGE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Paradigm 1: The Patterns-of-War-Approach.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Paradigm 2: Disaster as Vulnerability.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Paradigm 3: Disaster as Uncertainty .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Paradigm 4: Disasters as Systemic Events and Social Catalysts.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Paradigm 5 : A General Theory of Social Order .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ANTHROPOLOGY AND DISASTER.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>History of Disaster Research in Anthropology .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Current Trends in the Anthropology of Disaster .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.2.1	Archaeological/Historical .....	16
3.2.2	Political Ecology .....	17
3.2.3	Sociocultural/Behavioral .....	17
3.2.3.1	Disaster Behavior and Response.....	18
3.2.3.2	Cultural Interpretations of Risk and Disaster .....	18
3.2.3.3	Post-Disaster Social and Cultural Change .....	19
3.2.4	Applied/Practicing .....	19
<b>4</b>	<b>VULNERABILITY CONCEPT .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Types of Vulnerability .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1.1	Economic Vulnerability .....	22
4.1.2	Social Vulnerability .....	23
4.1.3	Physical Vulnerability.....	23
4.1.4	Educational Vulnerability and Informational Vulnerability .....	24
4.1.5	Environmental Vulnerability .....	24
<b>4.2</b>	<b>The Vulnerability Concept of Wisner et al.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.2.1	The Pressure and Release (PAR) model.....	25
4.2.1.1	Root Causes .....	27
4.2.1.2	Dynamic Pressures.....	27
4.2.1.3	Unsafe conditions .....	28
4.2.2	Access Model.....	29
4.2.2.1	The Access Model – A Cyclical Model.....	30
4.2.2.1.1	Situation Previous to the Disaster .....	31
4.2.2.1.2	Hazard Impact.....	32
4.2.2.1.3	Transition to Disaster.....	33

4.2.2.1.4	Emergency Response, Recovery and Rehabilitation.....	34
4.2.2.2	Normal Life of Households.....	34
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Disaster Response and Hazard Mitigation.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.3.1	Disaster Response by Those Affected.....	36
4.3.2	External Disaster Response.....	37
4.3.3	Hazard Mitigation: Reducing Risk and Minimizing Vulnerability.....	38
<b>5</b>	<b>GENDER.....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1	Gender as Symbolic Construction .....	41
5.2	Gender as Social Relationship.....	42
5.3	“Doing Gender” .....	43
5.4	Sex and Gender.....	44
5.5	Sameness and Difference .....	44
5.5.1	Difference Within and Difference Between.....	45
5.5.2	Doing Difference.....	46
5.5.2.1	Gender .....	47
5.5.2.2	Race.....	47
5.5.2.3	Class .....	48
<b>6</b>	<b>GENDER AND DISASTER .....</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1	Gendered Vulnerability .....	51
6.2	Gendered Impact and Response .....	53
6.3	Gendered Coping Capacities.....	54
6.4	Gendered Relief and Rehabilitation .....	55
6.5	Gendered Disaster Mitigation and Risk Reduction .....	56
<b>7</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>57</b>
7.1	Personal approach.....	57
7.2	Thematic and Theoretical Approach.....	60
7.3	Research Design.....	62
7.3.1	Research Methods .....	62
7.3.2	Research Location .....	63
7.3.3	Data Collection- First Phase.....	64
7.3.4	Data Collection- Second Phase .....	65
7.3.5	Data Analysis .....	66

<b>8</b>	<b>GENDERED VULNERABILITIES – GENDERED TSUNAMI.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Situation Before the Tsunami -Normal Life.....</b>	<b>69</b>
8.1.1	Structures of Domination – Root Causes of Vulnerability .....	70
8.1.1.1	Concepts of Womanhood and Masculinity in Sri Lanka.....	70
8.1.1.2	Socialization Into Being a Sri Lankan Woman .....	71
8.1.1.3	Socialization Into Being a Sri Lankan Man.....	72
8.1.1.4	Protection and Security .....	74
8.1.1.5	Law and policy.....	75
8.1.2	Social Relations .....	76
8.1.2.1	Education .....	76
8.1.2.1.1	Sri Lankan Education System.....	77
8.1.2.1.1.1	Primary School .....	77
8.1.2.1.1.2	Secondary School .....	78
8.1.2.1.1.3	College .....	80
8.1.2.1.1.4	Tertiary Education .....	81
8.1.2.1.2	Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) .....	81
8.1.2.2	Labor Market and Economy .....	84
8.1.3	Households.....	87
8.1.3.1	Households in Sri Lanka.....	87
8.1.3.2	Productive Activities.....	88
8.1.3.3	Reproductive Activities .....	93
8.1.4	Lack of Social Protection.....	94
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Disaster as a Process .....</b>	<b>95</b>
8.2.1	The Onset of the Tsunami and the Transition to a Disaster.....	95
8.2.2	Survival, Damage and Loss .....	99
8.2.3	Immediate Relief Phase/ Camp life .....	103
8.2.4	Households in the Aftermath of the Tsunami .....	106
8.2.4.1	Female Headed Households – Widowhood.....	106
8.2.4.1.1	Coping Emotionally .....	106
8.2.4.1.2	Security .....	107
8.2.4.1.3	Family Situation and Remarriage .....	108
8.2.4.1.4	Rehousing .....	110
8.2.4.1.5	Livelihoods .....	111
8.2.4.2	Male-Headed Households - Widowerhood.....	113
8.2.4.2.1	Coping emotionally.....	114
8.2.4.2.2	Reproductive Activities .....	115
8.2.4.2.3	Family Relations and Remarriage.....	119
8.2.4.2.4	Livelihoods .....	120
<b>9</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>129</b>
	<b>ABSTRACTS .....</b>	<b>137</b>
	<b>CURRICULUM VITAE.....</b>	<b>139</b>





# **1 Gendered Tsunami - An Introduction**

On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2004, an earthquake of the magnitude of 9.1 took place in the Indian Ocean with the epicenter about 250 km west of Banda Aceh in Sumatra, Indonesia. (National Earthquake Information Center 2008) Geological research institutes all over the world claim that this quake was the second largest earthquake ever recorded in history. It triggered a massive Tsunami that first hit Indonesia and then, after traveling through the Indian Ocean, hit eleven other countries. The waves reached Sri Lanka after a period of 90 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the location of the affected area. The Tsunami struck first the coastline of the districts in the north and then the waves diffracted around the island up to the northwest of Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka the Tsunami killed around 31,000 people, 4,000 persons were reported missing and around 550,000 people lost their homes. (CBSL 2005, p.4). Disasters, especially natural disasters such as the one triggered by the Tsunami, are commonly considered as events that happen unexpectedly and leave behind death and destruction.

One important publication on the definition of disaster that gives a good overview of different approaches to a scientific definition of disaster was compiled by E. L. Quarantelli (1998). In 1993, the International Institute of Sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris held a congress, where E.L. Quarantelli organized a session on the concept of disaster: „Disasters: Different Social Constructs of the Concept” (Quarantelli 1998, p.2). There he asked five highly esteemed researches to present their papers: Dombrowsky, Gilbert, Horlick-Jones, Gary Kreps, Porfiriev. Later Quarantelli asked another five researchers: Dynes, Rosenthal, Kroll- Smith/ Gunter, Oliver-Smith and Stallings, in a second round, to present their views on the definition of a disaster. The compilation of these articles was published in 1998 in „What is a disaster? Perspectives on the question”, which gives an insight into the different approaches to disaster research. One of the scientists who discussed their approaches, Anthony Oliver-Smith (1998), comes from the anthropological discipline.

The history of anthropological disaster research is relatively young. Therefore, the group of anthropologists working on disaster theory is relatively small compared to the number of sociologists and geographers working in their respective fields on disaster research. Nevertheless, anthropologists make important contributions to disaster

research. Even though there is much disagreement among disaster researchers from various fields, there is consent among anthropologists on a basic definition of disaster: „Disaster is seen as a process leading to an event that involves a combination of a potentially destructive agent from the natural or technological sphere and a population in a socially produced condition of vulnerability. The development of the process and the subsequent event produce damage or loss to physical facilities and to major social-organizational components of a community, to the extent that the essential functions of the group are interrupted or destroyed. Individual and group distress and social disorganization of varying severity follow.” (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 1999, p.4)

The present study inquires about the different impacts of the Tsunami disaster on Sinhalese widows and widowers and the changes that have taken place in their daily lives since then. The analysis is based on a theoretical model, the Access Model, which was developed by Wisner et al. (2007). It links disaster to the concept of vulnerability. A disaster is seen as a cycle that begins a long time before the actual onset of an event such as the tsunami through the creation of vulnerabilities and does not end with the reconstruction of damaged buildings and reestablishment of livelihoods. In order to understand the root and more proximate causes of vulnerability of disaster victims, one has to look into the history and structures of the society and economy. Only through the interplay between the vulnerable population and the hazard, a disaster emerges. “It is a complex characteristic produced by a combination of factors derived especially (but not entirely) from class, gender and ethnicity. Differences in these socio-economic factors result in hazards having a different degree of impact.” (Cannon 1994, p.19) Aspects that determine the extent of vulnerability and therefore have an influence on the scope of impact and size of a calamity are characteristics such as class, gender, ethnicity, caste, occupation, health status, age, residency or immigration status, language literacy and social networks. The focus of this study lies on the influence of the characteristic of gender in the creation of vulnerability.

In the 1980’s, with the shift from the hazard paradigm to the vulnerability paradigm, disaster researchers began to study vulnerability of individuals and groups and the structures that produce it. The relevance of the factors class and ethnicity were proved already in the early stage of vulnerability research. For a long time, gender was neglected in disaster research. Not many studies were conducted that would have

underpinned the significance of gender aspects in the production of disasters. In 1984, the first work that gave an overview of gender aspects in disaster research was published by Nielsen (Nielsen 1984, cited in Fothergill 1998). In most of the publications that were discussed in that volume, gender was only one variable among many others. The publications did not give a detailed description on how gender had an influence on the different experiences people had in facing the impact of a hazard. “Gender as a complex social phenomenon underlying persistent social inequalities is transformed by researchers into an ‘independent variable’ that is used to account quantitatively for variation in a dependent variable. With such a transformation, the issue shifts to statistical differences (if any) between gender (actually sex) categories, and any fuller understanding of how gender inequality and gender relations structure disaster experiences is lost.” (Bolin et al. 1998, p.30) Only since the mid-1990’s, scholars have focused on gender aspects in their research. These researchers do not treat gender as a segregated analytical category, but interrelated it with other categories. “Gender does not gain meaning through socialization into a discrete gender role, any more than social class or ethnicity are taken on as roles, but is a primary organizing principle of social life. Its significance arises in a complex matrix of race, ethnicity, culture, class, sexuality, and age and is changed through life experience and political struggle“. (Enarson & Morrow 1998, p.3)

## **Chapter Outline**

**Chapter 2** gives an introduction to various scientific definitions of disaster that are postulated by different paradigms: The “Patterns-of-War-Approach”, the “Disaster as Vulnerability” paradigm, the “Disaster as Uncertainty” paradigm, the paradigm that sees “Disasters as Systemic Events and Social Catalysts” and “A General Theory of Social Order” will be discussed. They all come from diverse fields, such as geography, sociology and anthropology.

**Chapter 3** elaborates on the anthropology of disaster and gives an overview of the historical development of the field. The importance of the contributions that anthropologists make to the field of disaster research is highlighted. It discusses current trends in the anthropology of disaster. This includes archaeological/ historical and sociocultural/behavioral research, Political Ecology and applied disaster anthropology.

**Chapter 4** explains the concept of vulnerability in details. It describes the different forms vulnerability can take, economic, social, physical, educational/ informational and environmental vulnerability. It discusses the two theoretical models, the Pressure and Release (PAR) Model and the Access Model that were developed by Wisner et al. (2007).

**Chapter 5** gives a historical overview of the development of different gender theories. Gender as a symbolic construction, as social relationship, the “Doing Gender” and the “Sex and Gender”, the “Sameness and Difference” and the “Doing Difference” approach.

**Chapter 6** explains the meaning of the term “gendered disaster”. The chapter discusses how gender influences the production of vulnerability, the way people experience, cope with and mitigate disaster.

**Chapter 7** describes my personal and the thematic approach to this study. It explains the process of data collection, which consisted of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, literature and secondary data analysis.

**Chapter 8** gives in its first part a detailed analyses of the pre- Tsunami situation of disaster affected men and women in Sri Lanka and how their vulnerabilities were created. The second part describes the onset of the Tsunami, the transition to a disaster and the situation of Sinhalese widows and widowers in the aftermath of the Tsunami, their resilience and coping strategies.

**Chapter 9** draws conclusions from the findings in chapter eight. In this chapter the findings are related to the Anthropology of Disaster and the Vulnerability Concept. The chapter also offers recommendations for further measures.

## **2 What is a Disaster? - Disaster Research at Large**

The scientific definition of a disaster is a contested one. Contributions to the definition of disasters come from various disciplines, such as geography or sociology. Each discipline, according to its research focus, has its own definitions. Even within the social sciences there is still disagreement on how to define a disaster. Nevertheless, disaster definitions can be classified in certain paradigms. The following chapter gives an overview of the current trends in disaster research.

### ***2.1 Paradigm 1: The Patterns-of-War-Approach***

Disaster research started after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War when government institutions in the US and Europe funded research on human response to situations of war. “Disasters were viewed as situations likely to elicit the reactions of human beings to aggressions and to allow an adequate test of them” (Gilbert 1998, p. 12). So researchers started to study human reaction in natural disasters to get an idea on how human beings act in situations of war. In both cases, in war and in the event of a natural disaster, this paradigm identifies an external agent who operates against a human group. This agent can be an enemy or a natural force, but both are seen as external aggressors that act against a community. The human group then has to counteract as a whole against the aggressor. The causes both for disasters and for war are seen as coming from external sources in contrast to approaches that seek the causes for disaster within the society. Therefore, this approach is called “Patterns of War” Approach by Gilbert. (Gilbert 1998, pp.12-13)

Wisner et al. (2007, p.10) point out the concept of ‘bounded rationality’, which is based on the model of the stages of economic growth of Rostock. The model distinguishes industrial societies from ‘mixed societies’ and ‘folk societies’. Each society has its “typical patterns of loss from, and protection against, nature’s extremes” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.11). ‘Bounded rationality’ means that people are not able to make proper judgments about the surrounding environment and misuse nature. The concept claims that the rationality of the people is bounded and additionally to that comes “the pressure of population growth and lack of ‘modernization’ of the economy and other institutions” (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 11) and this leads them to settle in hazard prone areas. Only through a modernization process this mechanism can be stopped. “It was

assumed that 'progress' and 'modernisation' were taking place, and that 'folk' and 'mixed' societies would become 'industrial', and that we would all eventually enjoy the relatively secure life of "post-industrial` society." (Wisner et al. 2007, p.11)

According to Kenneth Hewitt (1998, p.78) this paradigm, he calls it the physical agent or hazard paradigm, is still widely used in the discourse on disasters. The reason for this is that it is easy to understand and so has found its way in to common sense. Kenneth Hewitt (1998, p.78) sees it as a threat to the understanding of the social dimensions of disasters. One of the most important objections against this paradigm is that the hazard paradigm sees communities as mere victims of natural and technological disasters with no room for maneuver.

In the 1970s and 1980s, this approach was reviewed and heavily criticized. Gilbert (1998, p. 13) refers to Quarantelli as the first researcher who started to question this paradigm. In his concept of "consensus crisis", he criticizes "the unnecessary linkage between the destructive factor and the community as it emerged from the notion of panic. He pointed out that there was no mechanical relation between these two factors, and thus that there was great autonomy in the reactions of people to troubles." (Gilbert, 1998, p. 13) Soon more and more researchers in the US, such as Kreps and Dynes, started to reject the notion of an external factor as the main cause of a disaster and began to point out the importance of social factors in disasters. (Gilbert 1998)

## ***2.2 Paradigm 2: Disaster as Vulnerability***

The debate on the first paradigm led to the development of new paradigms that shift their focus from seeing disaster as solely caused by nature to approaches that see disasters as vulnerability. According to Gilbert, this paradigm gets rid of the notion of an external agent that causes a disaster but disasters, are rather described as processes that are directly linked to social vulnerability and that can be explained both in terms of structure and context. So the causes of disaster lie within the structure and logic of society and are "social action[s] taking place within societies". (Gilbert 1998, p. 14) Gilbert points out that disasters occur when there are structural flaws in the organization of communities. When these flaws aggravate they explode inward into the community and finally this leads to a breakdown of the structures of the communities (Gilbert 1998, p. 14)

Blaikie et al. (1994) wrote an important volume on vulnerability and disaster that laid the foundation for the following research on disaster as vulnerability. Later Wisner et al. (2007) published a second revised edition of this volume, "At risk. Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters." The focus of this approach lies on explaining the occurrence of natural disasters and does not deal so much with technological and manmade disasters. They emphasize "the social causation of disaster" but do not deny the role that nature plays in the evolvement of a disaster. Natural hazards are trigger effects for disaster. Hazards, for Wisner et al., are natural forces such as earthquakes or floods that can affect small localized areas or even regions on a larger scale. Sometimes these hazards occur as single events but often also in combination with other hazards. Their impact can be measured in terms of intensity and severity. (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 49) "A disaster occurs when a significant number of vulnerable people experience a hazard and suffer severe damage and/or disruption of their livelihood system in such a way that recovery is unlikely without external aid. By 'recovery' we mean the psychological and physical recovery of the victims and the replacement of physical resources and the social relations required to use them." (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 50) The concept of vulnerability that Wisner et al. (2007) developed will be explained in more detail in chapter 4.

Gilbert (1998) sees the main obstacle to integration of this definition into the frameworks of disaster practitioners in the unsolved question of relating the "Patterns-of-War" paradigm with the "Vulnerability" paradigm. Wisner et al. (2007) manage the challenge of giving guidelines to practitioners and providing a theoretical analysis of disasters at the same time. They dedicate a whole subsection in each chapter solely to suggestions on how to integrate vulnerability analysis in the formulation of policies to mitigate hazards and impair vulnerability. Gilbert sees another obstacle to the overall acceptance of the vulnerability paradigm in the problem that the notion of vulnerability still is not clearly defined. In opposition to Gilbert Wisner et al (2007) see the diversification of research on vulnerability as a positive trend.

### ***2.3 Paradigm 3: Disaster as Uncertainty***

With the Paradigm "Disaster as uncertainty" disaster scholars attempt to find completely new ways to define disasters. In the early stages of developing this paradigm a disaster was considered a crisis. A crisis cannot be equated with an accident, thus a distinction is needed. A crisis is defined as an event that can emerge without any

accident and an accident according to Gilbert (1998) can occur without any crisis. This finally led to the evolvement of the paradigm that disaster is a state of uncertainty that is a product of complex societies but not a result. „Uncertainty virtually occurs when actors and structures stop developing their own underlying logics [sic!] and begin operating only on the border of their respective areas of activities. At the same time they freely take part in the crisis market acting in disorder, and try to define the situation.” (Gilbert 1998, p. 17)

Gilbert (1998) mentions three points that are characteristic for this paradigm: First of all a disaster is linked to uncertainty. In case a danger threatens a community, the threat can be real or not. Secondly, uncertainty is related to the growing complexity of modern communities and is a product of community organization . “It is the result of the upsetting in the system of meaning, and not the effect of the difficulty of solving problems of accidents or serious dysfunctions.” (Gilbert 1998, p. 17) Thirdly, in situations of disaster the people who are affected are not able to grasp the meaning of these situations in the ordinary, traditional way and so lose the cornerstones of understanding reality

Helen Cox (1998), in her article “Women in Bushfire Territory”, tries to explain how Australian women experienced the impact of a bushfire in Southeastern Australia and recover from it. Disasters for her are entropic events and so disorder is created. In order to return to order and harmony, energy has to be restored. Cox assumes that people who are affected by a catastrophe can cope with disaster, by using their energy from within and from their surrounding environment. This helps them re-establish order and harmony. These assumptions are part of a framework, the ecological postmodernism, which is based on a model developed by the sociologist Aaron Antonovsky (Antonovsky 1987: cited in: Cox 1998, p.134). „Antonovsky calls his model salutogenic, in that it examines salutary or, at least, neutral effects of significant life events rather than negative ones. He considers the sense of coherence, a fundamental factor in recovery from traumatic life events, to have three core components. ” (Cox 1998, p. 134) These core elements are comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness.



There are debates among critics as whether scholars who support this paradigm underestimate other factors such as human losses or political disorders by putting the focus on understanding the system of meaning. (Gilbert 1998, p. 17)

#### ***2.4 Paradigm 4: Disasters as Systemic Events and Social Catalysts***

Kreps (1998), a leading sociologist in the field of disaster research, takes up a middle position in the sense that, on the one hand, he rejects the “Patterns-of-War-Approach” but on the other hand, his position cannot be classified under the “Uncertainty” paradigm. In Kreps’ comprehension the ultimate defining characteristic of a disaster is that they are catalytic events, which distinguishes disasters from other environmental hazards and other societal problems. Nevertheless, he includes a broad range of “environmental, technological or socio-political crisis that can be designated in social time and space.” (Kreps, 1998, p.54)

Also Uriel Rosenthal (1998), whose theories can be classified under this type of paradigm, does not reject traditional approaches to disaster but suggests to think differently about its elements differently. Traditional concepts see disasters as natural events that have a sudden onset. Rosenthal also sees disasters as events but claims that their causes are to be found in the past. The importance lies in the linkages between the conditions, characteristics and consequences of disasters.

Kreps takes a position “that attempt[s] to balance social disruption, physical harm, and psychological dislocation as characteristics defining disaster less inclusive. They emphasize physical impacts but still incorporate a wide array of events/processes.” (Oliver-Smith et al. 1999, p.23) Robert A. Stallings claims that “Kreps continues the tradition of defining disasters in terms of physical events (albeit socially defined) which become sociologically relevant because of their consequences (they are social catalysts)” (Stallings 1998, p.128) Kreps (1998) distinguishes disasters from diverse environmental hazards and also from other problems of the society. Kreps sees disasters as events, precisely as “nonroutine events” that have to be distinguished from „everyday problems and concerns” of societies. He sees them as “special types of societal phenomena, in part because they are dramatic historical happenings (events), and also because they compel collective reactions (social catalysts)”. (Kreps 1998, p.32) Kreps also distinguishes between disasters and emergencies. For him disasters, contrary to emergencies, combine both social disruption as well as physical harm. For Kreps

disasters do not happen on an individual but on a broader level, at minimum on a community level.

As he interprets disasters as social constructions, he takes up a stance for a life history perspective, which means to study societies vulnerable to disasters before and after the event. He sees this as essential for studying disasters. "Some researchers have examined how social systems react to physical harm and social disruption after an event has occurred. Others have examined what social systems do to increase or mitigate the risk of physical harm and social disruption before an event has occurred. But in either case, disasters are thought to be implicit or explicit catalysts for collective action." (Kreps 1998, p.33) According to Kreps the focus of the research of disaster sociologists lies on the identification and illustration of the key dimensions of disasters, which are length of forewarning, as the time between a hazard is identified and the moment when the impact takes place. Then there is the magnitude of impact, as a measurement for the severity of an impact that can range from low to high. The other dimension is the scope of impact and the duration of impact. "The above conception implies that event characteristics are independent variables while individual and social responses, however defined and measured, are dependent variables." (Kreps 1998, p.35)

Also Russel Dynes' (1998) concept of disasters falls into this paradigm, that supports the view that disasters are occasions or events in which social disruptions take place and social resources become endangered. To protect these resources, special efforts have to be undertaken by the communities. So in Dynes approach the notion of a disaster is linked to the community as a social unit, which can be characterized as a geographically identifiable location on the one hand and on the other as a socio-psychological component of identity. Disasters can be categorized according to the level to which communities are involved. Dynes (1998) identifies two main categories, community disasters and non-community disasters. The other important aspect in the classification of disaster is the identification of types of community organizations. These community organizations are activated to protect social resources. Perry (1998) criticizes that the category of community disaster is a very broad category and includes a broad range of events. Dynes also distinguishes between accidents and disasters: Accidents are problems that have to be dealt with regularly such as house fires, etc. whereas disasters by contrast have community wide features.

## ***2.5 Paradigm 5 : A General Theory of Social Order***

Robert Stallings (1998) sees all above mentioned theories as middle range theories that do not contribute to the evolvement of larger general sociological theories. He warns that pursuing a theory of disaster leads to a “dead end”. Robert Stallings instead tries to create a general theory of social order. For Robert Stallings disasters are “only one type of ‘interruption’ that all societies in every epoch confront.” (Stallings 1998, p. 137) Stallings defines disasters as disruptions of routines and calls these disruptions exceptions. But disasters are only one type of disruptions to the social order. “Routines are the actions (e.g., getting ready for work) and interactions (e.g., meeting with one’s clients) that are repeated over specific units of time (e.g., the workday). Actions and interactions repeated routinely provide structure for individuals lives and, in the aggregate, constitute the structure of social systems.” (Stallings 1998, p. 137)

There are mechanisms that are used to return from the disruptions of the social order to the routines, such mechanisms are called exception routines. By calling this mechanisms exception routines Stallings wants to indicate that these mechanisms are routines as well. The problem with such exception routines is that they are not always appropriate for the rehabilitation of routines.

Except for the “Patterns-of-War” paradigm with its focus on a natural hazard as the main disaster agent, the other paradigms have overarching topics and are interrelated. Perry (1998), who reviewed articles of disaster researchers, wrote a definition of disaster that somehow summarized the different approaches and found an agreement on certain crucial aspects of a disaster. “Disasters are socially defined events in social time. Disasters create disruption of social intercourse and, in that regard are a context for social action, but the disaster agent itself is not a key component of the definitional task. The events, occasions, or processes labeled disasters can be part of an external environment (nature) or internal in the sense of social (technological or even human intervention) manufacture. Disasters must be understood in relation to social change: as occasions that offer an opportunity for (or perhaps actually demand) creation and adoption of short-term correctives or long-term adaptations.” (Perry 1998, pp. 201-202)



### **3 Anthropology and Disaster**

The interest in disaster research is constantly growing, as the physical damage done by disasters is increasing and the occurrence of catastrophes is multiplying. Anthropologists often work in areas that are especially prone to disasters such as regions in Least Developed Countries thus ethnographic material is available on societies that had to undergo periods of extreme stress such as conflicts or involuntary resettlement. This material can be used for long-term and comparative studies that contribute to a better understanding of the interactions and interrelationship between nature and humans. Disaster research provides vast opportunities for anthropologists to do a combined research on the past and present, culture, ecology, politics and archaeology. Disasters are seen as opportunities to examine the organization of societies and to inquire about major anthropological themes such as social change. They provide researchers with the opportunity of exploring the structure of a society, and anthropologists explore how individuals and groups interact and integrate into the society at large. Anthropological research is important for all sciences concerned with disaster research. Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999, pp.2-3) argue that, as anthropology is a social science with a holistic approach, it can take into account the interplay of all three aspects of disasters: the environmental, the biological and the sociocultural aspect. So it can combine these aspects and make contributions to the field of disaster studies in general and create linkages between all areas concerned. Especially applied anthropology can contribute a lot to disaster relief and rehabilitation operations that have to be based on such holistic research in order to be successful. The methodology of ethnographic field work is vital for disaster research and practice so to understand how disaster recovery happens and in which form socio-organizational adaptations and changes take place at micro level.

#### ***3.1 History of Disaster Research in Anthropology***

There are references in early anthropological literature to societies that lived under ecological stress. But these societies were not studied because disasters happened to them but because anthropologists had research interest in other issues. Not until the 1950s did social and cultural anthropologists systematically study the impact and inquire about the social consequences of natural disasters. Only one social scientist, Samuel Prince (1920, cited in: Torrey 1979), did a study in the 1920s on the social impact of the explosion in the harbor of Halifax. Other social scientists in that time

considered disasters as sudden and extreme events that interfered with normal life of the population and so the study of disasters focused on how to mitigate them. (Oliver-Smith 2002, Torry 1979)

From the 1950s onwards up to the 1970s, research became more structured. Research on disaster was mainly oriented towards pastoral societies who lived under conditions of drought. Research interest focused on the behavior of individuals and organizations in the processes of warning, impact and immediate response. There was only little historical perspective taken into account. Only a few anthropologists published, for example, archaeological accounts of volcanic eruptions or tectonic activities.

William Torry (1979) gives an overview of past and actual trends in anthropological disaster research until the end of the 1970's. He presents two main approaches to the study of disasters, the homeostatic approach and the developmental approach. The homeostatic approach claims that "tribal societies" dispose of the ability to withstand situations of crises without major changes of their society. They have a "battery of institutional safeguards" (Torry 1979, p.518) According to this theory, there are several coping strategies that those societies use to mitigate hazards. Dispersal is one of the adjustments that can be undertaken in times of severe stress. Torry mentions the example of African pastoral populations who in times of drought split up their herds and communities. That gives them the possibility that different parts of the community move with their animals to different pastures in order ensure the survival of their livestock. Retrenchment of social activities is another strategy to cope in a situation of stress. "Food production and defensive operations are stressed while many other types of activity are retrenched, replaced, simplified, or merged." (Torry 1979, p.520) During periods of drought, to give an example, festivals, ceremonies and even weddings may be postponed or simplified for the sake of food security.

The developmental approach, in contrast to the homeostatic approach, „deals largely with societies under the influence of modernizing pressures. Here the disaster agent is identified as one of several interacting forces which disrupt social stability and promote change." (Torry 1979, pp.518- 519.) The research interest is not so much on finding coping strategies but on finding the causes of disasters. Especially the linkages between modernization and the creation of disasters are subject to research in the developmental

approach. Torry describes the research of Glynn Flood (1976, cited in Torry 1979, p.525), who conducted a study on the consequences of a development program undertaken by multinational donors along the Awash river in eastern Ethiopia. The research demonstrates that such programs can create tensions between different ethnic groups and disturb the ecological balance. (Torry 1979, p.525)

Torry (1979) claimed that only few ethnographies dealt with natural disasters and gave detailed descriptions on how disasters unfold. He mentioned that the field of cultural ecology had important contributions to make to anthropological theory. He regretted that between the 1950s and the end of the 1970s the field of cultural ecology and its potential to contribute to anthropological disaster research was neglected and said that anthropologists rather investigated which actions communities undertook to withstand situations of crisis.

He also tried to identify the reasons for the comparatively little interest of anthropologists in the field of disaster research. For Torry (1979, p.521) the reasons for neglecting such issues in anthropological research lie in the way anthropologist defined hazards in that time. He argues that disasters are regarded as single events that interrupt day to day life but not the whole structure as such and so are only peripheral to anthropological research. "Environmental hazards are typically regarded as constraining social organization only by limiting the ranges of feasible subsistence modes and by restricting the extent to which each is pursued. Individual cells, to be sure, may collapse, but social system survives intact. This is not to say that anthropologists universally characterize traditional disaster communities as changeless, but only that hazard agents are not credited as forces that power the machinery of social change." (Torry 1979, p.521)

In the 1980s a new approach emerged. "Disasters, and the hazard leading to them, were re-evaluated and redefined as basic, often chronic elements of environments and, more significantly, as happenings humans themselves to some degree construct." (Hewitt 1983: cited in: Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p.2) People who are living in disaster prone areas are neither ignoring the settings they are living in nor are they are unaware of it. They are forced to live within these dangerous zones due to political and economic forces and have to adjust to the environment they are living in and create a meaning to

their lifestyles. But the technologies humans use to adapt to the environment have not always brought about more security but sometimes have put people into peril. One such technology is the production of atomic energy. On the one hand, it helps to meet the demand for energy and, on the other hand, puts people at risk of a worst case nuclear incident. Researchers started to acknowledge the importance of understanding the link between human action, social realities and hazards that lead to disasters.

Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) claim that catastrophes are diachronic. Catastrophes develop over time, as they are produced by unfavorable processes of societies such as environmental degradation or social inequality. On the other hand, there is the short term aspect of a catastrophe, the sudden crisis. These two time frames of a catastrophe are interrelated and inseparable. The unfavorable processes of societies accumulate and finally culminate in a sudden crisis, which is then experienced by people as a dreadful event.

### ***3.2 Current Trends in the Anthropology of Disaster***

According to Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999, p. 4) there are currently four major fields in anthropological studies on disasters, that are all interrelated and that draw upon and contribute to research in other disciplines.

- 1) Archeological/Historical
- 2) Political Ecology
- 3) Sociocultural/Behavioral
  - 3a) Disaster Behavior and Response
  - 3b) Cultural Interpretation of Risk and Disaster
  - 3c) Post- Disaster Social and Cultural Change
- 4) Applied / Practicing

#### **3.2.1 Archaeological/Historical**

Archaeological research has contributed a diachronic perspective on disasters to the field of disaster research. Disasters are historical processes and so there is a need for a long-term and in-depth perspective on disasters. Archaeology tries to explore how conditions of societies are prior to disaster. They identify the physical and social processes that lead to disasters and the nature of the risk. Historical research covers such areas as creation of vulnerability or demographic shifts. Other aspects of research cover



the post disaster period. The aim is to find out what makes a society resilient to disaster, what the coping strategies are and what adjustments are made to deal with new situations. Archaeologists can draw on various materials such as chronicles, annuals, etc. that not only deal with disasters but themselves report on different issues such as politics, demography, or economy and so give a broader picture also of the pre- and post-disaster situation.

### **3.2.2 Political Ecology**

The Political Ecology approach studies the interaction between humans and nature and how political and economic structures influence the way humans use or misuse the environment “since in the strictest anthropological sense all societies are viewed as perceiving and approaching their environment through cultural means.” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p.5) Utilization, and especially overexploitation, of nature and natural resources produce hazards that can evolve to disasters. Human societies and environment are inseparable, as they are engaged in processes of constantly creating and recreating each other. “Groups create physical niches for themselves and within them produce ecological settings that enable continuity and reinforce social and ideological constructs.” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p.6) There are different factors that enhance the capacity of a society to cope with disasters and others that reduce their resilience. The distribution of goods is an important issue, as it puts some segments of society at risk and contributes to the welfare of others. Disaster, from a political-ecological point of view, is a test for societies to prove how well they have adapted to their environment. Recently, a new concept has evolved that does not only deal with the adaptation capacity of humans to their environment, but also with the adaptation capacity of nature when confronted with a human population. “The question of how well a society is adapted to its environment must now be linked to the question of how well an environment fares when fused with a society. The matter of mutuality has risen to the forefront.” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p.6)

### **3.2.3 Sociocultural/Behavioral**

This approach deals with socio-cultural issues and encompasses a wide range of topics such as disaster behavior and response or post-disaster social and cultural change.

### **3.2.3.1 Disaster Behavior and Response**

Disasters are totalizing events that have a whole range of different effects on the behavior and thoughts of those affected. There are different stages of a disaster which the affected people have to go through. The characteristics of these stages can vary considerably according to the kinds of disaster that happen and according to the kind of people being affected. Alice Fothergill (1998) for example has generated a typology of stages of disaster. Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) begin with the immediate crisis when a disaster strikes, this stage is followed by the recovery phase. “The crisis demands and encompasses response. The behaviors implicated range from the biological to the philosophical.” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p.7) People search for explanations for what has happened to them and try to give meaning to the situation they are in. Important aspects of coping with sorrows and distress are the invention of new rituals or the retrieval of traditional ones. Also, the return to religious practices can help to overcome trauma. People derive part of their identity, and a sense of belonging to a community, from their homes, their neighborhood, and their community buildings. Therefore, the loss of home and other essential places, the search for shelter, and later relocation put communities under stress. Jealousy and conflicts among community members will start after a period of unity immediately after the disaster. Dissent can also arise between survivors and agencies providing relief and rehabilitation or between survivors and governments. Disasters can be seen as a challenge to old power structures and new political agendas can come up.

### **3.2.3.2 Cultural Interpretations of Risk and Disaster**

There are big differences in how people view hazards, assess risk and define disasters according to their cultural and individual perception. People assess their environment and try to identify risk. Sometimes, they feel in danger without an objectively identifiable risk, and, in other cases, they just ignore an existing hazard. People outweigh their vulnerability and calculate potential risk against different lifestyle or livelihood options. What comes into play in the research of risk perception is the theory of cultural construction of reality. Anthropological research focuses on identifying differences of how local communities and, contrasting to that, how experts measure risk. Another point of interest lies in the question of who defines what a disaster is and when to declare a state of catastrophe.

### **3.2.3.3 Post-Disaster Social and Cultural Change**

The interest of researchers working with this approach is to study the behavior of groups and individuals in the different stages of a disaster. They try to find out what effects on different aspects of life, such as social, cultural, economic, of affected communities disasters have. There is much debate about whether disasters bring about change or whether an inclination of communities to retain the status quo prior to a disaster. Anthony Oliver-Smith and Susanna M. Hoffmann (1999) claim that disasters imply a potential for change that does not always lead to change. Factors that determine whether or not a society undergoes change after a catastrophe can be found in the conditions prior to the disaster. “The strength of sociocultural persistence, that is, the constancy of people’s habits and ways, comprises the contrasting side of the discussion. Disasters impel societies and cultures to reassert prior patterns as much as spur them to undergo transformation.” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999, p. 10)

### **3.2.4 Applied/Practicing**

Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) identify a fourth separate field of anthropological research on disaster, which is difficult to distinguish this field of research from the other three. This field deals with the problem of how to apply anthropological knowledge in disaster context and with issues of prediction, prevention and mitigation of disaster. One main goal of applied anthropological disaster research should be to identify ways of how to integrate traditional knowledge or adopted technologies to reduce disaster impact and reduce vulnerability. Another aim is to find out about social structures and customs of the affected communities in order to ensure equal distribution of aid. It is also important to strengthen the resilience of aid recipients as there is a tendency that victims of disaster become dependent on the provision of relief. Research in these fields should benefit communities in disaster prone or disaster stricken areas.



## 4 Vulnerability Concept

The vulnerability concept is one of the paradigms in disaster research and was briefly explained in a previous chapter. The present chapter shall give a more in-depth view of the vulnerability approach. Vulnerability is created mainly through everyday life of people. It is not the natural event that creates a disaster but a disaster, is “the product of the social, political and economic environment (as distinct from the natural environment) because of the way it structures the lives of different groups of people.” (Blaikie et al. 1994, p. 3) Disasters are embedded in a larger “social framework”. The concept of vulnerability emphasizes the link between natural hazards and the major structures of a society. No disaster unfolds if there is only a natural hazard but no vulnerable people, and if there are only vulnerable people but no hazard, there is no catastrophe either. Even if only a weak hazard hits a vulnerable community, the impact might nevertheless be high. If the same hazard would impact on a less vulnerable community, it would not cause disaster. The scope of impact depends on the type of hazard that hits a vulnerable community. A community might be vulnerable to avalanches but resilient to flooding. (Cannon 1994, p. 20) Nevertheless, social, economic and political processes of a society are the main causes for a hazard to become a catastrophe. These processes determine in what way and intensity people are affected. Wisner et al. offer a working definition of vulnerability: “By vulnerability we mean the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard (an extreme natural event or process) It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone’s life, livelihood, property and other assets are put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event (or series or ‘cascade’ of such events) in nature and in society. (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 11) Vulnerability and the impact of a hazard varies according to who is affected. Characteristics that have an influence on the scope of impact are class, gender, ethnicity, caste, occupation, health status, age, residency or immigration status, language literacy and social network. (Bolin and Stanford 1999; Wisner et al. 2007) When Wisner et al. (2007) use the notion “vulnerable people”, they mean the group of people who are most vulnerable. Communities that are not vulnerable are secure, or capable to protect themselves, and are capable to reconstruct their livelihoods. “The word ‘livelihood’ is important in the definition. We mean by this command an individual, family, or other social group has over an income and / or

bundles of resources that can be used or exchanged to satisfy its needs. This may involve information, cultural knowledge, social networks and legal rights as well as tools, land, or other physical resources.” (Wisner et al 2007, p.12) The notion of vulnerability does not focus only on the period previous to a disaster, but there are more dimensions of time involved in the notion of vulnerability. It encompasses the time previous to a hazard, the disaster event itself, the immediate relief phase, the recovery phase, and the post-disaster phase. The first dimension of vulnerability deals with the time previous to disaster. People who are forced to live in disaster prone areas due to poor livelihoods lack information to anticipate a hazard and are not able to mitigate a risk. In the phase of the disaster impact itself, and also in the following period of relief, different characteristics can play a role in the creation of vulnerability. To give an example: In the pre disaster period the characteristic determining the vulnerability to a certain hazard in a specific region that determines is mainly class. It makes a difference if a person is from a lower class and can only afford living in hazardous places or if it is a well-off person living in a safe neighborhood. In the period of immediate impact and in the following relief phase gender can be a significant characteristic for survival. “Women in developing countries are more likely to die in disasters, due to discriminatory practices, women’s location in a disaster, and childcare responsibilities.” (Fothergill 1998, p. 17) In the recovery and also in the post disaster phase, it might be a combination of gender, class and immigration status that play a role.

#### ***4.1 Types of Vulnerability***

There are different types of vulnerability. Zaman (1999) identifies five types of vulnerability: physical, economic, social, informational/educational and environmental. Each of these types has different components and indicators. Lavell (1994) adds to these five types also the political, institutional, ideological and technical vulnerability.

##### **4.1.1 Economic Vulnerability**

For Lavell (1994), economic vulnerability is a synonym for poverty. Zaman (1999, p.195) includes “loss of livelihoods and income opportunities, economic status, loss of assets and savings, need for recurrent aid”. Economic vulnerability is the determining factor for the overall situation of people. It influences especially the social conditions and the physical conditions of the population. Economic vulnerability also includes budgetary problems of communities, regions or even countries. “However, there is also

a clear economic problem related to national and local government finances, which constitutes a further aspect of economic vulnerability and which directly affects distinct population groups at a local level.” (Lavell 1994, pp. 55-56) Economic vulnerability is, according to Zaman (1999), indicated by low income, poverty, unemployment, unequal land distribution and landlessness. In his chart on vulnerability types, components and indicators he also mentions relief and rehabilitation as an indicator but does not explicitly describe how this is meant. One can conclude that the lack of economic resilience and the need for receiving relief and rehabilitation is an indicator for economic vulnerability. To the list of Zaman underemployment and employment in the informal sector could be added as indicators. Especially, as people who work in the informal sector lack social security and a stable source of income.

#### **4.1.2 Social Vulnerability**

One component of social vulnerability is the disintegration of social organizations and the lack of social cohesion. “The levels of social cohesion existing within communities and their willingness or ability to organize collectively in order to confront common problems are of fundamental importance for the promotion of local participation in disaster prevention and mitigation and in the response to emergencies.” (Lavell 1994, p.56) Another component of social vulnerability is age. Especially elderly people are often of poor health, which leads to restricted mobility and a reduced ability to secure their livelihoods. This makes them more vulnerable to disasters. Gender is also an aspect of social vulnerability, which will be dealt with in the following chapter on Gender and Disaster. Indicators for social vulnerability are, according to Zaman (1999), social helplessness, apathy, ethnic/social crisis, poor health and diseases, and marginalization.

#### **4.1.3 Physical Vulnerability**

What Lavell (1994) calls a locational vulnerability is for Zaman (1999) the physical vulnerability. It signifies the poor quality of housing, hazard-prone locations of settlement and inadequate infrastructure. It is indicated by high death tolls and damage to settlements, infrastructure, livestock and crops. For Zaman, the physical vulnerability is directly linked to economic vulnerability as it “is a symptom of economic vulnerability.” (Zaman 1999, p.194) People who lack financial resources are forced to build their houses on marginal land or invade land, these areas are often hazard prone

and lack adequate infrastructure. Furthermore, their houses are badly designed and built using low quality construction material.

#### **4.1.4 Educational Vulnerability and Informational Vulnerability**

Educational vulnerability refers to two forms of education: the formal education system and “education in disaster response”. (Lavell 1994, p. 59) In many countries the formal education system lacks incorporation of issues such as “people-land relationships and the physical vulnerability of different populated areas” and incorporation of “adequate knowledge of risk and its causes in different zones or regions of the country” (Lavell 1994, p.59) in curricula. Education in disaster response targets not only the school population but all people living in hazardous environments. There is a need for programs that provide training to people on how to respond in an emergency situation. Informational vulnerability refers to a lack of proper forecasting, early warning and evacuation systems. The forecasting also includes risk mapping. Areas especially prone to hazards have to be declared as risky and, in some cases, even as uninhabitable. Lavell (1994, pp. 59-60) warns that the enforcement of such regulations often pose practical problems. Especially in developing countries, the state often lacks the capacity to operationalize such regulations and people do encroach on hazardous lands. “In contexts where permanent prevention and mitigation activities are clearly extremely difficult to implement in the short run, the importance of effective early warning systems accompanied by effective mobilization of the population cannot be minimized, especially in cases of hurricanes, flooding, landslides and volcanic activity.” (Lavell 1994,p. 60)

Educational and informational vulnerability is indicated by a lack of knowledge about local natural hazards. It is also an expression of poor preparedness in cases of emergency, a poor evacuation strategy, and poor dissemination of information before and during the onset of a disaster.

#### **4.1.5 Environmental Vulnerability**

Due to rapid population growth and a lack of land resources, the existing land is overused, which leads to deforestation and environmental degradation. Due to this scarcity of land, people settle in risk-prone, uninhabitable areas. Climate change intensifies the vulnerability of the people to hazards: “A final aspect of importance in a



consideration of local vulnerability to disasters relates to the manner in which in an increasing number of communities, particularly in urban areas, changes in the environmental conditions and balance in areas beyond their territorial limits have negative effects in terms of increased propensity to flooding, landslips and avalanches. Urbanization of slopes and hill tops dramatically changes fluvial run-off conditions in urban areas, posing severe problems for lower-lying communities.” (Lavell 1994, p. 61)

## ***4.2 The Vulnerability Concept of Wisner et al.***

The vulnerability concept of Blaikie et al. (1994) and Wisner et al. (2007) has been formulated in two models: the Pressure and Release (PAR) Model and the Access Model. These models are interrelated and together provide a tool for analysis of vulnerability. The PAR Model especially focuses on political aspects, whereas the focus of the Access Model lies on aspects of economy and especially livelihoods.

### **4.2.1 The Pressure and Release (PAR) model.**

Wisner et al. (2007) have developed a model that tries to explain the causal chain of vulnerability and the evolvement of a risk of disaster: “The Pressure and Release (PAR) model”. To clarify the distinction between risk and vulnerability, Wisner et al. quote Alexander, who says that “vulnerability refers to the potential for causality, destruction, damage, disruption, or other form of loss in a particular element: risk combines this with the probable level of loss to be expected from a predictable magnitude of hazard (which can be considered as the manifestation of the agent that produces the loss)” (Alexander 2000 cited in: Wisner et al. 2007, p.50) The PAR model claims that these risks are a product of both hazards and vulnerability. In the PAR model, hazards are natural forces such as earthquakes, flooding, volcanic eruptions and so on. People who have to face a disaster are subjected to pressures from two sides. On the one hand, they feel the impact of a hazard, on the other hand they experience the pressures of their vulnerability. Vulnerability consists of three layers of causes that are linked hierarchically. Wisner et al. call this combination of layers a “progression of vulnerability” or “chain of causation”. “It is a sequence of factors and processes that leads us from the disaster event and its proximate causes back to ever more distant factors and processes that initially may seem to have little to do with causing the disaster.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.87) Root causes are distant causes of disaster, at the bottom of the explanation and unsafe conditions are directly linked to disaster. In

between are dynamic pressures that are the medium for the progression from root causes to unsafe conditions. To reduce the number and severity of disaster impacts the pressure on the people has to be released. Since the possibilities to release pressure through the reduction of hazards are limited, the main focus in reducing disasters has to be on minimizing the vulnerability of people. Ways to achieve this are discussed in Chapter 4.3.3.

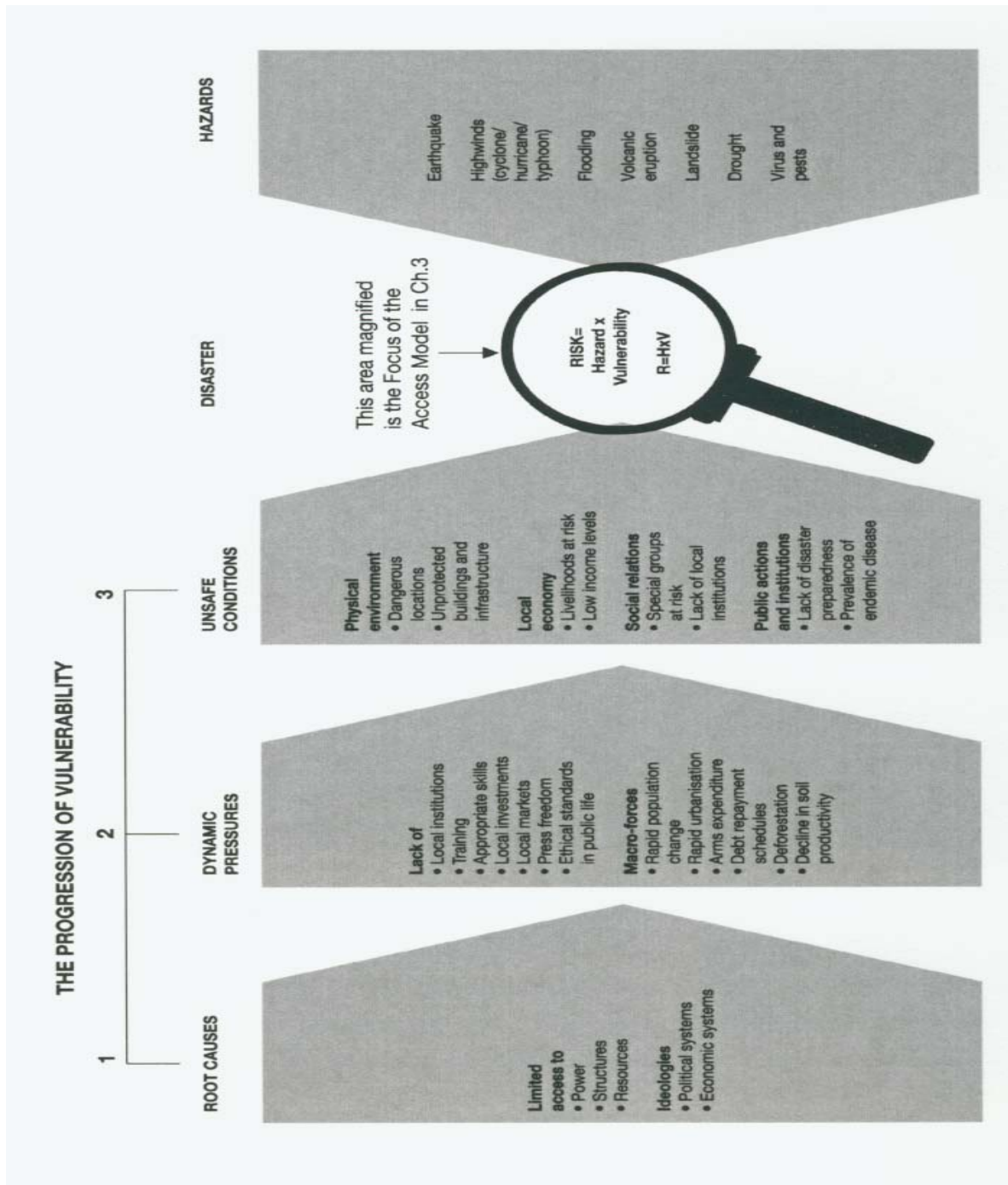


Illustration 1: PAR-Modell (Wisner et al. 2007, p.51)

#### **4.2.1.1 Root Causes**

Root causes are a reflection of the distribution of power in a given society, this power is not restricted to political but also encompasses economic and social power. Wisner et al. (2007) identifies them as distant root causes, as the link between the people affected by a disaster and the root causes are not apparent. Root causes are distant in space, as some of the causes can be traced to political, economic and social structures that are produced in the capitals or centers of power and wealth of a given country. Root causes are distant in time. Decisions made in the past may not only have effects in the past, but also have an impact on the present and future. Root causes are “finally, distant in the sense of being profoundly bound up with cultural assumptions, ideology, beliefs and social relations in the actual lived existence of the people concerned that they are ‘invisible’ and ‘taken for granted’.” (Wisner et al. 2007 p.52). Such causes have materialized in diverse forms not only as rules and regulations that are legally binding, but also through customs and practices. Root causes do not only lay ground for the production of vulnerability, but also reproduce it. The state and its government bodies influence, through their law enforcement, their way of governance, the production of vulnerability. An example for root causes is the enforcement of structural adjustment policies in less developed countries.

#### **4.2.1.2 Dynamic Pressures**

The second stage in the creation of vulnerability are “dynamic pressures”. Dynamic pressures are the medium for the progression from root causes to unsafe conditions. In comparison with the root causes that are based in long established economic, social and political systems, dynamic pressures add a more current dimension. “Dynamic pressures are processes and activities that ‘translate’ the effects of root causes both temporally and spatially into unsafe conditions. These are more contemporary or immediate, conjunctural manifestations of general underlying economic, social and political patterns.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.53) These dynamic pressures are of a social and economic nature. “Dynamic pressures channel the root causes into particular forms of unsafe conditions that then have to be considered in relation to the different types of hazards facing people. These dynamic pressures include epidemic disease, rapid urbanisation, current (as opposed to past) wars and other violent conflicts, foreign debt and certain structural adjustment programmes.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 54) These

pressures are not dangerous as such and do not inevitably produce harm, but their ability to induce vulnerability is bound to a specific time and location. That means that dynamic pressures that transform root causes in one location into an unsafe condition does not have to do so in another region. The dynamic pressures are neither ahistorical nor can they be separated from the region where they take place. “The ways in which these dynamic pressures operate to channel root causes into unsafe conditions lead us to specify how the pressures play themselves out ‘on the ground’, in a strong spatial and temporal sense. This will allow micro-mapping of unsafe conditions affecting households differentially (e.g. wealthy ones, or in distinction, those lacking crucial access to material and human resources) and subsequently groups across households (women, children, the aged, disabled, marginalised ethnic groups, etc.) (Wisner et al, 2007, p.54) To give an example: Export promotion is not good or bad as such but if it encourages specific forms of mining then it can induce vulnerability. Such forms of mining lead to the pollution of water and soil, which undermines the resilience of people in regard of their health status.

#### **4.2.1.3 Unsafe conditions**

Unsafe conditions are the expression of vulnerability of people in a certain time and location. According to Wisner et al. (2007) the way these conditions bear out depend on the “level of well-being” of people previous to hazard and on their access to resources. The aspect of access to resources plays a crucial role in the creation of vulnerability. Wisner et al. distinguish between tangible resources such as tools, housing etc. and intangible resources such as social networks or knowledge. In order to mitigate or even prevent a disaster, all aspects of the causal chain have to be dealt with, from the root causes to the unsafe conditions. Examples for unsafe conditions are food insecurity, unsafe living conditions or hazardous livelihood opportunities. (Wisner et al. 2007, p.55)

The PAR Model is subject to criticism especially from researchers who follow the hazard approach. In comparison with the identification of unsafe conditions which is relatively easy, the linkage between dynamic pressures and vulnerability is less intelligible. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a causal connection and prove it, which is used as an argument against the vulnerability theory. The PAR Model does not provide a detailed and theory-based, precise analysis of the interaction between

environment and society in situations of disaster. This model focuses on the stage before the onset of a catastrophe, it shows the preconditions for disaster. Another point of criticism of this model is that it is static and “cannot suggest nor account for change, either before the onset of a disaster, and more importantly during and after it.” (Wisner et al 2007, p. 88) This shows that the PAR model cannot provide a thorough explanation of disasters on its own but must be combined with the Access Model.

#### **4.2.2 Access Model**

In comparison to the PAR model, which is static, the Access Model is a dynamic model which operates on a micro-level but takes into account complex processes at the local, national and international levels. “This focuses on the way unsafe conditions arise in relation to the economic and political processes that allocate assets, income and other resources in a society.” (Wisner et al 2007,p. 92) It explains how vulnerability is generated and shows how the interplay between hazard and vulnerability takes place. For Wisner et al the distribution of wealth and power and the access to resources is constitutive for explaining how and why disaster impact differently on various households and at the individual level. “Access involves the ability of an individual, family, group, class or community to use resources which are directly required to secure a livelihood in normal, pre-disaster times, and their ability to adapt to new and threatening situations. Access to such resources is always based on social and economic relations, including the social relations of production, gender, ethnicity, status and age, meaning that rights and obligations are not distributed equally among all people.” (Wisner et al. 2007,p.94)

The model describes how “normal” life before the disaster takes place, the unfolding of the disaster, and the transition from normal to abnormal life. Even if each type of natural hazard has specific features, “[...], there are generally shared characteristics in the way that vulnerability is generated, how the trigger event and the unfolding of the disaster has its impact, and various responses by different actors, both local, national and international.” ( Wisner et al. 2007,p.88)

#### 4.2.2.1 The Access Model – A Cyclical Model

The Access Model is a cyclical model which follows a certain disaster chronology.<sup>1</sup> First there is the pre-disaster situation, which is followed by the hazard impact and then the transition to the disaster takes place.

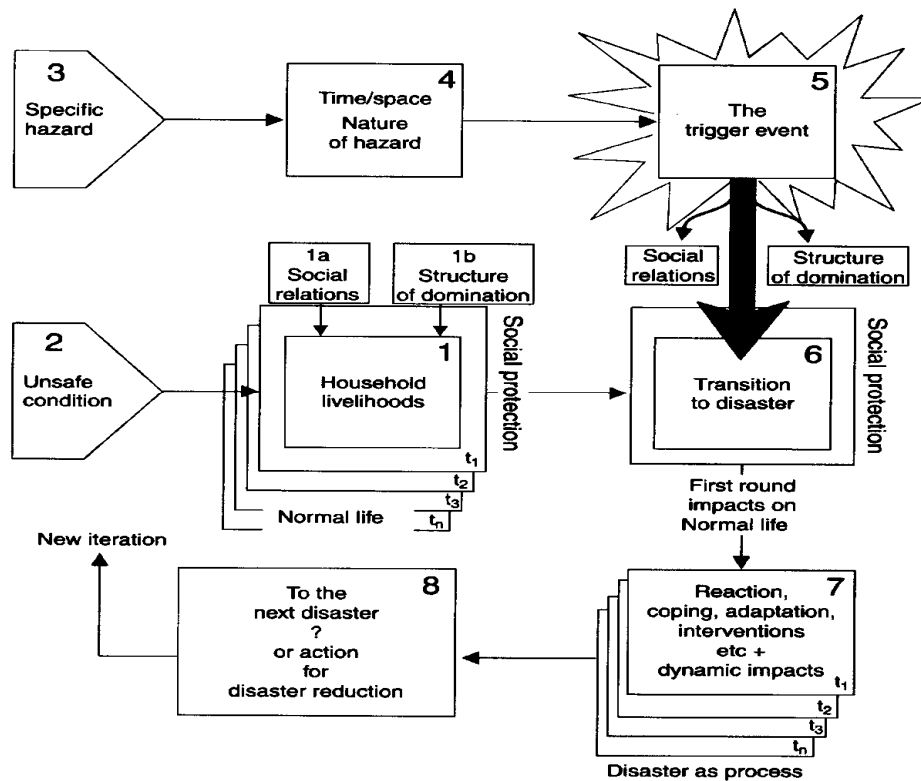


Illustration 2: Access- Model in Outline (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 89)

<sup>1</sup> Each disaster has a certain chronology in which different stages can be identified. Alice Fothergill (1998) has developed a more detailed typology of disasters that can be divided into nine stages:

**Exposure to Risk:** This stage deals with the situation of individuals previous to the disaster and with their vulnerability and exposure to risk.

**Risk Perception:** This part of the cycle shows how risk is perceived previous to the impact of a hazard and how people deal with knowing about it.

**Preparedness Behaviour:** After learning about a hazard, what are actions undertaken by people to prepare themselves for and mitigate the impact

**Warning Communication and Response:** „The warning response stage involves the reception of and the immediate actions in response to disaster warnings, such as tornado sirens or radio emergency broadcasts.“ {Fothergill 1998: 16}

**Physical Impacts:** This stage refers to the immediate impact of the hazard. The physical impact can result in injuries, deaths destruction of buildings, and infrastructure.

**Psychological Impacts:** Apart from physical impacts on the victims, there are also psychological impacts. Some psychological impacts become visible only after a period of time when people develop, for example, a post-traumatic stress syndrome.

**Emergency Response:** The term emergency response refers to the period immediately after a disaster and encompasses a time period from the onset of the catastrophe up to about a week after.

**Recovery:** „The recovery phase, typically the one-year period following a disaster, is generally when life returns to a somewhat operative, normal, or improved level.“ (Fothergill, Alice 1998: 21)

**Reconstruction:** This is the final stage of the chronology and can even last for years, as the consequences of the disaster might be experienced for a long time.

#### ***4.2.2.1.1 Situation Previous to the Disaster***

Boxes 1, 1a, 1b and 2 demonstrate the situation previous to the impact of the hazard: the exposure to risk, risk perception and preparedness behavior. Box 1 shows the “normal life” or “daily life” of a household and how the members of the household earn their livelihoods. Decisions about one's livelihood have to be taken on a regular basis. “The iterative character of a livelihood is suggested by repeated cycles of livelihood decisions, each one sheet, arranged in the diagram behind each other and labeled ‘t1’, ‘t2’, indicating subsequent iterations of decision making year by year.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.90) Households and their individuals are connected with the macro level such as the regional, national or even international level through their “social relations” and are subject to “structures of domination” that influence the decisions they are making. Social relations and the structures of domination together constitute the political economy. “The model stylizes the process of earning a living as a set of decisions made at the household level [...], individual decisions are always made in a political-economic environment, and this is indicated by two boxes (1a and 1b) labeled ‘social relations’ and ‘structures of domination’.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.90)

The system of “social relations” refers to economic transactions that are undertaken in the society between its different members. “The first is called social relations (Figure 3.1, Box 1a) and encompasses the flows of goods, money and surplus between different actors (for example, merchants, urban rentiers, capitalist producers of food, rural and urban households involved in various relations of production and endowed with a particular range and quality of access to resources, called an access profile [see below]).”(Wisner et al. 2007, p. 94)

The “structures of domination” system encompasses the hierarchical relations between different segments or members of a society and are often legitimized by dominant world views and ideologies. The structures of domination emerge at different levels that are interrelated, namely the household level, the extended family and kinship level, the community level and the state level. This includes intra-household relations between the different gender and age groups that “shape, and are shaped by, existing rights obligations and expectations that exist within the household and which affect the allocation of work and rewards (particularly crucial in terms of shock and stress.)” (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 94)

At the next level he identifies the kinship network that means commitment to support each other. For Wisner et al the relations between different classes and different ethnic groups form another structure of domination. The state level comprises all relations between the state, government bodies and its citizens. These relations have a decisive influence on the impact of a hazard and whether or not it develops into a disaster. “They involve issues of law and order and how these are exercised – with partiality and personal discretion, with particular degrees of intensity and efficiency, with differing degrees of coercion, or sometimes with violence. Relations at this level usually involve standards of governance and the capabilities of the civil service and the police.” (Wisner et al. 2007, pp.94-95) Important to mention is the negative effects that internal state conflicts can have on the development of disasters. In cases of civil war or conflicts between the state and its citizens, these structures of domination can have an especially negative effect and can create a “complex emergency”.

The “structures of domination” in the Access Model are equivalent to the root causes in the PAR-Model, which form the macro level of causes for vulnerability. The macro- and micro-levels are linked through unsafe conditions. The “unsafe conditions in Box 2 of the Access Model are the “unsafe conditions” of the PAR Model but at a local micro-level. (Wisner et al. 2007, pp. 88-95) Box 1 shows “household livelihoods” within the frame of “social protection” which is a visualization of the need for hazard precautions and preparedness at the local and national levels organized by the local community and/or the state.

#### ***4.2.2.1.2 Hazard Impact***

Boxes 3-5 relate to further aspects in the disaster cycle, which are disaster response, warning communication and response, and physical and psychological impacts. Box 3 introduces a specific hazard that has its own characteristics and potential consequences. Box 4 shows that the hazard is located in time and space. The impact of a hazard depends on the location and on the time when it occurs. One and the same hazard can impact in different ways depending on the region where it happens. It makes a great difference whether the hazard occurs in a densely populated region or in a deserted place. A tsunami might not create that much damage in areas where the coastline is protected by coral reefs as compared to coastal areas where there is no natural protection. The time dimension of a hazard has many aspects. Some hazards occur



frequently, thus communities are more aware of their existence. In other cases like the tsunami in the Indian Ocean happen only once in a few centuries and therefore people tend to forget about it. It makes a difference in which season, on which day and which time a disaster unfolds. Another aspect of the time dimension is the pace in which the disaster develops. There are sudden disasters, such as earthquakes and slow-onset disasters, such as famines. Each stage in the disaster cycle furthermore develops its own pace of change. “The stages of the impact of a disaster after the hazard strikes are fundamental. The various elements in the vulnerability framework (class relations; household access profiles; income opportunities; household budget; and structures of domination and resource allocation) each iterate at a different speed.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.108) All these aspects added together in Box 5 develop into a trigger event for a disaster. The black arrow that points from Box 5 to Box 6 breaks through the frame of social protection. “Some of the immediate consequences are mediated or deflected by the safety measures in place, while other impacts penetrate these safety measures (depicted by the ‘impact arrow’ striking through the outer protective barrier) and fall upon different households with varying degrees of severity. The hazard event also alters existing social relations as well as structures of domination, as the more detailed explanation of these processes will show.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.91)

#### ***4.2.2.1.3 Transition to Disaster***

Transition to disaster means that, as shown in Box 6, the households and its individuals have to face the first rounds of impacts on their daily lives. This impact is a serious one. The changes in the lives of individuals and households can be enormous. People die or suffer from illnesses or injuries due to the disaster, some may become disabled, and this alters the composition of households. Individuals and households often have reduced capacities to secure their livelihoods. Assets may be destroyed that prevent them from taking up income opportunities they had before the onset of the catastrophe. (Wisner et al. 2007, p.109) “The disaster event itself alters capabilities and preferences both in the short term (e.g. grieving, trauma, acute deprivation) and also in the longer term, since the aftermath of a disaster sees a reappraisal of previous individual and collective commitments, the strength and nature of trust, and the intensity and diversity of social networks including rules of membership.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p. 110)

#### 4.2.2.1.4 Emergency Response, Recovery and Rehabilitation

Boxes 7 and 8 depict the stages of emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation. Box 7 shows that the disaster unfolds as a process over time, and that coping mechanisms, interventions from outside such as relief efforts, take place. Box 8 illustrates the question if a household could enhance its disaster mitigation capacities or if it became more vulnerable to disasters. The arrow leading from Box 8 to Boxes 1 and 2 indicates that the conditions of the households have altered. Sometimes in the process of recovery and rehabilitation, vulnerability can be reduced, and mitigation and coping capacities can be enhanced. In case of the occurrence of a new hazard, it depends on these aspects whether another disaster takes place or not.

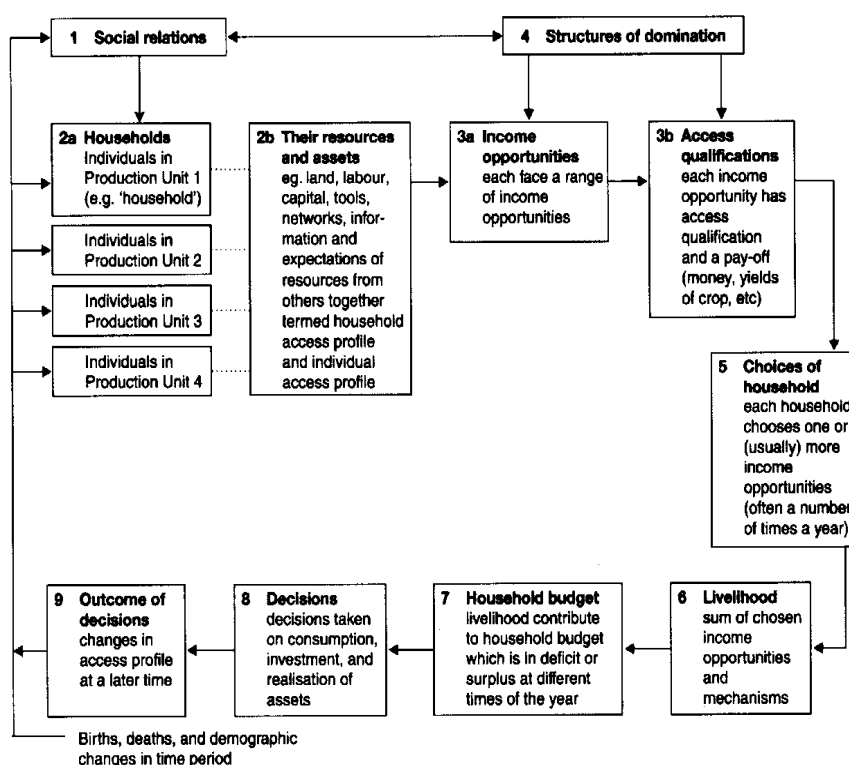


Illustration 3: Normal Life of Households (Wisner et.al 2007, p.99)

#### 4.2.2.2 Normal Life of Households

To fully understand how vulnerability is created, the normal life of households has to be described in more detail. The units of analysis in the Access Model are “households” or “hearth holds”. “Households” or “hearth holds” are units of people who share common cooking facilities, who eat together, take joint decisions concerning the household

economy, and are often part of one production unit. Exceptions such as workers living in hostels are not considered as households. (Wisner et al. 2007, p.98) The household access profile defines what resources and assets each household has at its disposal. Resources and assets in this context means both material resources such as land, livestock, housing, jewelry, etc. as well as non-material resources which are credited to individuals and include assets such as knowledge, skills and social networks. Access to resources essentially defines to the degree to which households are vulnerable to hazards.

“Non material ‘resources’ are also essential, such as knowledge and skills, the structural position occupied in a society such as gender, or membership of a particular tribe or caste (which can either enable or exclude a person from networks of support, facilitate or prevent access to resources and their utilisation).” (Wisner et al. 2007, pp.98-99) Wisner et al. claim that each individual has an “initial state of well being” which cushions the effects of shock and is “primarily defined by physical abilities”. (Wisner et al. 2007, p.98). This state is reduced gradually through the impact of disasters. It is important for a household to have access to non-material and material assets, as this is the decisive factor for the condition of a household. The Access is secured mainly through laws or customary rights. In some circumstances households secure their access to resources through crime.

Each household has different options to take up a livelihood and earn an income. But the decision on choosing a specific income-providing opportunity is based on the access profile, the qualifications and assets of a household or individual. For each livelihood, different qualifications, skills and resources are required. They are termed access qualifications. Without such qualifications individuals or households cannot take up income opportunities. Individuals and households which have a wide range of qualifications can choose between a variety of jobs. They can opt for income opportunities that are better paid and often less hazardous. Those with low skills and assets have less options to choose from and are restricted to less profitable ways of earning an income. The income of a household can take many forms, such as wages, natural resources, etc. “The resulting bundle of income opportunities (both in kind and in cash), together with the satisfaction of such needs as water and shelter, can be said to constitute a ‘livelihood’ (Box 6), which is the sum of the payoffs of the household’s

constituent income opportunities.” (Wisner et al. 2007,p.101) According to the household budget, decisions on consumption and expenditure are taken. “The outcome of these decisions will result in a change in the access profile of each household in the next period (Box 9). These will, in aggregate, alter the flows of surplus between groups and households and may alter the social relations between groups (Box 1), so that in the next round the households are in a different set of relations to each other and larger scale structures, and enter Box 2b with different access profiles.” (Wisner et al. 2007,p.101). As shown above, Wisner et al focus on households which consist of individual members as their unit of analysis. There is an inconsistency in the explanation of the access model. Wisner et al claim that “Each individual in a household has a collective claim which may be termed as access to resources.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.98) Wisner et al. seem to neglect the intra household differences between household members. It is important to look at each individual member and define its own access profile as well.

### ***4.3 Disaster Response and Hazard Mitigation***

After the onset of a disaster, the speed and scope of recovery depends on how people respond and adapt to it. Two different forms of response to disasters, that are closely connected, can be identified. In order to understand the mechanisms of disaster response, the two forms have to be analyzed separately: On the one hand there is disaster response by the affected people and on the other hand disaster response is provided from outside. Hazard mitigation is an other form of response to disaster. It should take place before the impact of a hazard but often only takes place after the onset of a disaster in order to prevent a future catastrophe This stage is decisive in making the affected either become more vulnerable or resilient to hazards. Resilience is the “capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.” (ISDR 2004)

#### **4.3.1 Disaster Response by Those Affected**

The mechanisms that affected people develop who are affected to deal with the consequences of a Hazard impact are called coping strategies. “Coping is the manner in which people act within the limits of existing resources and range of expectations to achieve various ends. In general, this involves no more than ‘managing resources’ but

usually it means how it is done in unusual, abnormal and adverse situations.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.113) Coping strategies involve mechanisms that enact on individual, family or on community level. The affected make use of experiences they have made in previous disasters and develop strategies and make use of capacities they still have in order to cope with the hazard impact. „They have adapted coping strategies based on previous experiences in dealing with disasters. Although disasters may deprive people physically of food, shelter, crops, tools, they always will have resources left.“ (Murshed 2003, p. 147) Capacities include different resources, material and nonmaterial resources.

Anderson and Woodrow (1989) have developed a matrix to analyze the different capacities people have. They define three types of capacities: physical/material, social/organizational, motivational/attitudinal. Some of these capacities are also mentioned in the Access-Model, such as coping mechanisms which can take on different forms: Social networks are essential in order to combine forces and pool resources, which frees their forces and resources for other individual efforts that are needed in the relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation process. Also nonmaterial aspects, such as religious beliefs, can play a vital role in coping.

#### **4.3.2 External Disaster Response**

Support mechanisms from outside are provided by government agencies, NGOs or even by citizens of other regions of the country. The first phase of support, the relief phase, starts when aid reaches the affected people immediately after the onset of a catastrophe. Relief can be defined as: “The provision of assistance or intervention during or immediately after a disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected. It can be of an immediate, short-term, or protracted duration.” (International Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2004) After the immediate relief phase, the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction follows. It stretches normally over a long period that can last up to several years after the onset of a disaster. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts are defined by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) as : “Decisions and actions taken after a disaster with a view to restoring or improving the pre-disaster living conditions of the stricken community, while encouraging and facilitating necessary adjustments to reduce disaster risk. Recovery (rehabilitation and reconstruction) affords an opportunity to develop and

apply disaster risk reduction measures” (ISDR 2004) It is crucial that external response mechanisms are integrated in the coping mechanisms of those affected. Only when these external relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts support the coping strategies that individuals and communities themselves develop, they assist in the process of recovery.

### **4.3.3 Hazard Mitigation: Reducing Risk and Minimizing Vulnerability**

Efforts that minimize disaster impact should go hand in hand with the response to disaster. So-called mitigation strategies, strategies that are currently applied often still follow the hazard paradigm and concentrate more on reducing the intensity of the hazard than on the factors that produce vulnerability. “Mitigation of hazards is normally associated with attempts to reduce the intensity of a hazard or to make some other modification which is supposed to lessen its impact. It is often a hazard- centred rather than people-centred approach.” (Cannon 1994, p.21) Efforts to reduce the vulnerability of people and minimize risk previous to the impact are important. These preventive strategies have to be implemented at various levels: the individual, small group and state level. Strategies at the individual and small-group level “may involve avoiding dangerous time-spaces (such as fishing offshore in small open craft during the storm season), avoiding concentrations of disease vectors (e.g. malaria mosquito, tsetse fly) that have variability by season and/or altitude and choosing residence locations that are less exposed to wind, flood or mass movement of the earth.” (Wisner et al. 2007, p.115) Other strategies would be to keep stocks of food for adverse periods and to diversify production and income sources. Important are ties with relatives, neighbors or other community members in order to support each other in times of distress. Wisner et al (2007, pp.330- 376) suggest a seven-part strategy to reduce risk and prevent disaster at a national level, the “CARDIAC” strategy. The first objective is to make people aware of hazards, to make them understand how disasters unfold and what makes them vulnerable to them. The second objective is to conduct an “integrated hazard and capacity/vulnerability analysis (CVA)”. This analysis should be different to the existing risk assessments, as these have an technological approach to disaster but should center on vulnerabilities and compound disasters. The vulnerability analysis should integrate an analysis of the capacities of the respective communities. The third objective focuses on intercepting translation from root causes into unsafe conditions by blocking, changing, or reversing dynamic pressures. These dynamic pressures are “social,

economic and political mechanisms” (Wisner et al 2007, p.343) that need to be altered or stopped in order to reduce vulnerability and prevent a disaster. “They are instances of capacity-building measures based on pro-poor economic and political changes. Such actions reverse the mechanisms that translate root causes such as long histories of racial discrimination, unequal access to land and other resources, etc. into specific unsafe conditions.” (Wisner et al 2007,p. 343) The fourth objective is to focus on sustainable development. This means in terms of a disaster rehabilitation-development continuum to include risk reduction into development efforts and vice versa. The fifth objective emphasizes livelihoods. On the one hand some, livelihood opportunities may reduce vulnerability and, on the other hand, other livelihood patterns can provide risk reduction. Examples for vulnerability-inducing livelihood patterns are activities where persons are exploited. The importance here is to reduce such patterns and increase “the kinds of measures that promote sustainable livelihoods and can lead to a reduction in vulnerability” (Wisner et al 2007, p.352) The sixth objective focuses on the integration of risk reduction into disaster recovery. “In principle, such recovery would address economic, political and social needs- not only rebuilding infrastructure and housing, but opening the way for more resilient livelihoods. In practice, implementation of recovery along these lines requires reversing (or at least substantially palliating) the dynamic pressures and root causes that have contributed to the disaster in the first place.” (Wisner et al 2007,p.354) The “seventh risk- reduction objective” aims at building a “safety culture” through changes in the institutions of the state and society in general. This also means that power relations have to be altered and access to resources has to be ensured for everybody.





## 5 Gender

In the 1970s, a new analytical category, gender, was introduced in order to analyze the relationship between men and women. This was an additional category to the previously existing ones of sex and sex roles. Gender was then interpreted as an achieved status and the relationship “between women and men as cultural constructs which result from imposing social, cultural and psychological meanings upon biological sexual identities.” (Stolcke 1996, p.20) Sex referred to the biological differences between men and women. Since then, research on gender has undergone many changes. There are five main approaches to gender, some of them intersecting.

1. Gender as a symbolic construction
2. Gender as a social relationship
3. Doing Gender
4. Sex and Gender
5. Sameness and Difference
  - 5a Difference within and Difference between
  - 5b Doing Difference

### **5.1 Gender as Symbolic Construction**

This approach was in use in the 1970s and 1980s and initiated a discussion on how gender is constructed and culturally produced. This theory is characterized by a gender dichotomy, the male and female. Inherent in this dichotomy is a regime that subordinates women under males. Henrietta Moore (2000) claims that scholars such as Sherry Ortner and Michelle Rosaldo postulate that this subordination of women is a universal feature that can be found in many societies all over the world. It is a generalized universal status but it is not inherent in biological differences. The whole theory is based on a binary model that can be found worldwide. A distinction is made between nature and culture. It claims that culture is universally seen as superior to nature as humans dominate and control nature through culture and cultural practices. While women are associated with nature, the domestic sphere and motherhood, men are associated with culture, the public domain and fatherhood. According to Moore (2000, p.15) does Ortner not claim that women are really closer to nature, but she tries to show that cultural connotations make them appear so. “It is in understanding how men and women are socially constructed, and how those constructions define and redefine social

activities, that the value of symbolic analysis of gender becomes apparent. ” (Moore 2000,p.16)

## **5.2 Gender as Social Relationship**

With the beginning of the 1980s, a new approach emerged that opposed the claim made by the scholars that see gender as a symbolic construction and the female subordination as universal. They do not take for granted the strict binary categories of society of the structuralists. Nevertheless, they also operate with binary categories of men and women. Many scholars who are proponents of this approach are Marxist anthropologists such as Eleanor Leacock and Alice Schlegel. Leacock rejects the notion of a universal dual concept of social life. She proposes that a division of social life into a public and private realm cannot be applied to all societies worldwide. Ethnographic descriptions have provided evidence that those binary models of societies are not homogeneous cross-culturally, but gender relations are complex and varied. These scholars “approach the problem of gender relations through a consideration of what women and men do, rather than through an analysis of the symbolic valuations given to women and men in any society.” (Moore 2000,p.30) An analysis of gender as social relationships has to integrate research on sexual division of labor. They claim that the subordination of women evolved with the change to a capitalist economy. Before this change, men and women were assigned different positions. Proponents of this approach found out that, in hunter and gatherer and small-scale societies, men and women were autonomous. Both men and women had their own rights and duties, but complemented each other and were equal in value and prestige. Only through colonization and integration of such societies into capitalistic mode of production these gender relations changed. Karen Sacks disagrees with this, as she questions the assumption that women were complete equals and had an autonomous status in pre-capitalist societies. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that women are not subordinate to men in all societies and tries to explain the correlation between subordination and control over means of production.

This Marxist view on gender has come under criticism by scholars who claim that gender and status are not only determined by relations of production and that this approach has a too narrow view on a very complex issue. “Cultural representations of the sexes clearly have a determining influence on the status and position of women in society, and, if women are represented as subordinate while simultaneously maintaining

considerable economic and political power, then this is a feature of social life which requires explanation.” (Moore 2000, p.35)

### **5.3 “Doing Gender”**

Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman (1987), in their acclaimed article “Doing Gender” developed a theoretical framework that sees gender as an accomplishment which is undertaken on a recurring basis. They differentiate between sex, sex category and gender. They criticize that, in western societies, these categories are mixed up. The cultural perspective on gender is that men and women are distinct categories of human beings, who show different behavior and have different psychological traits. This is based on the assumption that these features are fixed and are rooted in the reproductive functions of the human body. West and Zimmerman claim that gender is an achievement that is socially produced and displayed and so they reject the notion that gender is natural. West and Zimmerman also reject reducing gender to a mere form display. According to their approach, this interpretation of gender would curtail the full meaning of gender. In their view “gender is created through interaction and at the same time structures interaction.”(West and Zimmerman 1987, p.131) By “doing gender”, differences between males and females are created which in turn again affirm the importance of gender. “Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’.” (West and Zimmerman 1987, p.126) It can be institutionalized through social settings where the differences are enacted and emphasized. West and Zimmerman give the example of public toilets, where the physical attributes of men and women do not necessarily compel them to use different types of toilets. Nevertheless are sex-segregated public toilets in common use and, through their furnishing with urinals for men and dressing tables for women, they affirm gender difference. Another setting where gender is constantly reinforced are social occasions where gender can be enacted and displayed, such as sports events. It is nevertheless important to point to the fact that “any interactional situation sets the stage for depictions of ‘essential’ sexual natures. [...]Many situations are not clearly sex categorized to begin with, nor is what transpires within them obviously gender relevant. Yet any social encounter can be pressed into service in the interests of doing gender.”(West and Zimmerman 1987,p.138)

This leads West and Zimmerman to research on the question how human beings acquire the skills of becoming gendered persons in the first place. New members to a society, especially children, start with a process of observing how others behave and try to act and react accordingly to this behavior. Through this they can themselves acquire a gender identity and learn the appropriate gender behavior. "Thus gender differences, or the socio-cultural shaping of "essential female and male natures," achieve the status of objective facts. They are rendered normal, natural features of persons and provide the tacit rationale for differing fates of women and men within the social order." (West and Zimmerman 1987,p.142) The other important question that West and Zimmermann raise is if "doing gender" can be avoided. They reject this idea, as the accomplishment of gender is an ongoing process and cannot be stopped completely.

#### **5.4 Sex and Gender**

The discussions about the theoretical frameworks explained above lead to a rethinking of the dichotomous concept of men and women to a more differentiated picture of gender relations. Different scholars started to combine both approaches, as gender was neither a sole symbolic construction nor only a product of social relationships. According to Stolcke (1996) it was at the end of the 1980s that scholars such as Yanagisako and Collier and Mc Donald started questioning that gender should be rooted in biological facts. Gender relations are structured through an intersecting influence of cultural meaning, biology and socio-economic relationships. Yanagisako and Collier assume that there are no natural differences between men and women but that they are rather social constructs of western societies. Mc Donald also claimed „that even views of biology and physiology, and for that matter of nature as such, are socio-political conceptualizations." (Stolcke 1996, p.22). These concepts reject the distinction between sex and gender and also reject the binary sex model.

#### **5.5 Sameness and Difference**

Postmodernism represented the end of the era of the grand theories of anthropology. This had a great impact on feminist theory. It also meant the end of the great theories in anthropology of gender. The quest for a universal valid theory of sex and gender came to a halt.

Two debates influenced especially the anthropology of gender and finally led to the evolvement of the anthropology of difference. Women from the South started questioning feminist models of universal oppression of women. They questioned it as being a western model and claimed that, for them, other forms of oppression are more actual. This posed a threat to the international women's movement, as it questioned the legitimacy of the strife for self determination and fight against suppression of women. Ethnographic research furthermore shows that there is more than one model of gender relations in a society that is structured hierarchically. There are diverse relations between gender that are dependent on situation and context. A shift took place away from the paradigm of the researcher having an objective view from outside to the researcher being a spokesman or spokeswoman of multiple voices from within the society.

The other debate evolved around the breaking-up of the grand theories. Various scholars contend that traditional social entities are breaking-up. These changes take place especially in former traditional societies that become integrated into nation states and into the global economy. This breaking up of traditional structures of society does not mean that they stay fragmented. Out of the fragments, new societal institutions emerge. These changes in the structure also effect gender relations and therefore alter them. All these discussion led to a new era of gender research shifted the focus to exploring how different forms of difference were constructed. (Hauser-Schäublin and Röttger-Rössler 1998a; Moore 1996)

### **5.5.1 Difference Within and Difference Between**

Henrietta Moore (1996) gives a detailed description of the varying forms of difference that exist regarding gender. She identifies three main forms: the differences between, the differences within, and the different identities of one person.

Differences between gender, as shown above in the chapter on sex and gender, do not have to be based on dichotomies. The binary sex category is a social construction, and so is gender. There are two forms of approaches to differences within: First of all, gender is not the only form of difference in a society, as there are other forms of difference that structure society, such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and age. The question Moore and others are posing is "whether or not gender difference should be privileged over all other forms of difference. If gender makes a difference,

then so too do race, class, sexuality, religion and other forms of difference.” (Moore 1996, p.195) These different forms have to be regarded always as being imbedded in the context of a society. Intersection of the different forms of difference can create multiple differing and even contrasting gender relations in one society. The other approach to differences of gender within anthropology deals with the false preoccupation of gender with the “elision of the husband/wife dyad with the categories male/female, and the concomitant focus on relations between spouses as a gloss for gender relations in general, may explain why it has taken anthropology so long to recognize intercultural variation in gender models, meanings, categorizations and roles.” (Moore 1996, p.200) There are multiple different other relationships between men and women in a society other than husband and wife. In anthropological theory, especially the relationship between sister and brother is highlighted, but there are others, such as father and daughter. The third form of difference concerns differing identities of one and the same person. Depending on the context and on the part of lifecycle in which a person is situated, her or his identity changes.

### **5.5.2 Doing Difference**

There are different approaches to look at the dimensions of social differentiation. In the 1990s scholars looked mostly at race and class among other forms of discrimination. Some see these dimensions as systems that intersect, whereas others consider them as additive categories. West and Fenstermaker (1995) reformulate a concept of gender that was developed in the article “Doing Gender” by West and Zimmerman. West and Fenstermaker claim that the feminist theories have a white middleclass bias. Those who produce feminist theories are white women who stem from middleclass family backgrounds and they are often unaware of other realities such as the lives of black lower class women. Those who publish these theories are also white middle or upper class women and are not aware either of the bias in the published article. Therefore, they developed their model of difference as a criticism of these other feminist theories. They see gender, race and class as comparable systems of oppression in the way social inequalities are produced. West and Fenstermaker (1995, p.9) nevertheless insist that the outcomes and descriptive characteristics of these categories are different. These systems of oppression do not have a fixed way in which they are linked with each other. One can neither rank oppression nor rank the oppressed, people from less to highly oppressed as each kind of oppression is different. Race, class and gender cannot be

regarded as separate entities, as they are interlocked. Everyone is at the same time “gendered”, “raced” and “classed”. With the ethnomethodological approach of “Doing Difference”, West and Fenstermaker try to built a model of how gender, race, and class operate simultaneously and demonstrate how systems of inequality function. Race, class, and gender are not equivalents, as the consequences of these forms of oppression are different, but the way they operate is similar.

### **5.5.2.1 Gender**

West and Fenstermaker (1995) criticize the classification of sex in two categories as a western concept. They show that there are variations of how to assign different sexes to persons. “From an ethnomethodological viewpoint, sex is socially and culturally constructed rather than a straightforward statement of biological ‘facts’.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, p.20) For this reason they distinguish between sex category and sex assignment. Sex categorization is a process in which persons are identified as male or female in everyday life. (West and Zimmerman 1987, pp.132-134)

An important keyword in this regard is accountability, which means that actions undertaken by persons are noticed, described and assessed and evaluated by other members of society. Out of this evaluation these other members of society, in an interaction with other persons, draw conclusions for their further behavior, this evaluation is part of the process of interaction in which the circumstances of the action undertaken are taken into account as well. “And the third point we must stress is that, while individuals are the ones who do gender, the process of rendering something accountable is both interactional and institutional in character: it is a feature of social relationships, and its idiom derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, p.21)

### **5.5.2.2 Race**

Similar to gender, race is depicted as being based on natural criteria. This categorization is scientifically invalid, as race is not based in human biology. West and Fenstermaker (1995) claim that race is linked with normative conceptions of how persons have to behave according to their race category as an accomplishment that is dependent on the situation in which it is taking place. This does not mean that people have to enact race

in a special way but that people are assessed by others according to race. People are treated according to this race assessment and thus a certain racial order is maintained.

### **5.5.2.3 Class**

West and Fenstermaker acknowledge the existence of different structures of access to economic, political and social resources, but at the same time they reject that these structures have much “to do with class categorization - and ultimately, with the accountability of persons to class categories- in everyday life.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, p.26) Class categorization differs from accountability to sex category and race category in so far as it is not based in biological characteristics. Nevertheless, these are assumptions, that being assigned to a lower class means having such personal qualities as laziness. “Because we cannot see this, the accomplishment of class in everyday life rests on the presumption that everyone is endowed with equal opportunity and, therefore, that real differences in the outcomes we observe must result from individual differences in attributes like intelligence and character.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, p.28) This classification and the related practices in turn affirm the class system and make it seem “natural”.

West and Fenstermaker conclude, that applying an ethnomethodological approach, has implications for understanding race, class and gender:

First of all race, class and gender, as they are ongoing accomplishments, are always inseparable from each other and have to be seen as part of the context in which they take place. They “are potentially omnirelevant to social life, individuals inhabit many different identities, and these may be stressed or muted, depending on the situation.” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, p.30) Secondly, it is not necessary to have diverse categories of persons in a social setting to accomplish race, class and gender. In these situations, the presence of persons of a second category is not needed for the production of difference. Even if only one category is present differences can be produced. The presence of a second displayed category may only highlight the difference. “Some of the most extreme displays of ‘essential’ womanly and manly natures may occur in settings that are usually reserved for members of a single sex category, such as locker rooms or beauty salons”. (Gerson 1985 cited in: West & Fenstermaker 1995, p.31) Furthermore, one and the same activity, can have different meanings according to the way race, class and gender are accomplished. The meanings also depend on the persons



who are involved in the accomplishment. Finally, West and Fenstermaker highlight that “our perspective affords an understanding of the accomplishment of race, gender, or class as constituted in the context of the differential ‘doings’ of the others.” (West& Fenstermaker 1995, p.32)



## **6 Gender and Disaster**

Gender is an especially important aspect in everyday life. Gender influences the way people experience, cope with, and mitigate disasters. One can say that disasters, in many ways, are gendered. “The social experience of disaster affirms, reflects, disrupts, and otherwise engages gendered social relationships, practices and institutions. Disasters unfold in these highly gendered social systems.” (Enarson and Morrow 1998, p.4) Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) on the one hand reject gender stereotypes in disasters, but on the other hand identify certain experiences and behavioral patterns that women and men share. They apply “spatial theories of the public and the private” to the disaster context. (Fordham & Ketteridge 1998, p.82) They acknowledge that a binary model of gender simplifies complex contexts, but point out that such simplification helps in exploring “economic and social relations under a capitalist patriarchy” (Fordham & Ketteridge 1998, p.82). It is important to perceive the discourse on disasters as a gendered one. Disaster research, emerging from the field of civil defense and emergency management is still a male dominated area. Many research papers and many disaster policies have a male bias and reflect the ideas and experiences of a mainly male relief agency personnel and of male disaster researchers. Enarson and Morrow (1998, p.4) criticize that gendered disaster research still follows traditional gender norms and so, for example, research on the psychological impact of disaster on men is still a topic that is underexamined. Gender not only influences the production of vulnerability, but also has an impact on the coping capacities of the affected communities. To allow for the different vulnerabilities and coping capacities of men and women, the disaster response needs to be differentiated along class, gender, ethnicity and age groups.

### **6.1 Gendered Vulnerability**

For better analysis of gender issues in disaster research it is not enough to have gender disaggregated statistical data. Men and women are not two exclusive categories that require two different responses to disasters. Gender issues overlap with issues of class and ethnicity. A combination of these factors produces vulnerability. “But exclusive categories of vulnerability - elderly or female, migrant or single mother - falsely de-gender intersecting identities and social relationships. Gendered vulnerability does not derive from a single factor, such as household headship or poverty, but reflects historically and culturally specific patterns of relations in social institutions, culture and

personal lives.“ (Enarson 1998,p.159) Gendered vulnerability is based on unequal relationships between the genders in day-to-day life. In combination with the impact of a hazard and other factors, gendered vulnerability produces a disaster. The impact and also the experience of a disaster differ according to gender, because of the way the social system is structured through gender. Disasters reinforce already existing socio-economic stratifications. “Economic, racial/ethnic, and age stratification make some women needier than others before, during and after disaster, both among and within cultures.“ (Enarson and Morrow 1998b, p. 4) Many scholars analyze the vulnerability contexts of families or households as if they were unified by cooperatively sharing resources. Bolin et al. (1998) criticize this practice and emphasize the importance of looking into the situation of each individual member of a household and how resources are distributed along gender lines. Wiest (1998) also takes the household as the foundation for his analyses. The way how people respond to disasters is based on the structure of the household, which “provides the context, form and meaning for response.” (Wiest 1998, pp.63-64). For Wiest the existence or lack of coping capacities as well as disaster vulnerability have their roots in kinship and domestic structures. He then goes to the individual level where he differentiates between the different members of the household or kin groups. He finds inequalities among members of the household and kin groups that are specifically based on gender differences. Therefore vulnerability analyses should not only focus on the household as appropriate level of analyses but also study the individual aspects of vulnerability. Women are especially affected by all different kinds of vulnerability. Each form of vulnerability - economic, environmental, social, physical and educational is gendered.

Some examples shall be provided here:

Especially female-headed households are vulnerable to disasters due to economic factors and cultural practices, such as the segregation of widows e.g. in Bangladesh. Women’s economic vulnerability puts them especially at risk. “Low income women whose earnings are essential for family survival may die in floods when they ‘choose to’ remain in their homes to protect precious livestock or goods.” (Enarson and Morrow 1998,p.5) Some aspects of social vulnerability are related to cultural practices. In some countries, women are not taught to swim, as for going swimming one has to wear a special dress. Wearing a swimming costume is not regarded as appropriate for a girl or woman and so they are not allowed or do not want to learn how to swim due to fear of

being harassed by males. This poses a special threat for women living in coastal areas or near rivers, where flooding is an occasional risk. “Women form a particularly vulnerable group lacking the needed level of official support and recognition because of the largely hidden complexity of the private domain women occupy. They bear an increased burden during, and long after, the flooding event due to their generally low economic and social status, as well as major home and childcare responsibilities that often occur in tandem with low paid work outside the domestic environment.” (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998, p.86) One aspect of educational vulnerability are aspects regarding cultural practices. In Muslim countries observing Purdah on one hand poses direct threat to the survival of women facing a disaster as they often are often depended on males to receive warnings. Even if they receive the warning they might be reluctant to leave the house due evacuation shelters that are mainly dominated by men. (Enarson and Morrow 1998)

## ***6.2 Gendered Impact and Response***

There is not only a gender difference regarding vulnerability, but research on disaster impact and response shows that there are gender differences in all stages of a disaster, from warning communication and response, to risk perception, impact to relief and rehabilitation efforts. “In the context of emergency response operations, the research suggests that women are treated differently at all stages of disaster: from the initial warning period when women and children are pressured to leave, but men are often allowed to stay behind; through the immediate postimpact period when men may leave their families to assist others and report to emergency agencies; to the relief and recovery period when women, especially single parents, may be left out of the relief process.” (Scanlon 1998, p.46)

O’Brien and Atchison (1998) conducted a study on how men and women responded to aftershock warning and investigated whether there were gender differences in their reaction. They found differences in four different aspects of aftershock warning response. Differences could be identified in the way men and women perceived the experience of the earthquake, the immediate actions people undertook, the channels of information they used and type of information they received and the actions that were undertaken in the first months following the disaster. More men than women got their information about earthquakes and aftershocks through the media while more women

got information via informal information channels such as friends and relatives. There were also differences in how men and women experienced the catastrophe and perceived the damage. More women than men undertook actions to protect their homes from possible aftershocks and future earthquakes. O'Brien and Atchison relate this to "greater female concern with home and [...] lesser knowledge about aftershocks based on less experience in earthquake damage situations." (O'Brien and Atchison 1998, p.178) Also the role behavior complies with popular stereotypes such as women as the nurturers and carers and men the rescuers. Men tended to help more with search and rescue and more women than men were occupied with providing food and water. Although these findings follow the line of typical gender stereotypes, O'Brien and Atchison warn not to create an "instrumental/expressive gender dichotomy" (O'Brien and Atchison 1998, p.179) but to see these gender differences in warning response as dependent on the situation in which the disaster occurs. Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) found in their research on "Gender Stereotypes in Disasters" that male emotional reactions to disaster events differ from those of women. "Men have been constrained to hide emotional responses because of their stereotyped association with the active and the practical and sometimes their alienation from feminized care and support facilities." (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998, p.93) Men are reluctant to come forward and personally seek emotional support and psychosocial treatment. They also cannot rely so much on informal social networks to get emotional support. Therefore men need to be actively approached and be offered help. As men are less associated with providing care and emotional support, men are underrepresented as counselors and social workers.

### **6.3 Gendered Coping Capacities**

Coping capacity also has an influence on the impact of a hazard. When people lack capacities to cope with hazards, the impact on victims is greater. These capacities are also structured by social, economic and political factors. This means that gender makes a difference in the various coping capacities of men and women. "Since women's vulnerabilities and capacities are different due to their socioeconomic position in society, the effects of disaster are also different for women. Awareness of the cultural context that limits women's opportunities to develop their capacities for disaster survival also facilitates recognition of gender-based disaster impacts and the need to incorporate gender analysis and gender sensitivity in planning and implementing relief and management/mitigation programs." (Bari 1998, p.125) It is dangerous to portray

women as sole vulnerable victims of disaster as this can reinforce gender stereotypes. It is important to portray the vulnerability of women, but it is equally important to show the potentials and capacities that women have to contribute to the recovery of the community. (Finlay 1998; Enarson and Morrow 1998b) Women are not only victims who are vulnerable to disasters but they employ diverse coping strategies using their capacities. Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) state that these capacities and resources, even though being used in the private domains, are under-utilised in the “official (masculinized-public domain) disaster process” (Fordham & Ketteridge 1998,p.83) Women are an intrinsic part of community organizations as they volunteer to engage in work for the common good. In these often informal surroundings they demonstrate dedication, organizing abilities and leadership qualities that are often overlooked. Enarson and Morrow (1998c) documented how women use their networks and leadership qualities as their resources to establish grassroots organizations that serve the disaster-affected communities. Women from different ethnic and social backgrounds of the hurricane-affected region of South Dade County in Florida got together and founded the informal disaster response coalition “Women Will Rebuild”. They were unsatisfied with the existing foundation “We will Rebuild” that organized the relief distribution and reconstruction of the destroyed communities. They pressured the foundation to include more women in their steering committee. They accomplished the existing male relief distributing activities with a program that especially focused on women and marginalized families. There is a need for resources and capacities women contribute to relief and rehabilitation efforts to become more visible and for more women to be integrated into the formal disaster response process.

#### ***6.4 Gendered Relief and Rehabilitation***

Disaster relief and rehabilitation has a great influence on how affected communities re-establish their lives. Through the way how disaster response is provided by external agencies, it can either deepen inequalities or it can provide opportunities to improve the situation of disaster victims. Disaster response efforts have to be aware of and take into account social, economic and political structures. Disaster relief and rehabilitation has to be conducted in a gender sensitive way. When disaster relief is blind to gender issues, it particularly reinforces patterns of discrimination. “Male-dominated response organizations act on a view of society in which vulnerable women must be superseded or managed by men or left to carry out traditional female- roles- roles that lead in fact to

their vulnerability.” (Scanlon 1998, p.49) Men are dominating the management level of relief organization and are responsible for “disaster decision-making” and rescue work. (Robertson 1998) Female employees of disaster relief organisations are often assigned with positions on the organisation of provision of care or counseling. (Fordham & Ketteridge 1998; Robertson 1998). There is a lack of men in the so-called care-giving occupation and a lack of women on the relief management level. This gender misrepresentation threatens disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts as the needs of the victims cannot be addressed adequately. Both men and women have to be equally represented on all levels of disaster management and mitigation. Disaster relief has to strengthen the coping capacities of women affected by disasters. „Disasters provide an opportunity to challenge established discriminatory social orders when the disenfranchised gain access to resources or employment. Organized consciousness-raising efforts can highlight women’s potential productive and creative capacity“. (Wiest 1998, p.77)

## ***6.5 Gendered Disaster Mitigation and Risk Reduction***

Active involvement of women in disaster risk reduction and mitigation activities seems not reaching far enough, especially when referring to the seven objectives of risk reduction of Wiest et al. (2007, pp. 321-374) which demand a complete alteration of the structure of society. The second objective of risk reduction aims at making an „integrated hazard and capacity/vulnerability analysis (CVA)”. This analysis has to integrate especially gender and find out about gendered vulnerabilities as well as capacities. Another important issue is to empower women, which forms part of the improvement of livelihood opportunities. In the seventh objective an alteration of power relations is demanded, this includes a change of gender relations. “Disaster specialists rarely speak in the language of empowerment but social justice is, in fact, the linchpin of effective disaster mitigation. To the degree that disasters are rooted in unresolved dilemmas of global development, gender and development issues are disaster mitigation issues, as many contributors suggested. ” (Enarson and Morrow 1998a, p. 226) In all seven objectives gender forms an integral part of the measures to reduce risk and mitigate disaster, but how this integration can be put into practice still needs further research.



## 7 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach applied to this research: “Methodology includes discussion of method – How shall we proceed?– and of the principles of theory construction– What are the goals of inquiry? What shall the knowledge that we want to produce on our subject matter be like? What does the concept of theory mean?” (Schweizer 1998, p. 40) I will describe my personal approach to disasters, outline the thematic and theoretic approach to the topic of gendered vulnerabilities in disasters. I will also explain the design of the research and how the analysis was conducted.

### 7.1 *Personal approach*

In February 2004, together with other students of social anthropology, I went on an excursion to Sri Lanka. Among other places we also visited the University of Peradeniya in the Up-Country of Sri Lanka. There, we were able to talk with the Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology who gave us information about the department, the curriculum and their research focus. The combination of Sociology and Social Anthropology, with a focus on development studies, was of great interest to me and therefore I toyed with the idea of doing an exchange semester in Sri Lanka. So I inquired about the procedure of admission as an exchange student for one semester. Once back home, I prepared all documents that were required to register at the university. Finally, in mid- November 2004, Melanie, a friend of mine and I, departed for Sri Lanka in order to begin our studies there. We were put up in a guesthouse a few kilometers away from the university along Peradeniya Road on the way to Kandy town. The university term started at the beginning of December. We enrolled at university and registered for different courses on Sri Lankan Society and Applied Development. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, as it was going to be Christmas Eve the next day, we went to a small village on the coastline, a few kilometers south of the town of Galle. There, we rented a room in a small bungalow where we planned to stay for a few days before going back to university. The family that rented the room was known to us through friends. It was a lovely family consisting of the owner Amal, his wife, their small daughter and Amal’s parents. They lived in a small house that was attached to the bungalow. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2004, Melanie had left the bungalow early in the morning and was already visiting friends who were living a few hundred meters away. I

was just getting ready to have a shower, wearing only underwear and a T-Shirt. I just had turned the music on when suddenly a bit of water came in underneath the door. The bungalow was only 30 meters away from the beach with the door facing the sea. I was not afraid of the water as I thought that the sea might have been a bit ruff. I assumed that it was the spindrift that was carried to the terrace of the bungalow. The CD- Player and the mobile phone were plugged into the socket and laid on the floor. To prevent them from being damaged I wanted to unplug them. Suddenly a huge wave broke the door and pulled me under water. For a few minutes I was caught in the twirling water. I felt like being in a huge washing machine and I hardly could take a breath. After a few minutes, when the water calmed down, I was in the middle of the room. The water reached up to my chest and I stood in midst of broken furniture and pieces of the half broken door. The windows, as usual in Sri Lanka, were covered with iron bars, so there was no way of escaping through the window. The only way to escape would have been diving under the half broken door, but the water was so dirty that there was no possibility of finding the right way. So I started crying out for help but nobody came. Then, again, I must have become unconscious for some minutes. My next memory is that I saw some light. A sidewall of the bungalow had collapsed and so I was able to get out of the house before it collapsed completely.

The owner of the bungalow was able to rescue himself and his family, escaping to the roof of one of his neighbors' house. He later recounted that he saw me being carried away towards the main road by a three meter high wave. There, I first got hold of a loose electric line before getting hold of a tree where I stayed until my friends came to rescue me. Close to the tree were parts of the walls of the bungalow lying around. In between this rubble there were pieces of cloth entangled. I tried to pull one out as I felt ashamed of being half naked. I was finally successful and wrapped the dirty, wet cloth around my hips in order to cover myself.

Then, a few minutes might have passed; Melanie and another friend came and asked me to come with them. A few meters further down the road we met other people of the village who told us to walk towards the next village on the hill. It was only then that I realized I was injured. I had a serious cut on my left thigh and several other minor cuts and bruises all over my body. Nevertheless, we went to that village on foot and when we arrived there, we all gathered in one of the houses. I stayed in a house that a

manager of an Indian company had rented. He had a mobile phone which I used to call my mother in Austria. I told her that I had survived, though being injured. I was not able to tell her what had happened exactly but I was sure that the media would cover the event and so only told her to turn on the TV. I asked her to inform Melanie's parents as well, before the line was cut. I could contact my family only a week later after returning to Kandy. Later that day, we were given dry clothes by the villagers. We were served chickpeas with scraped coconut and chili paste and we were able to wash ourselves at the nearby well. We were about twenty people gathered in and around the house on the veranda. The Indian manager was fond of me and Melanie and so he offered us a spare room with 2 beds inside his house. All the others were given bed sheets and had to sleep on the veranda. On the next day, a nurse, who was a tourist as well, came and tried to tend the wounds of the injured, but all she had had were a few first-aid kits.

The following few days, people were housed and food was provided by the villagers. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> day, the owners of all nearby hotels organized a helicopter that flew out the tourists that were housed in the region. Melanie and I decided to stay. We then stayed with Amal and his family in their relatives' house. Melanie and I were offered a bed in one of the rooms of the houses. Amal and his family slept on mats on the floor. After the nurse had left, we tended to our wounds ourselves and did not go to a hospital, as they were partly destroyed, overcrowded and had turned into mortuaries.

Finally, one week after the tsunami, some friends of our friends came with a jeep and brought us back to Kandy with their car. We had a stop over at Galadhari Hotel in Colombo where they met a few friends. Melanie and I were dressed in ragged clothes, as we did not have anything else to wear. It was a shock for us after seeing all the destruction on the way from Dalawella up to Colombo, and once we were there, that people were dining and having cocktails in the hotel restaurant. A few kilometers away, there were people mourning the dead of their beloved ones and picking bits and pieces of the possessions left to them. Finally, during the night, we arrived at our boarding place in Kandy.

On the next day, I went to the doctor who cleaned and dressed my wound. Only after one month, the wound was clean enough to get stitched together. I could hardly walk during the following weeks but I nevertheless went to university and attended lectures. As part of a course in "Sociology of Development" I participated in an excursion to

Tsunami affected villages near Hambantota. I collected newspaper articles on the Tsunami and gathered information and books on natural disasters. After completing all my courses at the university, I asked Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva, the then Head of the Department of Sociology, for his advice regarding my research. After weighing up different options, I decided to do research on the impact of Tsunami.

## ***7.2 Thematic and Theoretical Approach***

A few weeks after the Tsunami, I bought the book “Gender dimensions in disaster management – A guide for South Asia” by Ariyabandu and Wickramasinghe (2003). This book, among other things, deals with the interlinkages of disaster, vulnerability and gender and got me interested in the topic of gendered disasters. For further reading on the topic, I found literature on different aspects of disasters. One of the magnum opuses on the various definitions of disaster is the volume “What is a disaster?”, edited by Quarantelli (1998).

This further led me to the scientific work of Oliver-Smith (1999), an anthropologist, who does research on disasters from an anthropological perspective. The volume of Wisner et al. (2007) “At Risk. Natural hazards, people’s vulnerability and disasters” deals with people’s vulnerabilities that in the interplay with a natural hazard cause a disaster. Morrow and Enarson work on social vulnerabilities, resilience and gender relations in disaster context and published the first major volume on this topic “The gendered terrain of disaster. Through women's eyes” in 1998. This provided the theoretical background to start research on the gendered impact of the Tsunami.

In order to get information on vulnerabilities and gender relations in Sri Lanka, a literature research and a collection of secondary data was undertaken in Sri Lanka. I started my literature research and collection of secondary data at the International Center for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Kandy and Colombo. It is an internationally renowned research center on issues of identity, inequality and conflict related to ethnicity, gender and politics, with a special focus on Sri Lanka. Both branches house a library with a large collection of books covering such topics as ethnicity, culture, identity, religion, women’s studies, politics, law, and history. The Center for Women’s Research (CENWOR) is an NGO that is involved in research on gender issues in Sri Lanka, and implements action-oriented programs related to women. It has also a library which is a major resource center for information on gender in Sri Lanka. The literature and secondary data collected in the different research institutes and through the internet

provided me with the background information needed for the study. The volume edited by Jayaweera (2002) "Women in post-independence Sri Lanka" gives a very good overview of the situation of women in Sri Lanka since independence. It covers such issues as constitutions, laws, education, employment, health, family and conflict. Another similar volume, "Unravelling herstories". A three generational study by Wijayatilake (2001), describes the situation of three generations of women in Sri Lanka and analyses the diverse relations within their families.

One of the oldest books on gender and power relations in contemporary Sri Lanka is "The fish don't talk about the water. Gender transformation, power, and resistance among women in Sri Lanka" by Risseuw (1988). This book provides an interesting historical overview and an insight into the contemporary situation of the coir industry in the South of Sri Lanka with a special focus on gender. Silva (2002), an anthropologist, not only writes in her book, "Life cycle rituals among the Sinhalese", about life cycle rituals in the Sinhalese society, but also about everyday life in a Sinhalese village in the south of Sri Lanka and issues of family, sexuality and domestic life.

Literature on concepts of masculinity in Sri Lanka is still rare to find. One of the only books on that topic is "Globalization, terror & the shaming of the nation. Constructing local masculinities in a Sri Lankan village", written by Jani de Silva (2005). It explains how young Sinhalese boys construct their maleness and how this is transformed by the local discourse on masculinity in the Sinhalese society. This is embedded in the description of an event, which took place in 1990, in the wake of the JVP-uprising, when a group of 22 school boys were kidnapped, taken to an army camp and killed.

The book "Frozen tears. Political violence, women, children, and problems of trauma in southern Sri Lanka." by Bulankulame (2005) also deals with the second JVP-uprising and describes the situation of widows who have lost their husbands due to this conflict. This gives reference material for the analysis of the situation of widows who have lost their husbands in the Tsunami. There are only a few qualitative studies on the Tsunami impact that focus on gender issues, and there is a general lack of reliable gender-aggregated data in existence. A report that deals with the coping strategies of widows, widowers and their children in the aftermath of the Tsunami was published with the support of UNIFEM by the Social and Human Resource Development Consultants (SHRDC) (2006). Ariyabandu (2006) has written an important article that describes gender issues in the recovery period in Sri Lanka. An interesting report on human rights

issues in the disaster aftermath was released by the Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit (2006) of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.

### **7.3 *Research Design***

To apply a proper research design, is a way of reducing threats to the validity and reliability of a study and includes various different aspects that, only together, form a logical plan.

“Thus, research design is more than just methods of data collection and analysis. It involves constructing a logical plan that links all the elements of research together so as to produce the most valid assessment possible of some theory, given some set of realistic constraints (for example, cost, scope, geographical setting, etc.)”. (Johnson 1998, p. 145)

#### **7.3.1 Research Methods**

I decided to do use a triangulation of research methods of; participant observation, semi structured interviews with people affected by the disaster, expert interviews with NGO personal, analysis of secondary data and literature. “We believe that the most effective way to ensure reliability and validity of ethnographic data is to obtain comparable, confirmatory data from multiple sources at different points in time, and through the use of multiple methods. This is the process of “triangulation”.” (Trotter and Schensul 1998, p.719) After the Tsunami, in the relief and rehabilitation phase, there was much competition about receiving aid among disaster victims. Every non Sri Lankan person was regarded a potential donor and therefore it was especially important to build up a rapport with the people in order to get reliable information.

Building up a rapport means for researcher to establish a certain amount of trust and mutual understanding between him/her and his/her interlocutors. This allows the respondents to share their knowledge and opinion with the researcher. (Dewalt and Dewalt 1998, pp.267-270) To achieve that it was important to live in the region where I conducted my research for some time and not only to stay there for a few days while the interviews where conducted. I was a participant observer additionally to conducting the semi-structured interviews. “Here, participant observation is a method in which an observer takes part in daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of the people being studied as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their culture.” (Dewalt and Dewalt 1998, p.260) There was a risk for me of “going native” as

I was personally involved in the research topic. “‘Going native’ is a constant danger, wherein observers lose their critical faculties and become an ordinary member of the field; while remaining an ‘outsider’, cold and distant from people in the field, with professional identity preserved and no rapport, negates the method. A proper balance in the participant observer’s dual role as part insider and part outsider gives them the opportunity to be inside and outside the setting, simultaneously to be member and non-member, and to participate while also reflecting critically on what is observed and gathered while doing so.” (Brewer 2000, p.60) In order to make my role as a student and a researcher clear to my respondents I always showed my Sri Lankan students identity card to the people. My identity as a student of the University of Peradeniya helped me in not being mistaken as a NGO personal.

### **7.3.2 Research Location**

Prof. Tudor Silva suggested that I should focus in my research on the villages around Hikkaduwa that were seriously affected by the Tsunami. To get in contact with disaster affected people I was supposed to find a person who would introduce me to the community as a student of the University of Peradeniya. Prof. Silva arranged a contact person for me, who helped me in finding an accommodation and a person as my key informant. Finally, in June 2005 I started my research in Hikkaduwa. Hikkaduwa is a coastal town in the Galle District. The Galle district lies around 100 km south of Colombo in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka and has a population of 990,487 people. The majority of the population, about 94.4%, in the Galle district are Sinhalese, with most of them being Buddhist. Hikkaduwa and its surrounding villages is one out of 19 Divisions in the Galle District. The whole area of Hikkaduwa Division consists of a population of approximately 112,000 inhabitants in 97 villages. The town of Hikkaduwa is the economic and administrative center of the District-Division with around 30,000 inhabitants. Hikkaduwa is a bustling small town that became renown in the 1960’s as an international holiday destination. This region is famous for beautiful white sand beaches and colorful coral reefs. It therefore has a history as a popular holiday venue with surfers, travelers and especially backpackers. In recent years Hikkaduwa also has attracted more and more package tourists. The town is easily accessible as it lies on the main transport routes. To Colombo in the north and to Galle in the south, Hikkaduwa is connected through the A2 highway and a major railway line. The road and also the railway tracks run more or less parallel to each other and are close to the beach. This

highway is the lifeline of the coastal belt, so the houses are lined up along this road and it is difficult to tell where one village ends and the next begins. Also many hotels, guest houses, restaurants and shops are situated on either side of this road. Smaller roads lead to other villages in the hinterlands which are still more traditional Sinhalese farming villages. The villages around Hikkaduwa, which are situated along the coastline, are mostly fishing villages.

### **7.3.3 Data Collection- First Phase**

Together with a friend of mine, Ch. whom I got to know at university, I went to Hikkaduwa. He was a fellow sociology major at the University of Peradeniya and had just graduated. Over the first few days we got in contact with the key informant, had informal talks with our landlady and inquired about the area. I formulated central questions for the semi structured interviews that covered the time period previous to Tsunami, the phase of the immediate impact and the Post-Tsunami Phase. The key informant was a school colleague of the businessman and was a business man himself who was engaged in fish trade. As he was in good contact with his neighbors and knew a lot about his neighborhood. He was able to arrange meetings with different people whom I chose as my sample. The process of sampling is important for the validity of the study as effective sampling is essential for being able to make generalizations. For the selection of interview partners I used a form of non probability sampling, the purposive sampling. "In purposive sampling, you decide the purpose you want informants (or communities) to serve, and you go out to find some. This is somewhat like quota sampling, except that there is no overall sampling design that tells you how many of each type of informant you need for a study. You take what you can get." (Bernard 2006, pp.189-190)

The research was restricted to Sinhalese, Buddhist interview partners who had first hand experience of the Tsunami. Most of my interlocutors have lost family members in the Tsunami. We were first introduced to them by the key informant as students of the University of Peradeniya who were doing research for their diploma. The semi-structured interviews took place in their partly damaged houses or in their temporary shelter and were mostly conducted in Sinhala by my friend. To make the informants more comfortable with the interview situation the interviews were not recorded but the key information was noted down and with those notes, a case description was formulated. The questions covered the personal living conditions of the interlocutors



and their families, pre and post-Tsunami and their personal experience of the Tsunami. The first round of interviews were conducted over a period of a few weeks. In August 2005 I returned to Austria where I started researching on the theoretical background of disaster anthropology and tried to connect it to gender studies. In the period between September 2005 and April 2006 I analyzed the data gathered during my first stay and reformulated my interview questions.

#### **7.3.4 Data Collection- Second Phase**

In April 2006 I went back to Sri Lanka to do further ethnographic research, gather secondary data and also search literature on the topic of the Tsunami. I had problems in finding a female research assistant who would be willing to go with me to Hikkaduwa and stay there for a few weeks. For many girls, especially for girls from rural areas, it is rather unusual to stay alone apart from their family for such a long time. Finally I had to select an older male senior lecturer, Mr. G. from Peradeniya University. As this man was in his 60's the ladies, we interviewed, would see him as a father or grandfather and therefore I hoped that they would not be as reluctant to talk with Mr. G. as they might be with a man of their age. Nevertheless, the fact that my research assistant was male and not female might have had an influence on the research outcome. Women might not have responded as freely on certain topics as they would have done it if two women would have interviewed them. In contrast to that, it probably eased the interview process with men. I arranged accommodation for Mr. G. nearby, in a small beachside restaurant, which gave us the possibility to have informal chats with customers of the restaurant. I took lodging with a lady who had a textile shop and rented out an annex in her house. At the beginning of our stay I got in contact with a local NGO, Artacharya Foundation (AF). Artacharya Foundation in Hikkaduwa is organizing small savings groups and is involved in community composting projects. The direct beneficiaries of the foundation are mostly women. Only a few men participate in activities organized by Artacharya Foundation. These women have regular group meetings where they meet in the house of one of the members. They report to each other on the progress of the activities they have undertaken, report their financial situation and discuss other relevant issues. After two of these meetings we conducted focused group discussions with these women about their situation in the aftermath of the Tsunami. Such discussions provide useful information as they help in orientation in the research field; they can also help developing research questions for individual interviews and

complement the information gathered in semi- structured interviews. (Trotter and Schensul 1998, pp.714-716) I also interviewed staff members of the AF branch in Hikkaduwa about their experiences and knowledge about gender issue in Tsunami. Another expert, with whom I conducted an interview, was a staff member of Siyath Foundation. Siyath is a community based organization that promotes education, economic development and empowerment which advocates for poor people and especially for home based workers. The third expert interview was conducted with staff members of the Women's Cooperation International, a small Austrian NGO that has Centers for Women in Walitera and Ahungalle. In addition to that I, was also invited to attend a meeting of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies in Colombo that dealt with issues of reconstruction and rehabilitation in the aftermath of the Tsunami. These expert interviews and the participation at the meeting provided me with additional information. With the help of some staff members of those local NGOs I was able to get in contact with more of my interview partners. In contrary to the first research phase, this time all the interviews and group discussions were recorded with a tape recorder. The interviewers introduced themselves at the beginning of each interview and identified themselves as being affiliated with the University of Peradeniya and the University of Vienna. The main aim of the research was explained and confidentiality was guaranteed. In order to ensure the confidentiality and conceal the identity the interlocutors of this study, they were all given aliases.

During each interview notes were taken down about circumstances of the interview situation. The interviews mainly took place in the homes of the interviewees and lasted for about 45 minutes. After the interviews, the outcome was discussed between the researchers and additional interview questions were formulated in order to get more detailed information and, in most instances, a second interview was conducted with the interlocutors. The interviews were later translated and transcribed before being analyzed.

### **7.3.5 Data Analysis**

For the analyses of my empirical data I chose a method of content analyses developed by Mayring (2008), the "Inhaltliche Strukturierung". The goal of this method is to extract certain themes, contents and aspects from the data and then to summarize it. (Mayring 2008; p.89) Content Analysis seeks to proceed according to rules and theoretical principles in order to make it replicable. "Qualitative content analysis

defines itself within this framework as an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification.” (Mayring 2000, paragraph 5) I chose this method as it provides an open and very descriptive way of analyzing data and the body of data is embedded in the context in which it is generated. The vulnerability theory constituted the main theoretical frame around which a set of main categories was formulated. The assumption, that gender has an influence on the different experiences people have in facing the impact of a hazard structured the analysis. “The main idea of the procedure is, to formulate a criterion of definition, derived from theoretical background and research question, which determines the aspects of the textual material taken into account. Following this criterion, the material is worked through and categories are tentative and step by step deduced. Within a feedback loop those categories are revised, eventually reduced to main categories and checked in respect to their reliability.” (Mayring 2000, paragraph 12) In order to be able to compare the different vulnerabilities and coping capacities of men and women their interviews were analyzed separately. To limit the extent of the thesis I limited the analysis of the interview material to interviews with widowers and widows and expert interviews. After working through the text the results were interpreted and the different experiences and living conditions of widows and widowers were compared.



## **8 Gendered Vulnerabilities – Gendered Tsunami**

This study analysis how gendered vulnerabilities determine the scope of impact of the Tsunami on men and women who have lost their spouses. It is based on the Access Model and sees the disaster as a cycle that begins a long time before the actual onset of the natural hazard through the creation of vulnerabilities and does not end with the reconstruction of damaged buildings and reestablishment of livelihoods. To find out why the impact of this Tsunami took on such disastrous forms one has to look at the structures of Sri Lankan society which allows us to understand the root and more proximate causes of vulnerability of the disaster victims. Only through the interplay between the vulnerable population and the Tsunami, the disaster emerged as it did. Gender is an important factor in the production of vulnerability but it overlaps with other characteristics, such as class and age. Only a combination of these factors produces vulnerability.

The first part of this chapter deals with a description of the situation, especially the vulnerabilities, of disaster affected people in Sri Lanka before the Tsunami. The second part starts with a description of the onset of the Tsunami and the transition to a disaster. The main part consists of a description of the situation of widows and widowers in the aftermath of the Tsunami, their resilience and coping strategies.

### ***8.1 Situation Before the Tsunami -Normal Life***

The situation previous to the Tsunami describes the social, economic and political processes that allocate resources, distribute power and wealth in the Sri Lankan society and at the individual household level. The first part of the chapter discusses the “structures of domination” that are an aspect of the root causes of vulnerability, which also encompass gender relations in Sri Lanka. It describes concepts of masculinity and womanhood in the Sinhalese society and the processes of socialization into becoming a Sri Lankan man or woman. The second part, “social relations”, deals with differing access men and women have to resources and assets that are a prerequisite for a livelihood from a gender perspective. The third part describes the situation of the different households that are covered by the study and their respective access profiles. The fourth part discusses unsafe conditions that are an expression of different vulnerabilities in Sri Lanka.

### 8.1.1 Structures of Domination – Root Causes of Vulnerability

The root causes of the disaster reflect the distribution of social, political and economic power that are linked to the structure of the society in Sri Lanka. The structures of domination encompass various relations between members of the society, including relations between the genders on different levels of society, the state, community and the household level. According to the Gender-Related Development Index, in which Sri Lanka ranks 73, compared to India at rank 103 and Austria at rank 17, the inequalities between men and women are comparatively low in Sri Lanka. The Gender-Related Development Index compares life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, combined gross adult enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary level schools and the estimated earned income of men and women. Also in terms of human development, with a Human Development Index Rank of 96, Sri Lanka fares quite well compared with its big neighbor India, which has a rank of 127. These figures are encouraging but do not give a differentiated picture of the real situation of day to day life of Sri Lankan men and women.

#### 8.1.1.1 Concepts of Womanhood and Masculinity in Sri Lanka

There are a few concepts that apply to both men and women regarding acceptable behavior in the Sri Lankan society, but have different implications for them. *Nambuwa*, is the Sinhalese expression for honor. To preserve one's honor, and especially the honor of the family, is an important issue in life in Sri Lanka and has to be considered in all aspects of daily life. (Silva 2002, p. 80) *Gati guna*, is a socio-cultural value system that needs to be followed in order to preserve the honor of the family. An aspect of this value system are manners or patterns of polite behavior, called *charitra*. "Children who are of adult age will not smoke in front of their parents nor sit on a chair crossing their legs. They will speak in a low tone and are never to raise their voices to elders." (Silva 2002, p. 80) People who for example show rebellious or rude behavior have *naraka gati guna*, bad *gati guna* and those people who are polite and kind have *honda gati guna*, good *gati guna*. "So as to preserve the *nambuwa* of the family, persons in a family must possess *gati guna*, a social-cultural value system of refinement in thought and action." (Silva 2002, p. 81) In a family it is the responsibility of the women especially, to preserve the *nambuwa*, the honor of the family. Especially adolescent daughters have to exercise care in their behavior in order to preserve the family honor as after attaining puberty her behavior is watched. This is linked to *läjja-bhaya*, which is an important

concept of the Sri Lankan society. “Lājja-bhaya is literally ‘fear of (being) publicly shamed.’ It may therefore also be glossed as ‘appropriate conduct’ in the sense of conduct which allows the subject to avoid any act that would shame him/her in public. As ‘appropriate conduct’, lājja-bhaya thus offers a frame for the construction of agency in Sinhala society.” (Silva 2005, p.74) Being shamed and ridiculed in public and being the person talked about does not only mean losing self esteem but also losing status. A serious threat to the public image or respect, *samaja garuthwaya*, of a Sinhalese person is a challenge to his or her self-respect could even lead him /her to commit suicide. “In everyday discourse then, suicide was seen as a response to a sense of lājja or ‘shame’ [...] Many of the ‘victims’ were said – by relatives, neighbours and friends –to have killed themselves ‘out of shame’, because of having been ridiculed by someone else; a lover, parent, sibling, friend.” (Silva 2005, p.114) Therefore people try their utmost to behave according to the norms in order to prevent gossip. Such norms of behavior and manners are conveyed to young people in the process of socialization.

#### **8.1.1.2 Socialization Into Being a Sri Lankan Woman**

For a girl the *kotahalu* ceremony marks the coming of age of a Sinhalese girl and is one of the cornerstones of the socialization process. This ceremony takes a few days time as the girl is secluded in her room from the outside world. During this time she is only allowed to leave the room in order to go to the bathroom. She has to avoid any contact with male persons as the blood of menstruation and also the blood a woman loses when giving birth are considered as impure blood, *apirisidu lae*. As the girl is considered polluting, *killi* during that time period –any contact of a male with her – could be harmful for him and as well as for her. Only after having a ritual bath at a special auspicious time she is allowed to meet relatives and other visitors who have come to celebrate her coming of age. “The reason for secluding the girl is to protect her against evil spirits which can enter her body and cause her mental faculties to be affected.” (Silva 2002, p. 110) Other claims are that a girl who is not secluded at the right time may not be able to get married or will not be able to bear children. “Marriage is deemed a ‘must’ for a girl, a young woman. [...] In such a context a spinster, or a single woman is looked upon by society sometimes with pity or even as an inauspicious person. An unmarried girl in the family is sometimes considered a problem, a responsibility.” (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 130) The activities to celebrate the end of the first menstruation take a whole day and include serving breakfast and lunch to visitors and handing over

gifts to the girl. From that day onwards she is considered a young adult female and therefore she is expected to behave according to the norms for females. Girls are socialized from early childhood onwards to show feminine behavior. To be feminine means for a girl in Sri Lanka to be gentle, compliant, weak, tearful, emotional, submissive, timid and shy. Adolescent girls are not supposed to climb up trees. For girls to be well mannered means not to talk or laugh loud and not to be forward or brash. They especially have to watch their posture and movements. “For a – perceived – withdrawal of deference by women, particularly younger women, was seen to imply more just insolence. It connoted nothing less than a display of ‘shamelessness’ or the abandoning of *lajja*. Such shamelessness becomes at times akin to display of sexual laxity. Thus any woman who assumes an upright, confident posture becomes immediately suspect: her stance was seen as almost a desire to project the body as an eroticized zone.” (Silva 2005, p.28)

The rules of behavior also include for a girl the prerequisite to stay a virgin until her wedding night. In some families it is still common to hold a ceremony, the *salu baleema* ceremony, after the wedding night. During this ceremony the nuptial bed sheet is presented to the mother-in-law of the bride and if “the cloth contains evidence of her virginity, she is given gifts of gold coins as a reward for having been chaste. The Sinhalese culture considers virginity of the bride as a prerequisite essential for a successful marriage. In olden times, if the bride was found not to be a virgin, she would have to return to her family” (Silva 2002, pp.139-140) The return of a daughter to her parents after the wedding would disgrace her family and bring shame over them. Therefore she would be ostracized by society and even her family.

### **8.1.1.3 Socialization Into Being a Sri Lankan Man**

Men are considered to be stronger than women, which does not only include physical strength but men are also connoted with attributes of inner strength, which means that they are “socialized to be reserved and not show outward emotion.” (Silva 2002, p.76) From early childhood onwards boys are conditioned to be rough, tough, aggressive, rational, brave, authoritative and venturesome. (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 100) In contrast to women, men are considered to be pure, *pirisidu*, as they do not menstruate and give birth to a child. Male are perceived also to be superior to women due to a concept that connotes the male semen with power and strength. “Semen, *kari* is also referred to as



*dhatu*, which means ‘the sacred essence of a living system.’ This connotation combined with the power of semen to create a child, exalts semen, thus elevating the male position.” (Silva 2002, p.36) One of the matters that reflects the higher position of men is the process of decision making among the kin group. Although decisions are commonly discussed among family members, it is mostly the eldest male in the family who has the final word over the others. Another aspect that highlights the superior position of men is sexuality and marriage. In Sri Lanka it is an important prerequisite for a groom to be older than his bride. It is tolerated that they are of the same age but the woman should not be older than the man. “A husband has to be at least three to four years older than the wife. This gives him more wisdom and the authority to protect her. Being male, he needs no protection.” (Silva 2002, p.77 ) Sri Lankan men tend to marry between 21-34 years of age, whereas women already get married at the age of 16-29. Men are not expected to stay virgins until their wedding night and therefore have greater sexual freedom than women. “They may have had sexual intercourse with married women or with prostitutes. Men are excused if they are non-virgins, and nothing is mentioned about the sanctity of that state for men (Williams 1950: 259), perhaps because of the notion that unless a man has had intercourse with a variety of women, he is not a ‘man’.” (Williams 1950, cited in: Silva 2002, pp.30-31)

Alcohol forms an integral part of the life of men in urban as well as rural areas. “Alcohol forms a rich and polysemic point of reference in the village; it is a business, a medicine, a pleasure, a need, and a mark of masculinity. Drinking, an exclusively male activity and a sign of wealth (if only temporary in certain cases), preoccupies many of the under and unemployed village men.” (Gamburd 2002, p.177) Whereas only few women of the upper middle and upper class drink – preferably beer and wine – at social occasions, drinking is acceptable for men of all strata of society. Men tend to assort into drinking groups around which factions of power, identity and loyalty are formed. Especially in rural areas where there are no other forms of recreation available than alcohol and gambling, drinking is an important social activity for men. “However, where the predominantly male drinking was concerned it was mainly a type of drinking where these males would come together after work to drink and socialise. This was common to the drinking of the legal beverages (arrack) as well as Kasippu. The only difference was that the ‘restaurants’ that served legal alcohol had very elaborate ways to help socialise, such as Hindi videos and card games. Apart from the drinking while

socializing, the clients had meals there as well.” (Abeyasinghe 2002, p. 56) *Kasippu*, is the local moonshine in Sri Lanka which is only sold in special bars. *Kasippu* bars offer less entertainment than normal restaurants as the main aim of the men who are going there is to get drunk in a rather short period in order to forget their worries.

#### **8.1.1.4 Protection and Security**

In Sri Lankan context it is considered inappropriate and dangerous for females to walk out on the streets alone at night. “Proper girls” would avoid to go out on their own after sunset as this would be unacceptable behavior. Even when going out during daytime she has to watch her behavior. When a woman oversteps the code of conduct she is accused of provoking being sexually harassed. Some girls are therefore chaperoned even during daytime by elders or males. Adolescent boys, to the contrary, are in no need for protection, they rather have the responsibility to play the role of the protector themselves in certain cases. Females are also restricted in the use of the private transport system. In Sri Lanka only few families can afford to own a car or a van. The most important and most common vehicle in Sri Lanka is the three-wheeler. 14,8% of all households in the Southern Province own a motor cycle or a scooter with three-wheelers falling into this category. (CBSL 2005, Special Statistical Appendix Table 10) Driving three-wheelers is heavily genderized and is considered a male activity. Women who drive motor-cycles and three-wheelers are a curiosity and subjected to harassment. Therefore, only few women have a license and even lesser have a three-wheeler of their own, which further restricts their mobility. Furthermore, it is relatively uncommon for girls to live away from their relatives, except if they move to girls only boarding schools. These girls only boarding school are rare and mostly connected to leading national or private schools. Most Technical Training Institutes and Vocational Training Centers lack sufficient facilities, which makes it difficult for girls from rural areas to find appropriate, affordable accommodation. These mechanisms instill in females the feeling that they need a male for protection and make them feel vulnerable when being on their own. All these issues restrict the mobility of females, limit their interaction with society and also hinder them in their educational career. This is a form of domination and control in order to condition females to submissive behavior and manipulate them psychologically.

### **8.1.1.5 Law and policy**

In the constitution of Sri Lanka, gender equality and fundamental rights are guaranteed for both sexes. „Further, the Sri Lankan government has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (in 1981) and has been a party to the UN Declaration on Violence Against Women (1993). This together with the ratification of the other international instruments and the adoption of the Charter for Women -based on CEDAW -create a conducive environment for the protection of women’s rights within a political and legal framework.“ (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 47) The real situation is different as state policies, legislations and law enforcement are not consistent with the constitution. Due to being colonized, subsequently by the Dutch, the Portuguese and the British, the influence of European concepts of law principles have formed the Sri Lankan legal system. Therefore Roman Dutch Law and English Common Law coexists with Islamic Law, Kandyan Law and Thesavalamai Law. These laws together form the civil law that regulates such issues as marriage, divorce, property rights and citizenship. “The State through its policy and legislation has a very powerful impact on its citizen’s lives, where dominance of one group over another -in terms of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender relations, religion and culture -becomes established and legitimized. It is a mechanism of socialization that reinforces and strengthens gender roles and relations.“ (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 46) An existing gender bias prevents women from having equal treatment in family issues, as the family law fosters patriarchal values and attitudes. One form of reinforcing gender stereotypes are regulations that define the husband as the breadwinner and head of the household. “Within the Sri Lankan context, the patriarchal concept of male guardianship or the male protector „role” in a family unit is entrenched in the statutory law which governs a majority of citizens in the country.” (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 92) In case of a divorce the woman is in a disadvantaged position in case of a custody battle, as the father is considered the superior guardian. In recent times a change in the implementation practice can be recognized. The judiciary upholds the concept that the order for custody should be given in the best interests of the child. Therefore, even though the man is legally privileged regarding the custodianship, this concept recognizes the mother’s parental rights. Another issue regarding law enforcement and equal rights is the question of access to law for women. Existing local gender norms stipulate that respectable women keep out of the public eye and this prevents women to take legal

action. (Gamburd 2002, p.88) “The patriarchal concept of submission and the ‘shame factor’ also restrains women from having access to the law and thereby -in reality -does not accord her equal status before the law. The fact that the law is mystified and upheld as falling within a male purview could also contribute to women not asserting their right to seek redress through the law.” (Wijayatilake 2001, p. 51) Furthermore do especially women lack legal literacy, which means they are often not aware of remedies to enforce their claims. “Access to relief, as well as gaps in legal literacy - particularly in relation to the issue of land house ownership - were highlighted as a concern for both men and women, and particularly for women.” (Ariyabandu 2006, p.766)

### **8.1.2 Social Relations**

Wisner et al. (2007, p.94) define “social relations” as the flow of mainly goods, money and surplus between different stakeholders who have different access to those resources and assets, material and non-material ones. One important way of acquiring resources is by engaging in income generating activities for which skills and qualifications are a substantial prerequisite. The access to formal as well as informal education and the situation on the labor market determines the income earning opportunities of each individual. To understand the livelihood situation of each household, one must place it in the context of the Sri Lankan education system, the situation on the labor market and the economy.

#### **8.1.2.1 Education**

With 92.5 % of literate Sri Lankans, 94.5% of men and 90.6% of women, the total literacy rate of Sri Lanka is very high.(CBSL 2005, SSA Table 10) The relatively small difference between men and women is not surprising as there is equal participation in schooling for girls and boys. As education is an important agent in the process of socialization, the equal opportunities to attend school and especially the high enrolment rates for girls are an indicator of gender equity in the Sri Lankan society. Nevertheless, there are gender imbalances in the education system that favor boys in their educational attainment and have negative impacts on future income earning opportunities of females. To identify the linkages between education and the livelihood prospects, one must understand the Sri Lankan education system.

#### ***8.1.2.1.1 Sri Lankan Education System***

The Sri Lankan school system differentiates between National Schools, Provincial Schools, Pirivenas – Schools for Buddhist Monks<sup>2</sup>, Private Schools and International Schools. In 2002 there were 320 National Schools (MOE 2009) in Sri Lanka that come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. These schools have often a long history that dates back before the independence and are mostly located in urban areas. They provide a very good education, have excellent facilities and are therefore referred to as elite schools. Often these National Schools have all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English, as medium of instruction. The vast majority of schools, 9,509 schools, are Provincial Schools that come under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Councils. (MOE 2009) These schools have a system of coeducation and in most of them the medium of instruction is either Sinhala or Tamil. The quality of education in these schools depends highly on their location, rural or urban. The around 66 private schools follow the local curriculum set up by the Ministry of Education. Out of the 66 Private Schools 33 are non-fee-levying assisted Private Schools and 33 are fee-levying autonomous Private Schools. (MOE 2009) The schools are mostly girls only or boys only schools and the medium of instruction is Sinhala, Tamil or English. The around 150 - 200 international schools are also privately owned schools but are not controlled by the Ministry of Education as they come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Investment (BOI). (The World Bank 2005, p.5) The medium of instruction in those International Schools is English, they follow foreign curricula and prepare students to sit for overseas examinations. The standard of education can vary greatly between schools. Some of them charge high tuition fees but have high standards and provide good facilities, others in spite of charging high fees have bad standards and lack qualified English-speaking staff.

##### **8.1.2.1.1.1 Primary School**

From the age of five onwards it is compulsory for Sri Lankan parents to send their children to school for a period of nine years. First the child goes to a primary school for 5 years and in the last grade students have the possibility to sit for the Scholarship Examination. This examination is conducted by the Ministry of Education and is a very competitive one that only students with exceptional skills can win. This enables students from villages to be transferred to prominent national schools with support from these

---

2 The 561 Pirivenas – Temple Schools are funded by the state. (MOE 2009)

government scholarships. Schools in rural areas suffer more from lack of poor facilities and a shortage of qualified teachers and therefore the dropout rates of students is higher there than in urban areas. Up to the year 2000 allocation of money to schools depended largely on past practice and the initiative of the respective principal. The budgetary disparities have only started to diminish after the government introduced a policy of funding schools based on a norm-based, unit cost resource allocation formula in 2000. (The World Bank 2005, pp.27-29) One of the reasons for the gender imbalance in education lies in large disparities in the quality of education provided in rural and urban schools. The regional imbalances are having an especially unfavorable influence on rural girls in their educational prospects. “Girls in the rural sector are disadvantaged in access to private tuition and have had to opt for arts courses through lack of school and extra-school facilities in science education. (Jayaweera 2002, p. 115)

Parents who can afford it start sending their children to tuition classes from early age on. This is intended to enable them to win a scholarship, help them in getting admitted to good schools and therefore enhance their chances to go to university. In order to send their children to tuition classes, parents do not only have to spend a lot for tuition fees but also extra costs for transportation to and from the location where the tuition is held. “The competition to enter universities has promoted excessive learning by rote, and has spawned an extensive private tuition industry that has increased the private costs of education within a free education system.” (Jayaweera 2002, p. 115)

#### **8.1.2.1.2 Secondary School**

In the second phase of education, which lasts for a period of four years from grade 6 up to grade 9, the child attends a junior secondary school. At the end of grade 9 the student has completed his/her compulsory schooling. Those who continue their studies at the senior secondary level, which encompasses grade 10 and 11, finish off with the G.C.E Ordinary Level Examination. Students who drop out after grade 9 can start a vocational training, an apprenticeship, or engage in any kind of economic activity. About 18% of schooling children drop out of school before completing grade 9, with less girls than boys failing to complete the compulsory education. (The World Bank 2005, p.6) “Further, an important equity issue exists, as the 18% of children who fail to complete grade 9 are drawn from poorer homes, economically disadvantaged, geographical regions such as the rural hinterland, conflict affected areas and the estate sector, or are

disabled and handicapped children.” (The World Bank 2005, p.6) Poshita, one of the interlocutors for this study, for example grew up in a rural area near Trincomalee and only later moved with his mother to Kandy. He only studied up to grade 8 and then stopped schooling. It seems that the reason for him to fail completing his education lies in the fact that he came from a rural area. Other problems that affect the education of many children are intra-family conflicts and alcoholism of the parents. Sandamali studied only up to her GCE O/L exams as her father was an alcoholic. She had no support and guidance from her family and therefore she did not consider to study further.

*„I had no clear future. My father was from a respectable family and he got addicted to alcohol. There were no opportunities and support for my education, so I studied only up to GCE O/L.” (Sandamali 8.1/15-17)*

Menaka also studied only up to the GCE O/L examinations and even failed them. She ascribes this to the lack of concentration which were caused by the economic problems her family had to face and that made her study under hardship.

Saman, who also studied only up to GCE O/L examination, took it twice but failed to pass. The successful completion of GCE O/L Examination is a prerequisite for attending school at collegiate level. Admission to a certain college depends on the grades students have obtained for the different subjects in the O/L examination. Students with very good results, especially in science, mathematics and technical subjects, have the option of being transferred to reputed colleges in urban areas. At this stage the gender stereotypes that have been promoted in schools and have influenced the educational attainment of girls and boys become apparent. “Further into the curriculum it is observed that girls and boys are unobtrusively geared to concentrate on subjects closely related to their given roles in society. For instance, at the GCE O/L, technical subjects for girls are home science, dress making, while carpentry, mechanical drawing, metal work are taught to boys. Even if a girl/boy manifests an aptitude for a non-stereotyped subject they are not encouraged to follow it.” (Wijayatilake 2001, pp. 53-54)

The teachers play an important role in supporting gender stereotypes. “As a student a girl is moulded and conditioned to conform to given social norms and codes of conduct, that promote reinforcement and perpetuation of the ascribed roles. The school environment other than imparting knowledge, successfully and subtly, succeeds in manipulating the personality of a girl child in order to make her believe that she likes to conform to what society expects from her.” (Wijayatilake 2001, pp. 104-105) Women

who are now in their 30ies and 40ies report that they were taught that a girl's fate is to become a wife and mother. Even nowadays such ideologies are supported by teachers, as demonstrated by an example given by Wijayatilake (2001, pp. 54-55). The female students of a leading girls school were asked to do the sweeping and wiping off cobwebs by the sectional head in the course of the annual 'shramadana'<sup>3</sup>. For the painting of the desks and walls rather some men were asked to do it instead of the girls, who were keen and capable of undertaking it. The rationale behind this was to promote the girls skills needed as future mothers and housewives.

#### **8.1.2.1.1.3 College**

The students who continue their schooling career are assigned to either a science, commerce or arts stream according to their O/L examination grades. The large disparities in the quality of education provided in rural and urban schools become especially apparent now at collegiate level. "Only 600 schools in the country offer GCE A/L science classes. Further, effective GCE A/L science teaching is confined to about 200 urban schools. In consequence, access to GCE A/L education in science subjects is tightly constrained." (The World Bank 2005, p.27) The regional imbalances have an unfavorable influence on rural girls who often only have the possibility to choose an arts stream at college. "The participation rate of rural girls does not differ from that of urban girls, but it appears that girls in non-affluent rural families have access only to ill-equipped secondary schools. This imbalance is reflected in admissions to universities." (Jayaweera 2002, p. 114)

In order to enable their children a better education, parents from rural areas try to accommodate their children in homes of relatives who live in urban areas. This gives them the opportunity to study in better equipped schools with science streams, which makes it easier for them to get admitted to university.

Danoja, for example was able to stay in her uncle's house in a major town during her school time, so she could study in a reputed National School. There she passed the GCE A/L exam in the science stream. At collegiate level, in total more girls than boys are enrolled in schools. In the year 2003 124,177 males compared to 162,602 females have undertaken their A/L exams. In the science and commerce stream, boys only slightly outnumber girls, but in the arts stream there is a considerable difference in enrolment

---

3 Shramadana is a form of voluntary work undertaken by the community of a village in order to complete a common project such as the cleaning of the village school or the reconstruction of roads.



rates of girls and boys. In the science stream 33,049 boys compared to 30,422 girls and in the commerce stream 42,373 males and 40,559 females completed their A/L exams. In the arts streams, with 91,621 females and 48,755 males the enrolment rates of girls almost double the rates of boys. (MOE 2003, Table 16) The stream chosen at college determines the chances to follow a certain subject later on at university level. After completion of grade 13 students are permitted to sit for the GCE A/L examination. In order to be admitted to a Sri Lankan state university, this examination not only has to be passed successfully, but the students have to reach high marks. Only 56 % of all students who sit for the A/L exam pass it, which shows that these examinations are very competitive. Girls in general suffer from a lower performance in mathematics and sciences and are therefore less competitive in entering the university. “Nevertheless, the performance of girls in the GCE Advanced Level examination has been lower chiefly in mathematics and physics, showing marked gender differences.” (Jayaweera 2002, p. 132) Pushpa sat for the GCE A/L examination in the arts stream. She even passed it, but her performance was not good enough and therefore she could not enroll at a public university.

#### **8.1.2.1.1.4 Tertiary Education**

Only 11% of the eligible population is enrolled in tertiary education, out of those 3% are granted admission to a state university, 6% follow professional courses and 2% receive a technical education. (The World Bank 2005, p.7) In the admission year 2006/07 9,720 girls were admitted compared to 7,469 boys. (DCS 2009a Table 14.16) The highest percentage of girls get admission into arts disciplines, with a total of 4,310 women who got admitted to arts faculties in comparison to 1,261 males. With 1,033 males and 187 females around 5 times more men enrolled at the science faculty. (DCS 2009a Table 14.16) This disadvantages them with regard to future employment prospects, as the unemployment rate of graduates from the arts faculty is higher than that of other faculties. (Jayaweera 2002, p.134)

#### **8.1.2.1.2 Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT)**

Those who do not follow higher studies after completing their secondary education or even drop out of school earlier, have the possibility to undergo vocational and technical training. There is an extensive network of different training institutes that provide technical education and vocational training. In 2001, 920 training institutes were registered with the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. This Commission is

the administrative body for regulating the training activities and setting policies. There are 556 public sector institutions, 252 private sector institutions and 112 NGO sector institutions in Sri Lanka. (The World Bank 2005, p.94) 68,875 young people enrolled in diverse public training organizations. (Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) 2006, p.39) The 5 major public training institutes account for 85% of the trainings provided by the state sector. The 2 major public sector training organizations are the Department of Technical Education and Training (DETT) and the Vocational Training Authority (VTA). The DETT has 37 technical colleges in major provincial and district capitals. It provides formal fulltime and part-time training in technician, craft, business and general studies. The VTA focuses on provision of employment oriented short courses for rural unemployed youth. It has 207 Rural Vocational Training Centers, 14 District Vocational Training Centers, 4 National Institutes and 9 Special Centers. (The World Bank 2005, pp.95-97) The problem with short-run skill development programs, such as the ones which are offered at the VTA, and with the Sri Lankan education system is that they do not provide the students with relevant skills for the job market. There exists a mismatch between the trainings offered by Vocational Training Institutes and the skills required by the private sector. A study conducted by the GTZ indicated that only 2.7 % of the graduates of VTA but 37.6 % of DETT found jobs within six months after the training. (The World Bank 2005, pp.100-102) What is especially apparent is the gender gap in enrollment rates as in 2006 61% of all persons enrolled in technical and vocational training programs were males. (TVEC 2006, p.39) The general trend is that with rising educational achievements the tendency to receive training is also increasing, but at all levels women compared to men are less likely to undergo a training program. There is also a difference in the type of training women get. “Though not shown here, in terms of gender, the proportion of female enrolments in TEVT courses has remained relatively constant at about 40 percent, clustered in several traditionally female occupations (e.g. dressmaking, ISM operator, beauty culture, secretarial jobs); recently however, female participation has increased as new courses were offered in English for commerce, industry and further education (69%), accounting technicians (65%), computer applications (73%) and computer programmer and operator (57%). In general, female participation in TEVT is low relative to their participation rates in school and higher education.” (The World Bank 2005, p.96) Several reasons for this gender gap in technical education and vocational training can be found. More girls pursue their secondary education at colleges and therefore do not

enroll in TEVT courses after completing their GCE O/Ls. After completion of their secondary or tertiary education, girls tend to get married quicker than boys and have children. They do not have much time in between graduation and marriage to start further vocational training. Later on as wives and mothers the responsibility of the woman lies in housekeeping, child care and livelihoods. This leaves them with no time to go for trainings. With growing age individuals generally are less likely to invest in training and therefore training especially for young female school leavers and graduates is important. Out of the female respondents only Danoja has enrolled in a long-term technical education program in order to become a midwife. Most of the other women either have only undergone short-term vocational training or training on the job. Menaka first participated in a few months training program to make door mats and later on in a two weeks program to become a pre-school teacher, conducted by Sarvodaya<sup>4</sup>. Sandamali, after quitting school, got an on-the-job training in the garment factory where she started working. It seems that none of the male respondents, except Danushka, got any formal training as they all were engaged in fishing activities. Only Danushka, who works as a carpenter, has received a formal vocational training.

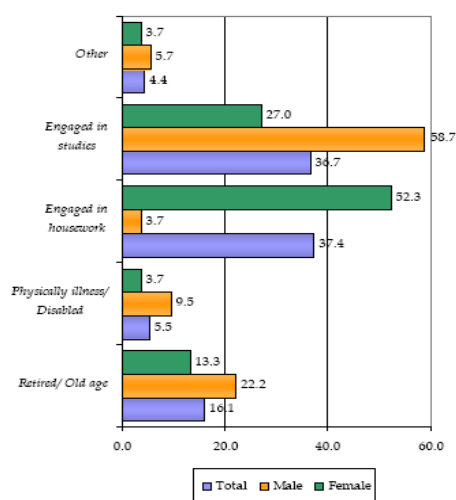
---

4 The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is the largest Sri Lankan non-governmental organization.

<http://www.sarvodaya.org/>

### 8.1.2.2 Labor Market and Economy

In 2004 the total working age population<sup>5</sup> were 16,593,431 persons. 8,061,354 persons or 48.6% of the total working age population were part of the labor force<sup>6</sup>. 66.7 percent of the total economically active population were males but only 33.3% were female. Out of the whole female labor force only 31.5% are economically active, whereas the labor force participation rate of men is with 66.7 % more than double than that of women. (DCS 2006, pp.1-2)



In 2007 the majority of women, 52.3% explained their economic inactivity with being engaged in housework, whereas only 3.7 % of men gave this as a reason. More than half of the men, 56.7%, stated that they were engaged in studies instead of going for work but only 27% of women did so.

Illustration 4: (DCS 2008 Figure 8)

In 2004 around 7.4 million people were employed, which is an employment rate of 91.7%, with 94% for men and 87.2% for women. Especially striking is that, with 12.8 %, the unemployment rate for women was double the unemployment rate for men. With 46.4% of all unemployed females, the women in the age group 20-24 years compose of the biggest group. The highest incident of unemployment among females can be found with women who have either completed their G.C.E A/L or even hold a degree compared to that is the male unemployment rate highest among men who studied up to grades 5-9. Those who have completed vocational training are more likely to find employment and the search for a job takes them less time than those without training. Especially those who have completed their GCE A/L in the arts stream or graduated

**5 Working Age Population:** The working age population is the total non-institutional household population aged 10 years or over. (DCS 2006; Appendix1)

**6 Labour Force:** The Labour Force is composed of the economically active population aged 10 years and over.

**Economically Active Population:** The economically active population is defined as those persons who are/were employed or unemployed during the reference period of the survey. (DCS 2006, Appendix 1)

from university in an arts subject are not well prepared for the transition from education to work and cannot offer the necessary skills required by the private sector. Therefore, the oversupply of female arts graduates could be given as one of the reasons for such a great difference in unemployment rates of female and male university graduates. In the year 2004, 42.4 % of all employed people worked in the services sector, 33.4% in the agricultural sector and 24.1 % in the industrial sector. The importance of the services sector for the Sri Lankan economy is reflected in the contribution that it makes to the GDP. In 2004, with 54.4 % of GDP, the Services Sector contributed the biggest share, the Industry Sector contributes 26.5% and the Agriculture Sector 17.9%. Earnings in the services sector of US dollars 1,527 million come mainly from transport services and the tourism industry. (CBSL 2005, Statistical Appendix, External Sector Developments and Policies Table 86) In 2002 the majority, 91 out of a total of 222 graded tourist accommodations were situated on the south coast of Sri Lanka. In addition to the graded accommodation, 230 supplementary accommodations exist island wide. In 2002 the tourism industry provided 38,710 people directly and an estimated 51,100 people indirectly with employment. (CBSL 2005, Statistical Appendix, External Sector Developments and Policies Table 83) A large segment of persons indirectly employed in the tourism industry are self-employed. Many of those are women, who produce handicrafts or manufacture clothes for tourist shops or make breakfast foods to be sold to hotels and restaurants. The services sector is an important factor for the balance of trade as it generated a surplus of US dollars 419 million in 2004. (CBSL 2005, Table 5.1, p.90) In 2004 the overall balance of payments was negative with a minus of US dollars 205 million, due to a negative trade balance as the import costs of US dollars 8,000 million exceeded the export earnings of US dollars 5,757 million by far. (CBSL 2005, Table 5.1, p.90) The major export earnings are in the industrial sector, which make up 78% of all exports. The majority of the 4001 industrial enterprises in Sri Lanka, namely 2,117 are located in the Colombo district and only 120 are situated in Galle District. (CBSL 2005, Statistical Appendix, National Output and Expenditure Table 32) 49% out of all export revenues are earned by manufacturing textiles. The employees who work in the textile industry are mostly young unmarried women, aged between 18 and 30 years. "Around 80 per cent of the labour force in the EPZs are young women. The garment industry has been feminised with 90 per cent of its employees being young women workers. Men, however, predominate at the management and technical levels in these enterprises." (Jayaweera 2002, p.122) These young women

move to towns near the Export Processing Zones<sup>7</sup> as the majority of the garment factories are located there. The living as well as the working conditions of these women are hard. They have to live in basic hostels, far away from home. Furthermore is the work in the garment factories very repetitive and does not require much education. “Women work directly in the production areas such as plantations and garment factories as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. There are similarities in the working conditions of these jobs, such as long-term contracts, and most categories are dead end jobs. The educational qualifications required to enter such jobs are minimal.” (Gamaathige & Abeysingha 2004, p.23)

In the agricultural sector, which accounts for 19% of all export earnings, 13% are earned by producing and exporting tea. (CBSL 2005, Table 5.4, p.94) The majority of employees in tea production are women. They work as tea pickers in the plantations, which are mainly located in the Central and Uva Province. Even though the majority of these women are formally employed, the work is very arduous and low paid and the living conditions are rather bad.

Women in Sri Lanka generally still tend to work in a limited range of occupations, as around 80 % of all female employees work in one of four major occupational groups. Around 70% of these employees are skilled agricultural and fishery workers, workers in elementary occupations, crafts and related workers and only around 11% work as professionals, most of whom are teachers and nurses. The remaining 20% of female employees compose of sales and service workers, clerical-related workers, technicians and associate paint and machine, senior officials and managers, and workers in the construction industry. (Gamaathige & Abeysingha 2004, p.20) “In a gendered labour market, women in low-income families were unemployed, secondary-educated women were channeled into dead-end jobs in agriculture, industry and overseas domestic labour, and women university graduates applied for clerical jobs or worked in the informal sector, often in low-income economic activities. The glass ceiling prevented many women in the profession and in the administration from reaching the highest levels.” (Jayaweera 2002, p. 137)

Another employment opportunity that women choose in order to earn a living is to migrate overseas for work. Most of these female migrants go to the Middle East and

---

<sup>7</sup> Export Processing Zones (EPZs): This is a type of free trade zone where companies that do business there are provided with exemptions from certain taxes and locally applied business regulations.

work there in most cases as housemaids. “The main feature of Sri Lankan migrants to West Asia is that they are predominantly semi-skilled or unskilled and a significant proportion of them female. Unskilled and semi-skilled men also migrate to West Asia, but their numbers are in no way comparable.” (Kottegoda 2004, p.180) They send a large amount of their salary back home to their families in order to support them and make savings for the future. 55% of all private money transfers to Sri Lanka are worker remittances from the Middle East. Private transfers are an important source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka and amount to US dollars 1,564 million. (CBSL 2005, p. 99)

### **8.1.3 Households**

Each household has an access profile that defines which material and non-material resources and assets it has at its disposal. Each individual and each household have access to different income-providing opportunities for which different qualifications, termed access qualifications, are needed. Wisner et al (2007), in the access profiles he discusses, focuses on productive activities. Thereby he underestimates the importance of reproductive activities that have to be undertaken by households. Both reproductive as well as productive activities need to be considered when analyzing the generation of a livelihood and securing access to resources.

#### **8.1.3.1 Households in Sri Lanka**

In Sri Lankan context, the membership in a household is mainly defined through kinship or affinity. A distinction has to be made between membership in a household and membership in a family. “The concept of who ‘belongs’ to the household is a narrow definition of the Sinhala term *pavula* or family. A broad definition of family as understood by the three ethnic groups can include a wide range of kin and affinal relations. Kinship, particularly amongst Sinhalese and the Tamils, is reckoned through cognatic or bilateral descent, i.e., an individual can be a member of at least two groups of kin – the father’s and the mother’s.” (Kottegoda 2004, p.28) In villages and smaller towns, a household comprises mostly either a nuclear or an extended family who are living together in one *gedere*, one home. 89.2% of all households in Sri Lanka live in their own house. (CBSL 2005, SSA Table 10) In rural or semi-urban areas it is nowadays rare to find several households living in one home, but it is common in villages that the kin group lives close by and is part of everyday life. “It is in the area of daily or occasional exchange, gift giving, prestations and emotional support that kin as

well as neighbourhood links become essential elements of survival in many households.” (Kottegoda 2004, p.120) Not only the extended family is an integral part in all aspects of one's life, but also the non-related neighbors play an important role. Often a clear distinction between kin and non-kin cannot be easily established. “Miscellaneous kinsmen along with wholly unrelated neighbours form the individual's immediate intimates world outside the home. Quite minor differences exist between kin and non-kin in the normal affairs of everyday life. Economic activities, as well as multifarious dependencies upon others in house building...almsgiving and exorcism ceremonies are affairs of neighbours before they are affairs of kin.” (Ryan 1953, cited in: Kottegoda 2004, p. 29). All families of the study lived as nuclear families, mostly in their own house. Prior to the Tsunami Saman lived in his own house, which was built close by his father's on the same piece of land. This is not uncommon, as in Sri Lanka members of one kin often build their houses close to each other on a land which is commonly owned by its different members. Sandamali lived with her husband and four children in their own house close to her relatives and in-laws. With the proceeds from her pawned jewelry she built a bathroom, attached to their house, which indicates their relative material prosperity. Also Ruwan lived with his family in a rather large and well built house of his own. Pushpa lived with her husband and child on a small plot of land her husband had bought before they got married. There they erected a small house made of timber with a roof of aluminum sheets. Menaka bought a piece of land on which she has started to build a house with the financial help of her sister. Danoja and Poshita and their respective families lived in rented apartments. The apartment in which Danoja lived with her husband and their two sons was attached to the premises of her husband's shop.

### **8.1.3.2 Productive Activities**

The perception that men are heads of household and providers for their wives and children and that women should stay at home is still very prominent.

*“The main role is to earn an income for the family. It may be employment, labor work or fishing. He is also the leader of the house hold, since ours is a patriarchal society. He has to protect the family, and set a good example for family members. He has to apply more strength to take care of the family.” (NGO staff member 20.2/20-24)*

The concept of the husband as the main income provider is still upheld in the families of the present research. In all instances except one he was portrayed as the one who



contributed the major share to the income of the household. Ruwan's and Sandamali's husbands were both local businessmen who were engaged in the fishing industry. Pushpa's husband supplied goods to the boats that were needed for fishing trips. Saman and Poshita both worked as fishermen during the fishing season. "Just over a quarter of fisher-folk own a fishing craft with the remainder having no such ownership and are either employed as fish workers by craft owners, or hire the craft of others on the fixed income sharing basis (in terms of gross income net profit)." (Jayasinghe and Thomas 2009, p.365) The village economy in fishing villages strongly depends on patron-client relationships between fishermen and fish merchants. The fish merchants, mudalalis, are the local elite, who control business activities such as the fish production and distribution. "As well as using both their own and hired mechanised craft, they hire workers for their craft, buy the entire fish catch from fishermen at lowest prices, handle the distribution network with city markets, prevent outside traders from involvement, and provide credit facilities to fishermen to buy materials needed for fishing trips." (Jayasinghe and Thomas 2009, p.359) Ruwan's and Sandamali's husband both owned larger fishing boats, they either hired fishermen to work for them on those boats or rented out a vessel to small-scale fishermen.

*„Trading in fish was my main business. In addition I owned boats. I also sold fish through a few vendors. So while helping some others (to earn an income) I also received an additional income. That is how I lived. I helped several others and earned a profit through them.” (Ruwan 12.1/ 42-45)*

These mudalalis bought the entire catch from the fishermen and therefore controlled the local market price of fish. The merchants either sold the fish locally to fish retailers or to fish traders in Colombo. Additionally, the fish merchants sold necessary items such as fuel, engine oil or ice to the fishermen.

*„My husband engaged in trading fish. He transported fish from here and sold it in Colombo. He supplied necessities for fishing boats such as fuel (diesel) and ice.” (Sandamali 8.1/34-35)*

The distribution of the revenues is based on a „fish catch sharing system” which is based on the patron-client relationship. "Labour is paid on the basis of the daily fish catch output and a "fixed sharing ratio" (one quarter or one eighth of fish catch), instead of total working hours or standard piece rates per hour/day." (Jayasinghe & Thomas 2009, p.364) The mudalali gets 50% of the catch for the boat ownership and, additionally to that, a variable share for running expenses.

Fishing is a highly seasonal work that can be undertaken in the south and southwest of Sri Lanka only in the months between November and April, as for the rest of the year the sea is too rough to go fishing.

*“It is this way. On the days I engage in sea fishing my earning for the day is Rs. 700 to Rs. 800. But we don’t do it daily. During a year we can go to the sea for fishing only three or four days in a week. On the remaining three or four days I take a rest. Also during a year, fishing is safe from the month of November to April. So it is difficult to think of a regular monthly income.” (Saman 11.2/ 48-52)*

This means that fishermen do not have a regular income and therefore have to engage in other activities during the rest of the year. In the off-season time many men like Saman, engaged in coral mining.<sup>8</sup>

It is the woman’s responsibility to manage the household income, which means to make sure that all bills are paid, to provide enough food for all family members and spend money on the children’s education. From the wage a man earns he often keeps a share, mostly one-third of his income, for his personal use and gives the rest to his wife.

*“The husband would return home drunk, for which he has already spent half of his daily income. He does not understand that half of his day’s earnings are insufficient for meeting household needs. Due to drinking, he is susceptible to reduced vitality and has poor health. When he is in the sea for seven or more days, his wife has to buy food conditions on credit. The little money brought by the husband is used to pay debts to the boutiques or retail store.” (NGO staff member, 20.2/213-219)*

Therefore, women try to find various ways to earn an income to make ends meet, which is a difficult task considering popular perceptions about working women and the situation on the labor market for females. The popular perceptions of men as the main income earner, does not recognize the importance of the contribution of women to the family income. “The concept of women as main income earners in society does not seem to exist in a heavily patriarchal society such as Sri Lanka. The majority of women can be categorized as home-based earners with very little resources and fragile markets.” (SHRDC 2006, p.9) For women there is not much diversification especially on the labor market in the rural economy and only few women find work in the formal

---

<sup>8</sup> There are two forms of coral mining, one form of mining is breaking off corals from shallow reefs in the sea, which is illegal, and the other form is carried out on fossil reefs located inland, and this form is legal.

private or public sector in their region. Therefore, many women move to the export processing zones, migrate to the Middle East or married women with child care responsibilities work in the cottage industry.

The cottage industry is dominated by a few occupations for women. Making products out of coir, making and selling cooked food, making handicrafts or sewing clothes are the most common economic activities for women in rural areas. In recent years they also have started doing other types of piece-work such as binding exercise books or packing tea. In the 1970s and 1980s, Sri Lanka had to implement structural adjustment policies that had a big impact on macro-economic policy, with a shift towards liberalization of the economy which also destroyed the markets for products manufactured in villages. "In Sri Lanka after the open economy (1977), marketing of products manufactured in the villages was a severe problem. Tailoring for orders and manufacturing of garments done on a small scale faced severe competition from imports and large scale manufacturers. Handlooms also faced severe competition from imported products." (SHRDC 2006, p.35) Due to the lack of a market for such products and a decline of prices most such economic activities performed by women are not very remunerative.

*"She made string hoppers and sold them at Rs. 60 per 100. She made around 300 string hoppers per day for sale. But on some days, some string hoppers remained unsold."* (Saman 11.2/ 55-57)

This resulted in widening income disparities and an increase of poverty. In the year 2002, 21.7% of all households in Galle District were poor. (Department of Census and Statistics 2009, Table 4.7) Nevertheless, none of the families in the study did depend on a welfare program previous to the Tsunami, but all families had enough income to sustain themselves. None of the women except Danoja were permanently employed. They either earned an additional income by engaging in the cottage industry or were not engaged in income generating activities at all.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Danoja, who worked as a midwife, the Rs. 8,000 she contributed to the household income almost equaled the income, Rs. 10,000, her husband earned as a wholesale rice trader. She completed her A/L examination in the science stream and afterwards started a training to become a midwife. She continued working in this profession even after getting married and

---

<sup>9</sup> A cottage industry is usually a small-scale industry carried on at home by family members using their own equipment.

having children. This was only possible through the support Danoja got from her mother and sister who were living close by and assisted her by taking care of her children when she was at work. Sandamali, who could only study up to her O/L examination, thereafter started working in a garment factory. After getting married she stopped working and only looked after the household and her children. She and her family were rather affluent and therefore there was no financial need for her to earn any additional income. Sandamali's husband was a local businessman who owned boats, traded fish and fishing equipment and owned a lime kiln.

*“G: What was the source of income for the family? S: My husband engaged in trading fish. He transported fish from here and sold it in Colombo. He supplied necessities for fishing boats such as fuel (diesel) and ice G: Any other income sources? Ch: My husband owned a lime kiln. His father constructed it for my husband. That also provided an income. It was a good income” (Sandamali, 8.1/33-38)*

Also the wife of Ruwan did not engage in any home-based income generating activities, as he earned a good income as an owner of fishing boats and as a fish trader. Ruwan and his wife took care of their nine year old niece, while his sister-in-law worked abroad in the Middle East. The income of Ruwan's business and the money that Ruwan's sister in law sent regularly as an alimony for her daughter enabled them to live a better life. Pushpa, with the help of her husband, grew vegetables on their plot of land. They sold them at the local market in order to earn an additional income. Often the income a woman earns is not seen as belonging to her alone, but is seen as family income. “Women's wages usually go directly for family use, and women who spend even small sums of money (much less than the one-third allowed working men) for their own individual pleasure confront public condemnation for their ‘selfishness’. Unemployed husbands, however, feel it within their rights to demand money from their wives for their social activities.” (Gamburd 2002, p. 202)

*„When a man earned money, half of it was spent on alcohol, and the remaining half was for family expenses. But when a woman earned, all of it was spent for food and meeting needs of the children. The women carried a heavier load of the burden.” (NGO staff member, 20.2/209-212)*

Even in cases where a husband hands over all his income to his wife and she can decide on day to day expenses, it is often him who has the final say on how to spend money on larger investments.

### **8.1.3.3 Reproductive Activities**

Most reproductive activities are ascribed to women and especially in fishermen's families traditional gender roles are still upheld. Sinhalese women are socialized into being wives, whose first duty is to tend to the needs of her family, which consist of gathering food, fuel and water, preparing food, managing the household, bearing and nurturing the children. "Recognition and respect is of course only gained if the woman who is qualified also carries out her family obligations and abides by tradition and cultural expectations. An ideal woman is a dutiful and faithful wife, mother and worker." (Silva 2002, p.53) Traditionally, men only take over the minimum of housework, as being the one doing household chores and is caring for young children would threaten his self-conception of being male. (Gamburd 2002, p. 186) Nevertheless, this does not mean that husbands do not partake in household activities at all. "Under 'normal' conditions indeed he will not undertake daily repetitive household chores, and he would be mocked if he did. But if faced with a crisis – f.i. illness of the wife – husbands will often take over more easily than a woman neighbour or relative, due to current level of isolation between families, which is also reflected in the low level of cooperation among the women themselves." (Risseuw 1988, p.269) Housework that is associated with impurity such as changing diapers or cleaning toilets is considered exclusively women's work and also fetching water and collecting firewood is rarely undertaken by men. Men carry out household chores which are less repetitive and exhausting, such as washing their own clothes, looking after the children or purchasing larger items in the nearby town. "Handling dirt, faeces, cleaning toilets, being impure, doing repetitive, relatively less prestigious work, which often lacks the status of work as such or 'prestige' of the proximity of danger, is the female expression of the principle of gender hierarchy. This is taken for granted by both men and women, whatever specific activities are enacted by specific individuals." (Risseuw 1988, p.271) An employed, married woman is compelled to play dual roles, because as soon she comes home from work she is expected to do most of the household chores. "Whatever the female may do, she will try her utmost not to neglect her children and her husband for according to the cultural values of the Sinhalese a wife loses status and dignity if she neglects her family. She works hard to live up to these expectations as well as earn money for daily expenditures." (Silva 2002, p.56)

The staff member of an NGO explains:

*“When the children come home from school, the mother has to be at home to prepare their food. Even if the father is there he might not do it. If she doesn’t do it, she is concerned as not fulfilling her duties. It creates severe problems. Women have many roles to play. She has to go for Samurdhi meetings. Everything has to be done by her. It’s always her devotion not a fathers. This is more common in fishing families.,,  
(NGO staff member 21.1/37-42)*

In recent years a gradual change has taken place in the society, due to an increasing participation of women in the labor force and the large number of females migrating to the Middle East who are leaving their families behind. Then sometimes the husbands have to take over the reproductive role, which has already initiated a slight change in gender roles. Nevertheless, the demarcation of the different domestic roles of men and women, is still clearly visible. Saman indicated that he was helping his wife from time to time with the household activities, such as cutting firewood and even with cooking. In Danoja’s case even though she was working as a midwife, it was her who was doing the larger share of the housework. Her husband was helping her sometimes with chores such as washing clothes, but still they were far from sharing work equally. Sandamali’s husband also helped her sometimes with housework, she mentioned especially washing clothes. All other husbands rarely took part in household activities, leaving it to their wives to take care of them.

#### **8.1.4 Lack of Social Protection**

In order to protect its own citizens, the state as well as the local community have to establish hazard precaution and preparedness measures at the local and national levels. In Sri Lanka both the state as well as the communities have failed to do so. Prior to the Tsunami there was neither a tsunami warning system nor a policy on disaster management in place. In 2003 a Disaster Counter Management Bill was drafted by the government of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, which included the appointment of a Disaster Management Council. A conflict emerged between the government and the President’s Office over the Chair of the Council. Furthermore, the Bill was challenged in the Supreme Court, which then “gave its determination on the need for amendments, but these were not made, and the Bill never came before Parliament.” (Goonesekere 2006, p.36) Even though the Bill referred to the phenomenon of tsunami as a possible hazard, the larger sections of the population had never heard of it. Most people stated, when asked about prior knowledge about tsunamis, that they had neither known about the phenomenon nor about the correct behavior in the instance of an impact.

Other issues of social protection relate to problems of coastal conservation. The Galle Road, A2, is one of the main roads in Sri Lanka running from Colombo to Galle. It runs close by the sea with varying distances between 50 and 800 meters inland. In some parts of the coastline, there was dense vegetation between the sea and the main road, but in most other parts of the coast settlements were erected close to the beach. Instead of preserving the natural vegetation, the brushwood and mangrove forests, the areas were cleared to create building space or start aquaculture businesses. This made the communities settling in the area more vulnerable to the Tsunami, as they lacked natural protection. The inundation reached in some cases up to 2 km inland, but the destruction was highest in settlements close to the beach. “Furthermore, local topography and the density of buildings and vegetation were seen to play an important role in determining the onshore flow depth attenuation with distance inland.” (Rosetto et al. 2007, p.109)

Coral Mining is another issue where public authorities lacked to provide social protection as they failed to enforce the existing ban. Coral Mining was an integral part of the village economy in coastal areas. Even though it was banned, people engaged in coral mining, due to weak law enforcement and a lack of alternative employment opportunities. In places where coral mining was undertaken, the force of the Tsunami was more destructive than in places where the coral reef was still intact. (Dahdouh-Guebas et al. 2005, p.R444-R447)

## **8.2 Disaster as a Process**

This chapter describes the different rounds of impact on the daily life of men and women affected by the Tsunami and the changes that have taken place since. First of all, the onset of the Tsunami and the transition to a disaster will be described. There are enormous changes in the composition of the households due to the Tsunami, as people have become injured, disabled or have died. The second part of this chapter explains the situation of the disaster victims during the relief phase. The third part deals with the aftermath of the disaster and shows the capacities widows and widowers have and how they cope with their altered life.

### **8.2.1 The Onset of the Tsunami and the Transition to a Disaster**

For many people in Sri Lanka, the 26th of December 2004, a Sunday, was a public holiday. It was the day after Christmas for Christians, and for Buddhists it was a *Poya*

day. *Poya* days are public holidays in Sri Lanka and most shops and offices are closed. On *Poya* days practicing Buddhists observe *Sil*, which means they go to the temple early in the morning in order to engage in religious activities during the whole day. Some believers even go to the temple the night before *Poya* day and stay over night. Others reach the temple premises just before sunrise. They all dress up in white clothes as a sign of devotion. Believers all sit in the temple premises throughout the whole day, listen to the sermons of Buddhist priests and meditate. At lunch time, others bring food which they have cooked in their homes in order to serve the devotees. After lunch the persons who are observing *Sil*, are not supposed to eat until the next morning. Also on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2004 many people in Galle District gathered at the temples in order to observe *Sil*. Other people, especially women, stayed at home and were cooking food for the family or preparing alms for the temple.

*„I was cooking in a hurry to take “Buddha Pooja” to the temple where my mother was observing Sil.” (Menaka 2.2/152-153)*

In Hikkaduwa, like in almost every town, a fair was held every Sunday, these are the so called *irida pola*, Sunday markets. Most of these *polas* are located close to the main road. In the case of Hikkaduwa, the fair was close to Galle road, only a few hundred meters away from the beach. All different kinds of household items, food and clothes were sold there. These fairs normally do not take place in commercial buildings but are out in the open space, where vendors bring tables on which they arrange their products for display. Fairs are the domain of women in Sri Lanka, as many women sell their products at these fairs and do their weekly grocery shopping. For most fishermen in the area of Hikkaduwa it was an ordinary day of work, as it was fishing season. Many of them were out fishing all night and had just returned to the beach. Others had left early in the morning and were still out at sea fishing.<sup>10</sup> At around 9.30 a.m. the water receded and exposed large sections of the beach. Many people who were at the beach at that time went to collect shells. They were unaware that this situation represented a serious danger to them. A few minutes later, the first wave rushed in. Only then the people at the beach realized that the sea was in an unusual state. The first wave in most regions in Sri Lanka did not have enough power to reach further inland, and the water ceded after

---

10 The categories of boats used in Sri Lanka are Inboard Multi-day (IMUL), Inboard Single-day (IDAY), Out-board engine Fibreglass Reinforced Plastic boats (OFRP), Motorized Traditional Crafts (MTRB), Non-motorized Traditional Crafts (NTRB) and Beach Seine Crafts (NBSB).



a few minutes. The Tsunami was a succession of several waves which occurred in cycles of retreat and rise. In Galle District, the second wave was in most places the most powerful one and reached highest. In some places around Hikkaduwa, the second wave reached around 1.5 km inland. Smaller waves continued to occur for the rest of the day. With the first wave reaching the shore people began to shout and scream and started to run inland. The breaking of the waves and the people who screamed made such a noise that the ones who were in their houses came out in order to have a look what was happening.

*„Then from the direction of the beach some boys came running towards us and they were screaming that the sea was overflowing.” (Menaka 2.2/155-156)*

*„I heard a strange noise. It was a loud noise and I heard it as “DOS”. There was a shop in front of our grocery store. It was a place where coffins were sold. I had returned from the fair and I was removing items from the shopping bag when I heard that noise. Then I came out of our grocery store. Then I saw the coffins shop collapsing. The shop walls were coming down. There was another shop adjoining the coffins shop and its walls also collapsed. Then I took the children and jumped out of our store.” (Danoja 18.1/76-83)*

People tried to escape the water by running inland, climbing up trees or searching refuge at multistory buildings, but many did not manage to survive. Due to the Tsunami, around 35,000 people lost their lives. Statistics indicate that more women than men died in the Tsunami. In Galle District 1,785 people who lived in the damaged housing units were killed, out of these 584 were male and 1,199 female, the sex of 2 persons was not stated. (DCS 2005, Table 7.2) The reasons for the higher death toll of women can only be concluded from narrations of survivors, members of NGOs and rescue staff.

In Sri Lanka the traditional dresses worn by women in the south of Sri Lanka are the Indian Sari and the “*cheeththa/ redda and hetta*”. The *cheeththa/ redda* is an ankle-length piece of cloth that is wrapped round the waist. The *hetta* is worn along with the *cheeththa / redda* and is a short-sleeved shirt that is fitted and has waist length. It has buttons down the front and resembles a sari blouse. Both the sari as well as the *cheeththa* restrict the ease of movement and therefore hindered women fleeing from the Tsunami. Even modern skirts often were a hindrance, as it was fashionable to wear them tight-fitting. Another problem women encountered was being left naked by the water. The force of the water dragged the clothes off the women and left them naked. Stories were recounted that instead of coming out of the houses they rather were hiding, as they felt ashamed being naked. With the second wave they drowned or were buried by the collapsing walls of the building.

*“Some others were in their night dress or their dresses were dislodged by rapidly moving water. They were ashamed to be on the road or be seen by others in nude or semi-nude form.” (NGO-staff 20.2/90-92)*

*“Yes I heard that one lady cried for help but did not come out because she was naked. The 2nd wave has washed her away, I know it personally.” (NGO-staff 21.1/97-98)*

The men had an advantage in surviving by knowing how to climb trees. In the coastal areas many coconut trees are grown and from early childhood on men learn how to climb up those trees in order to pluck coconuts. For adolescent girls and women it is considered inappropriate to climb up a tree, so they do not practice it. When the Tsunami came, most women failed to climb up coconut or other higher trees and had to search refuge in other places.

*“Can you climb trees? A -No. That is why we mounted a box.” (Menaka 2.2/182-183)*

*“The others were running. I also ran. It was a jungle area with many waterholes. Then people shouted at others to climb up trees. I also climbed a tree as much as I could. But in an instant the water level was above my mouth, while I was on the tree. This happened at about 9.00 a.m. From 9.30 a.m. till 12.30 p.m. I was on the tree; I saw poisonous snakes around me. People were shouting „I am dying“, „save me“ and I heard people crying and screaming. There were no houses close by. All around me was jungle and people were on the trees. So the people climbed the trees as much as they could when the water level increased. There were small children also on trees. I looked round. I could not see a single member of my family. Then we measured the depth of water. The water level had gone down only by one inch. In a little while the water level increased by 6 inches. So we had to wait till the water level decreased and this took almost four hours. Then I heard a male voice and I shouted „is it you“. Then he shouted back „is it you. I am coming“. It was my husbands voice. The water was still moving. He came to the place where I was. He was wet and shivering. Then we went further and my mother was there. We had to move further. We looked for a road. Then the boys also gathered there. He took my mother on his shoulder as there were deep water holes.” (Disaster affected woman 14.1/39-56)*

Another explanation for the higher death toll of women is the fact that women are responsible for their home. Recounts of Tsunami survivors indicate that many women felt responsible for the protection of their homes and their families. Some women got caught by the waves as they left their houses too late. Instead of running away, they started to protect the house or closed the doors first before leaving the house. It is the woman's duty to look after the house when her husband is out of the home.

A woman recalls the moment when the Tsunami came:

*“G: What were you doing when Tsunami came? P(the husband): I was cleaning fish for cooking. M: He was cleaning the fish. Then my son-in-law shouted. He said the sea is flowing to the land and shouted to run away. He was in the house at that time. M: I took the cleaned fish and put in the refrigerator. They ran away. I went to the road to see what it was. Near our fence there was a lot of water. I put soil there in order to prevent water coming into our garden. My husband came out of the house. Then I went to the house. All the others had gone away. P(the husband): I went away from the house with the children. M: At that time there was no water in the house. I washed my face. P(the husband): I went with the children to save their lives. M: Then I sat down to scrape a coconut. G: After the water came towards the house? M: Yes. Then my son came and said “ Mother do not stay in the house. Run away!” Anyway I closed the doors before leaving the house. G: You closed the doors? M: Yes I closed all doors. Then the water came into the house. I began to run. There was a huge mass of water” (Disaster affected woman 9.1/141-161)*

Other stories told by survivors indicate that many women lost their lives because they tried to rescue their belongings. Women, especially those living in rural or semi-urban areas, invest their personal savings in jewelry instead of saving it in a bank account. They mostly keep their valuables in their homes, which gives them the opportunity to pawn them and get access to cash. Menaka rescued her sister as she prevented her from trying to save her belongings:

*„My sister was inside the house and was staring at the ceiling. I said water is coming. At that instant water came into the house and the level was about 3 feet above the floor. My sister tried to collect valuable items. I prevented her from wasting time to collect belongings. Due to the gush of water the door was unexpectedly closed. Then we jumped out of the house through the window and went towards the adjoining house.” (Menaka 2.2/158-163)*

Some women went back to their houses after the first wave in order to get valuables or other household items out of their homes.

*„My younger son was very afraid. I got hold of my children. I was only dressed in a blouse and skirt. When the water level decreased I ran home and picked children’s clothes. Then we went to Rathgama school. I had only the skirt and blouse on me.” (Disaster affected woman 7.1/87-89)*

Many of those women who tried to retrieve their belongings got caught by the second wave and drowned.

### **8.2.2 Survival, Damage and Loss**

The Tsunami hit 2/3 of Sri Lanka’s coastline from the northern coast to the west coast causing severe damage to the ecosystem. Out of a population of around 19 million people around 550,000 people were displaced, which means that around 3 % of the total population were directly affected. Around 35,000 were killed, including the persons reported missing and 21,000 suffered injuries. “The population of the coastal area of

Mulaitivu and Ampara in the East were the worst affected (80% and 78%). In Kilinochi, 35% of the population was affected by the Tsunami. These were all areas that had also experienced decades of internal conflict. In Hambantota and Galle, two Southern coastal areas, less people were affected, but there were pockets of severe damage.” (Goonesekere 2006, p.1) One of those pockets that was severely damaged was Hikkaduwa DS Division. In Hikkaduwa DS Division, 855 persons, living in damaged housing units died or disappeared. (DCS 2005, Table 7.1) In Hikkaduwa DS Division, 5,696 housing units were destroyed, 42% completely, 8% only partially damaged but unusable, and 49.6% were partially destroyed but usable. (DCS 2005, Table 1.2) The following narratives explain how interlocutors of the present study experienced the Tsunami and what losses they have suffered.

On the Tsunami day, Saman was in the sea mining corals, when the first set of Tsunami waves reached the shore. He was carried away by the waves towards a small island in the sea. Then he was pushed towards the shore, so he struggled to reach the main road. There he asked people about his wife and children. Saman was told that his son had gone with his friends to the temple. His wife and his mother had been to the Sunday fair in Hikkaduwa town. So he walked along the road in search of his wife and his mother. On the way between his village and Hikkaduwa he met his wife. When the second set of waves came they clung on to each other and grabbed a branch of a tree to avoid being carried away by the second set of waves. They then could not hold on to each other anymore, the tree got uprooted and so he and his wife were carried away by the water in two different directions. His wife died in the Tsunami, whereas he and their children survived. His house, which was only a few hundred meters away from the sea, was destroyed completely and he lost all his belongings.

On the 26th of December 2004, Ruwan was on the way to Colombo by bus, as he had to meet a fish trader. Only after he had met the businessman, he learned that in Trincomalee the sea had come on to the land and that the waves had pushed boats onto the beach. He still did not know that the Tsunami had hit almost the whole coastline of Sri Lanka. He then tried to contact his family, but could not reach them. So Ruwan took a three-wheeler back to the bus station and got on a Galle-bound bus. Ruwan became very confused when the bus, instead of going on the Galle road as usual, took the Nagoda Road. In Batapola they had to stop, as the roads were blocked with mud and

debris. Ruwan had a friend in Batapola where he stayed over night. On the next day, they got a motor bike and went to Ruwan's house, which is a few hundred meters away from the sea. There, they met Ruwan's son-in-law who told him that Ruwan's wife and his daughter were missing. They had gone to the Sunday Fair to buy some onions and a frock for the girl. The two other younger daughters had gone with their elder sister to her home, about 3 km from Telwatta temple, to have a bath. One of the sons had taken his grandmother to his aunt's house. The other son had taken the grandmother, Ruwan's daughter-in-law and her baby to a safe place after the first set of waves had hit the house. Later on that same day they had gone to the house of Ruwan's second eldest daughter where he met his family on the following day. The bodies of Ruwan's wife and daughter have never been found. Ruwan's house was damaged by the Tsunami and he lost assets worth Rs. 800,000. His trade center was destroyed and three motor cycles, boats, three new engines and Rs 14,000 in cash could not be recovered.

Poshita was at home when the Tsunami hit. He had just had breakfast and was watching TV, when a boy living in the neighborhood shouted that sea was flowing towards the houses. He looked out of the house and saw water near the railway track. Poshita ran to his father-in-laws house and sent his family to the temple. Then he shouted in order to inform the neighbors about the water that was coming towards the village. He ran home and closed the doors. When the second set of waves came with great force, he climbed a tree. After a little while he got down from the tree, swam through the water and went to the temple. He met his children and in-laws at Kiralagahawela, but his wife was not there. His wife died in the Tsunami, but her body was never found. The rented house he was living in was completely destroyed and he lost all his belongings. The house of his parents-in-law, which they had constructed only a few months before the Tsunami hit, was destroyed only partially.

On the day of the Tsunami, Menaka stayed with her sister in her brother's house a few hundred meters away from the beach in a village near Hikkaduwa. Her brother had gone to Chilaw with his family and Menaka's children. Her mother went to observe *Sil* and therefore Menaka stayed with her sister to keep her company. Menaka's husband had gone out for work as a garbage collector. The sister was in the sales point that she owned. Menaka was cooking food for the Buddha Pooja to take it to the temple where her mother was observing *Sil*. Suddenly, boys were shouting that water was flowing

onto the land. The sister did not believe it and laughed. Menaka ran to the road to have a look and saw water running along the railway tracks in direction to the house. She ran home and at the instant that Menaka told her sister about the water, the wave came into the house at a level of 3 feet. Her sister still tried to collect valuables but Menaka prevented her from wasting time. The door was blocked by the water and so they jumped out of the window, as their house had windows without bars. Menaka said that, if she had not been there, her sister would have been caught by the waves. The two ladies climbed up a box near a guava tree and so they could get hold of the tree. After the water had receded, they went towards Kalupe temple. As the road was under water, it took them between a quarter and half an hour. Menaka's husband lost his life in the Tsunami, but her brother's family, her children, her mother and her sister all survived. Her brother's house was partially destroyed and many assets of her sister, which she had brought from the Middle East, were destroyed. Menaka's house itself was not damaged as it is located further inland and therefore was not reached by the Tsunami.

Sandamali was at home, which is within 100 meters from the beach, when the Tsunami came. Her husband had gone in the morning with their elder son, to see his father. Their second son had gone with some others to Kataragama on pilgrimage. Their two daughters had gone to her sister's house to watch TV. When the Tsunami came, Sandamali was all alone in her house. She was preparing Buddha Poja, food offerings, which she wanted to bring to the temple later that day. Suddenly she heard a strange noise, so she looked out of the house. The sea was unusually rough and waves reached the land. She saw houses collapsing and heard people screaming. At that time water did not reach their house, but the water was already on the other side of the road. So she ran towards the temple. Before, her daughters had already fled and therefore she followed them. Her elder son had climbed an araliya tree, and only after the water level had gone down, he climbed down and came to the temple. Her husband had accompanied his father, but the wave caught them and both lost their lives. Her large house was partially destroyed, with the newly built bathroom and kitchen completely damaged. All furniture and other belongings were washed away.

Pushpa and her baby were at home, which is about one kilometer inland. Her husband had been to work at the beach. Pushpa recounted that, in the morning, there were suddenly many vehicles on the road. Then her neighbours in the adjoining house

shouted that the sea was coming to the land. They told Pushpa to go to a mountain close by. So she took the child and some of the child's clothes and went with her neighbours towards the mountain. She thought that her mother-in-law had gone to the fair and that her husband had gone there to rescue her. So she decided to go to Hikkaduwa to look for her husband. After the Tsunami had ceased, she searched for him in many places, but his body was never found. As her small house of wattle and daub was situated further inland it was not damaged by the waves.

Danoja, her husband and their two sons lived in a house on rent. The rooms of their apartment were adjoining to their rice wholesale shop. Their house was close to the main road and not far from the sea. Danoja had just returned from the fair and was putting the items out of the shopping bag, when she heard strange noises. So she looked out and saw the coffins shop in front of her house collapsing. Then she ran out of the store together with her children. At that time her husband was still inside the bath room, washing clothes. Danoja called her husband and told him to leave the house. Her son had seen him peeping out and looking at them when they called him. She kept on running in haste to search a mountain top, towards which other people were also running. When the first set of waves retreated, the beach had appeared to have less water than earlier. Danoja's husband went to see that with one of his friends. He saw dead bodies floating and with the help of others began to pull them out on the beach. Someone had saved a mother and Danoja's husband, he had helped to rescue her and bring her to the road. Then, suddenly, the second set of waves came ashore. The others had managed to run away quickly. but her husband had failed to escape the second series of waves. Not only her husband perished in the Tsunami, but she also lost her mother, who drowned. Their apartment, the shop, the rice and groceries for sale were completely destroyed. There are still outstanding bills she has to settle for rice purchases from her husband's business.

### **8.2.3 Immediate Relief Phase/ Camp life**

Temples and schools were the first places where people who survived the Tsunami searched shelter. In most villages, the schools and temples are well-constructed buildings and therefore withstood the force of the water. As it was a *Poya*-day, many people already were in the temple. Some of them brought alms with them as offering to the monks and fellow worshipers. This food was then distributed to all people who

gathered there. People from the hinterlands brought more food and other essential items and distributed them among the needy. For many of the displaced, the schools and temples became their homes for the next few weeks or even months. Those who had relatives to accommodate them avoided staying in camps. Except Poshita, who stayed in a temple for about three weeks, none of the families of the widows and widowers had to stay in a camp for longer than a day. Most of them stayed with relatives or even friends. Dhammika and Sandamali even rented out a house for a period of a month. Especially families with adolescent girls avoided staying in camps. There was fear that the girls would lose their good reputation or even their virginity. “When feasible and able, widowers particularly with adolescent girls have made arrangements to live with extended family members. This to some extent provides a sense of security to the widower and the girls as against the prevailing situation in camps and single sheds.” (SHRDC 2006, p.74) Ruwan mentioned that his fear over the security of his two adolescent daughters made him stay in the house of one of his daughters. Even though this house was only small, made out of wattle and daub, and had to accommodate sometimes up to 10 people, he preferred living there rather than staying in the camp.

*“We could have stayed in a camp. My children stayed with relatives. I did not stay in a camp, but I visited them. There were drug addicts, alcoholics. I can sleep even under a tree. I can’t sacrifice my daughters. I have two veeduru badu (veeduru-glass, badu-items) and they are fragile and not to be damaged.” (Ruwan, 12.1/185-188)*

To lose her good reputation for a girl would mean difficulties in finding a suitable boy to get married to. Therefore, even at the risk of losing access to relief goods families with adolescent girls refrained from staying in camps.

*“G: How was the security situations during that period? Se: I had no fear. I was in my sister’s house. My daughters were not in the camp. Some people told me that I would not be eligible for relief assistance if I did not stay in the camp G: Who said that? Males? Se: Both males and females. I said that I have three daughters and it was impossible to live in a camp.” (Disaster affected woman 16.1/174-180)*

As already mentioned by Ruwan in the above interview passage, the increased alcohol consumption by men was a major problem in camps. “As a cross-cutting theme across all qualitative camp surveys, women articulated their concern for the increased alcohol consumption by men in the temporary camp shelters, as it was expressed to be a contributing factor to the incidences of sexual harassment, abuse and violence.” (Miltzer 2008, p.52) A further issue of concern was related to the lack of privacy, as in schools and temples many families shared the same space. “The stay in camp-type situations was prolonged over six months, which had implications for family relations



and sexual behavior, exerting greater pressure on women. The lack of privacy resulting from shared space in camps made women uncomfortable about having sexual relations with their husbands.” (Ariyabandu 2006, p.S767) Also the number of toilet and bathing facilities was inadequate and lacked privacy, which made it difficult for women to have a shower or get changed.

The distribution of relief by the state was based on official registration, which meant that the head of household, mostly a male, got the relief supplies for the whole household. This distribution mechanism hindered women in having direct access to relief supplies and created a situation of dependency especially for women. (Ariyabandu 2006, p.S766; Goonesekere 2006, pp.10-12) In some instances widows had difficulties to be recognized as heads of household after the death of their spouses, for example when a couple was not officially married. In Danoja’s case, she was not registered at the place where she had been living with her husband and children. Earlier she and her family were living together with her mother in her mother’s house in another Grama Seva Niladhari Division. There she was registered only as an occupant but not as the head of household. This created difficulties for her to get the ration cards for her and her children.

*“G: Any payments for compensation? D: I received only Rs.15,000 for my husband’s last rites. G: The payment of Rs.5,000 D: I received it. G: Any other payments? D: There were problems. Ration cards were not issued to me as my name was not in the household list pertaining to the area where I lived during Tsunami. Earlier I was living within another Grama Seva Niladhari Division. So my name was not registered in any household documents. We lived in Wellawatta when Tsunami came. Earlier we shared a home with my mother. Then my name was entered there as only as an occupant, but not as the head of the household.” (Danoja 18.1/145-156)*

The support from government agencies consisted of different schemes. First of all, every household received a death compensation of Rs. 15,000 for every person who died in the Tsunami. A cash grant of Rs.2,500 was given to every household in order to buy kitchen utensils. Every household got dry rations for every person in the household worth Rs. 175/ Rs.200. Furthermore, every household received a monthly cash allowance of Rs. 5,000 for a period of four months. For those families whose house was partially or fully destroyed, the government provided housing assistance through two schemes. People who were living in the buffer zone<sup>11</sup> were provided with a newly

---

11 The government imposed a 100-meter buffer zone on the south coast of Sri Lanka where construction and reconstruction of houses was banned.

constructed house through donor-driven reconstruction schemes. Those who lived outside the buffer zone received monetary compensation, Rs.250,000 for rebuilding a fully damaged house and Rs. 100,000 for repairing a partially destroyed house, through the owner-driven schemes. As the construction of permanent houses took some time, the displaced people moved to transitional shelters. In these shelters, women faced similar problems as in the camps, because the living conditions were similar. The families stayed in temporary shelters up to 18 months until their permanent houses were erected.

#### **8.2.4 Households in the Aftermath of the Tsunami**

The Tsunami changed the composition of households, men lost their wives, women lost their husbands and children lost one or both parents. This changed the capabilities of individuals and households to deal with the new situation. The capacities to secure a livelihood, for example, were reduced in many ways. Gender makes a difference in the aftermath of the Tsunami. Sri Lankan men and women, as shown in the previous chapters, have different vulnerabilities. Thus the capacities widows and widowers have, the strategies they employ to cope with the disaster and the problems they face, are also different.

##### **8.2.4.1 Female Headed Households – Widowhood**

In the aftermath of the Tsunami, the societal status of women who lost their husband changed due to becoming widows. They have to perform dual roles now, the productive and the reproductive role. Widows and their families are facing altered personal living conditions. This chapter shall explain how these living conditions changed their lives. The issues that are of special concern for them, the emotional coping, security issues, resettlement, and especially the livelihood situation will be described. Also the family situation and the topic of remarriage will be discussed.

###### ***8.2.4.1.1 Coping Emotionally***

After the death of her husband, a widow not only has to cope with the pain of losing her partner, but also has to undergo a change in lifestyle and position in the society. Even though widowhood in the Sinhalese society is not connected with discriminatory rituals, such as shaving the hair like in India, widows in Sri Lanka are nevertheless stigmatized. During the mourning period of three months, she is perceived as being polluting, *killi* and therefore she is not supposed to visit shrines. As a widow she is considered

unfortunate and inauspicious and therefore she “cannot participate in any rituals or ceremonies like weddings, puberty rituals, New Year celebrations or in any form of entertainment.” (Bulankulame 2005, p. 49) These traditions hinder widows in their capacities to cope emotionally with the loss and trauma. Most of the interviewed women reported some kind of post-traumatic stress disorder. Danoja reports health problems, which she only got after the Tsunami.

*“Those days I never felt ill. But after Tsunami I have a heart problem. The valves of my heart don’t function properly. I have gastritis. I have a problem in my nervous system. Sometimes my hands become benumbed. I have difficulty in using my hands at such times.” (Danoja 18.1/59-62)*

All interviewed widows reported that they feel sadness, but either family members or friends help them to overcome it by talking to them and consoling them.

Pushpa reported that, as a midwife, she participated in a training in order to provide counseling to others. This also helped her in coping with her own emotional situation. Menaka also recounted that she participated in counseling sessions that were held by Sarvodaya in cooperation with the Divisional Secretariat. Also keeping themselves busy helps them in overcoming the trauma and loss. Sandamali narrated that she went in search for orphaned children whose whereabouts she reported to the responsible government agencies. Also Pushpa indicated that her work as a teacher in a Montessori<sup>12</sup> helps her reducing the pain.

*“G: How were you able to adjust to the circumstances? P: My mother and father consoled me. My mother-in-law helped me a lot. I started a Montessori class to keep myself busy. I make efforts to thin the mental agony. Somehow I will make my child a good child.” (Pushpa 13.1/115-118)*

#### **8.2.4.1.2 Security**

In a woman’s life it is first a father’s and brother’s duty to provide her with security and, after getting married, it is the husband who has to protect her. “Marriage may mean several things to men and women in the public domain: security, power and authority.” (Bulankulame 2005, p. 61) As already mentioned, honor is an important issue especially for women, as they are the ones in the family responsible for preserving it. With the death of her husband, she loses the status of being a married woman, which means she always is at risk of losing the respect of the community. As a widow she is subjected to certain restrictions and a code of conduct. The sexuality of the widow is an area of special concern for the society and she lacks the husband to control it. “This ‘stigma’ is

---

<sup>12</sup> Montessori is the Sri Lankan term for a kindergarten.

directly concerned with the woman's "abounded sexuality" unprotected now by the absence of her husband, which in turn has become a concern within that particular context." (Bulankulame 2005, p. 49) In the eyes of males the widows are now unprotected and single, which seems to make them sexually accessible for them. Especially the knowledge that these women had previous sexual experience lets some men believe that they are more available for sexual activities compared to unmarried girls, who need to protect their virginity. This can lead to harassment of widows, which can take on many forms. Men and women often have differing views of what to consider a harassment. In male perceptions, acts of sexual harassment must include physical contact and therefore they do not include derogatory comments or gestures. Gossip is Another way of harassing widows, which is not only done by men but equally by other women. The behavior of widows is watched by other members of the community and commented about. This verbal harassment is taken seriously as it means humiliation and loss of self esteem for the women. "Gossip and the more formal written versions of it pasted at central public places in the village are aimed at instilling shame or *lejja* and a sense of fear to uphold what is perceived as morality and honour." (Bulankulame 2005, p. 58) Kinship ties are essential in ensuring security for the widows. In all cases of this study the widows have asked members of the extended family to move in with them to provide them with protection. The relationships with the immediate neighbors are also important as they can also serve as a source of security and support.

*"G: What do you think about your security? P: There are no problems. The neighbors are good, I have no fear as my father is with me." (Pushpa, 13.1/109-111)*

For Sandamali it is sufficient that her old mother moves in with her to give her protection. Her mother, an old lady, is out of the reproductive age group and therefore she is no longer in need of protection but rather can give protection to her daughter. In some instances this form of coping with insecurity has negative effects, as it increases the dependency on other family members and makes them vulnerable to intra-family exploitation and harassment.

#### **8.2.4.1.3 Family Situation and Remarriage**

In Sri Lanka it is not common for widows and divorcees to remarry. To remarry is a complicated issue for a widow and even to talk about it is difficult. During the second interview with Menaka, one of her sons was present. Before asking Menaka about remarriage G. sent her son out of the room under the pretext of getting him a glass of

water. There are several reasons for the complication and stigmatization of remarriage. First of all, as a widow a woman is considered unfortunate and sometimes even held morally responsible for the death of her husband. Another reason is linked with aspects of sexuality. The ideal of a bride and a future wife, as already described earlier, is that of a virgin, who only after getting married should experience sexual gratification. Statistics indicate that widowers rather marry a spinster than a widow or a divorcee. A third reason is the stigmatization of remarriage, as the ideal of a woman who lost her husband is that of a chaste widow who refrains from any sexual activity. To remarry would be a sign of giving in to lust, which has a negative connotation in Sri Lankan terms and therefore has to be suppressed. Furthermore, it is considered inappropriate for a woman to marry a man younger than her. Ideally, a man should be 4-5 years older than his wife, which restricts widows in their choice of a possible partner. The loyalty to her dead husband is another reason for a widow not to remarry. "Memory places a great emphasis in keeping loyalty alive. Religious ceremonies also play a large public role in reminding people of her commitment to her dead husband." (Bulankulame 2005, p.66) The concern about her children is the most significant reason for a widow not to remarry. She fears that her children will receive step-fatherly treatment from her new husband. Especially the security of daughters in case of remarriage is sometimes a matter of concern for mothers. Another issue regarding children is that they might feel ashamed of the fact that their mother considers remarriage. They might even become the subject of gossip especially from their peer group. "It applies to children in the same context. For them, it might be worse as they have to face peer pressure and also get ridiculed from young adults in school and elsewhere. The children are also aware at this point that their mother has sexual needs. This alone is a cause for embarrassment. The fact that the mother has even entertained thoughts of re-marriage to another than their father under the 'pretext' of gaining economic and social security is quite disheartening in the local cultural context." (Bulankulame 2005, p.72) This often leads widows to put the wishes of their children above their own and makes them refrain from considering remarriage. The widows try their utmost to keep up the integrity of their families and ensure a good future for their children. "Although the widows face issues related to poverty and poor access to services due to marginalization, the families remain intact and the children are able to make role adjustments for the better functioning of the family." (SHRDC 2006, p.46) In the case of an adolescent daughter, the need to arrange

a good marriage for her, and especially to provide her with a dowry, puts extra pressure on the widow.

*“A dowry is essential for a proposed marriage. Even if it is a love marriage, problems arise when children are born but a boy can be employed and he is no burden at all. G: Any other problems? M: The husband’s character must be good. Both parties will be united if there is a dowry.” (Menaka 2.2/335-340)*

#### **8.2.4.1.4 Rehousing**

Rehousing after the Tsunami involved two major problems. One problem is that neighborhood networks got disrupted due to the massive death toll of the Tsunami and due to resettlement, as villages often were not resettled as a whole. Neighbors who have lost their houses have been provided houses in different areas. Others, whose house was only partially destroyed, were assisted in reconstruction and so stayed at the old place.

*“G: Any changes in village after Tsunami C: Some people have left the village. The well wishers have all gone. Now I feel lonely. Only one or two very friendly families remain here. All the others have gone. We feel lonely. Our old house was close to the sea.” (Disaster affected woman 1.1/231-234)*

“Most importantly, the beneficiaries have no real input in the actual selection or determination of the resettlement site options at the outset. As such, the Tsunami-affected beneficiaries remain largely on the receiving end of the decision-making process, without input or even awareness of the process.” (DRMU 2006, p.6)

The second problem was that many families were rehoused farther away from the place where they used to live. This creates difficulties for these families, especially for children. It either disrupts their school career when they have to shift to a new school that is closer to their new home, or it disrupts the daily routine of their mothers, especially that of widows. It is regarded a mother’s duty to bring the children to school and pick them up afterwards. This is very time consuming, especially when the school is far from home, as public transport facilities are often rare. The time that is wasted by traveling to and from school could be used for income generating activities instead. This aggravates the situation especially for widows, as they have less time left. In Sandamali’s case, although being provided a new well built house, she opted to stay in her poorly repaired and scantily furnished old. The new house is located far away from the main road and public transport facilities are rare. Therefore, the children find it very difficult to travel daily to and from school from. So she intends to stay in her old house till the children have finished schooling.

#### **8.2.4.1.5 Livelihoods**

In most cases, the main concern of the widows is the absence of the main income provider. Only Danoja is permanently employed and works as a midwife. She resumed work already a few weeks after the Tsunami. Danoja's husband had a rice wholesale business, for which she has to pay outstanding bills. With her income of Rs. 8000 she can manage, although the expenses for her children's education and repayment of her husband's debts pose some difficulties for her. Pushpa has started a nursery group, together with a friend of her, in the nearby temple. This was possible as the pre-school sector is poorly regulated in Sri Lanka. Almost anyone can open a preschool and does not even need to show relevant qualifications or experience. Before starting their school career, 60% of all Sri Lankan children (The World Bank 2005, p.8) go to a kindergarten at the age between 3-5 years. Most nurseries are private and not government sponsored, which means that the parents have to pay the fees themselves. Supposedly, the income of the parents who send their children to a pre-school such as Pushpa's is little, the income Pushpa can earn therefore is also little. Fortunately, Pushpa's friend does not charge anything for helping her with supervising the children and therefore the income of Rs.1500 belongs solely to Pushpa. Additionally, she grows vegetables in her home garden that she sells at the market. The two income generating activities provide Pushpa with a moderate income.

*"G: How do you earn an income now? P: I teach in a Montessori, that I started recently with a friend. Classes are conducted at the temple. We earn an additional income by selling vegetables produced in the home garden. My mother helps by looking after the child when I work." (Pushpa, 13.1/95-98)*

Both women, Danuja and Pushpa, have in common that they have completed their GCE A/L, with Danoja in the science stream and Pushpa in the arts stream. Contrary to Danoja, Pushpa did not follow any vocational training after completing her GCE A/L exams, which leaves her with less remunerative income earning options. Many of the widowed women, previously to the Tsunami, were not engaged in wage earning activities but in home-based self-employment activities. These women now struggle to secure a livelihood for themselves and their children. As already mentioned, they lack the qualifications and experiences that are required by the private sector in order to engage in remunerative jobs. Therefore, they have to opt for low-income earning activities that can be undertaken by semi-skilled or unqualified workers. These consequences of the gender disparities in the education sector and the job market which

impact on the lives of these widowed women. Another problem lies in the fact that there is a lack of daycare centers. Therefore, single parents who lack family support structures can not take up formal full time employment. Furthermore, the social rules and restrictions that widows are subjected to are an important aspect that constrain them in taking up a livelihood. Especially widows have to comply with those behavioral norms such as not being out, on the streets after dusk, which is around 7pm. Even women in higher positions try to stick to such behavior in order to protect their reputation and ensure their security. A senior employee of a local NGO, who is single and lives on her own in a rented house, said in an interview that she avoids going out of the house after 6pm. Also, doing physical labor in public can be demeaning for women and is connected with losing respect and status. In order to prevent losing the good reputation in the village, which is essential for securing networks of support, women avoid working in these areas. “Hard work, particularly physical labor, carries significant stigma in the village; light skin, clean white clothing, and a sweatless brow indicate leisure, high status, or at the very least a respectable office job out of the burning sun.” (Gamburd 2002, p.178) This leaves many women, and especially widows, with not much other option than to engage in activities related to the cottage industry. Menaka engages in coir work, which she already did before the Tsunami. She seems to be not a regular member of any society such as Siyath, which assists with income generating activities that are related to coir work. She says that she joined Siyath recently but got a bundle of coir only once. She attended meetings twice on Sundays at the Siyath Foundation, where she handed over the coir ropes she had spun. The bundle she received from Siyath has been used up and has not received more since then.

*“Q: After Tsunami ? A: I joined Siyath. They provided one ketiya<sup>13</sup> of coir Q: What is the weight of a ketiya? A: Thirty one kg. What I received was used up. Now I don’t have coir fiber to continue work. Q: Did any one object when you wanted to join Siyath organization ? A: That Thilaka raised objections. She lives behind our house. She does not believe in associating with others. Q: Why did she dislike you? A: It is only her nature. Now that problem is solved.” (Menaka, 2.2/228-237)*

Another problem she faces is the monsoon. Coir work can be only undertaken when it is not raining, as it needs to stay dry.

*“When it rains, it is difficult to produce coir strings. But I can’t stay at home. I have to visit offices.” (Menaka, 2.1/67-68)*

---

13 Ketiya is a bundle of coir.



The problem Menaka mentions concerns many women who have to go to diverse offices to claim relief and rehabilitation several times. This is very time consuming and therefore they have less time to engage in income generating activities. Menaka gets additional financial help from her mother, who receives a pension after her husband's death.

Sandamali, whose family was rather affluent previous to the Tsunami has to adjust to a completely new situation. She was working in a garment factory before her marriage, but stopped afterwards and did not engage in any income generating activities since then. After the Tsunami, she started packing tea and spices for sale in retail shops.

*“G: How do you earn an income? S: Recently I started making tea packets. I bring tea dust from a factory in Baddegama. I pack them and provide them to the retail shops in the neighborhood. I have also started packing chili powder for sale. It was started very recently. G: Who helps you in this work? S: My children help me”*  
(Sandamali, 8.1/192-198)

Additionally to packing and selling tea and spices she has opened a small retail shop. She is getting financial support from her sister and brother, as the income she earns is not sufficient. The study undertaken by the Social and Human Resource Development Consultants describe similar findings. “With the exception of four women whose employment was based on their educational qualifications, others were employed in jobs that required very little training or education. Most of them who were doing petty trades had experience but not formal training. These trades hardly fetch a survival income.” (SHRDC 2006, p.36) Due to causes that are structural in nature, none of the widows except Danoja manage to earn enough income in order to sustain themselves and their families. Somehow they all need financial support from relatives or friends.

#### **8.2.4.2 Male-Headed Households - Widowerhood**

In the aftermath of the Tsunami, the personal living conditions of the widowers have changed, even though the social status of men who have lost their wives has not altered, to a certain extent, they have to perform both roles, the productive and the reproductive role. This chapter shall explain how widowers manage their lives and show the issues that are of special concern for them. The emotional coping, reproductive activities, the livelihood options, their family situation as well as the topic of remarriage will be treated.

#### **8.2.4.2.1 Coping emotionally**

In terms of psycho-social coping men are restrained by traditional perceptions of masculinity and male behavior in distress. Men are conditioned to be tough, brave and not to show their emotions to others, especially not to persons who do not belong to the family. The widowers are torn between the expectations of others towards their behavior and their own emotions. Even seventeen months after the Tsunami the widowers in the study still show severe signs of distress and have difficulties in coping with their emotions. They report that they feel an exceeding sadness about the loss of their wives and some say that life is only a burden for them. All widowers recount that they still see their wife in their dreams. While women know about counseling sessions, and some have even participated in such sessions, men object that anything or anybody could help them overcome the trauma and loss. They rather try to deal with it on their own. After the Tsunami, alcohol consumption by men increased drastically and was one of the factors that contributed to gender based violence. (Ariyabandu 2006, pp.767-768; Militzer 2008, pp.51-53) This tendency was especially apparent in camps in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami, which can be attributed to various causes. "Men from a number of camps admitted to increasing their alcohol consumption; this increase occurred because of trauma and stress resulting from the disaster, having access to cash through various relief schemes (a weekly Rs.200 per head and a livelihood support allowance Rs.5,000 [approximately Rs.100=US \$1 and a simple meal costs Rs.25 per person] per family, which was distributed four times after the Tsunami through the government relief scheme), and the fact that most men were idle without work." (Ariyabandu 2006, p.767) Ruwan, previous to the Tsunami, was what can be called a social drinker. Only after the Tsunami he became an alcoholic, he hardly eats anything but drinks liquor even during the day. His daughters are very concerned as he looks haggard, is restless and shows suicidal tendencies. He said that he wants to retreat to a forest and live in a cave or commit suicide. The daughters therefore fear that, after losing their mother and cousin, they will also lose their father. Ruwan says that for him the only reason to live on are his children.

*"G: How were you able to achieve consolation R: I thought of my children. They were afraid that I would die. So I deliberately developed mental strength. I wanted to look after the children and to do that I had to live." (Ruwan 12.1/345-348)*

Also for Saman his children are important to cope with the loss of his wife. Saman, previous to the Tsunami, had few social contacts and after work he rather stayed at

home with his wife and children than going out with friends. Now, after the death of his wife, he often goes to the beach, sits there alone and thinks about his fate.

*“G-With whom can you discuss your worries for consolation? With whom can you discuss your worries? S-No one. Now when my children go to school, I feel very lonely. So I go to the beach, sit there all alone and ponder on my thoughts.” (Saman 11.2/202-205)*

He feels that his problems are overburdening him and that he has no one to talk about it. The only solution for him is to sometimes talk about it with his children.

*“G: Who is there to help you, if there is a problem? S: You can’t solve my problems and I cannot solve your problems. I cannot make up my mind. What I have gone through is horrible. Now I think this way. I have 100 problems. When I solve one of them, two new problems emerge. So the problems cannot be solved. They keep on increasing. Some times when I have problems, I discuss with my children.” (Saman 11.2/215-220)*

On the one hand this adds extra burden to the already difficult emotional situation of the children. They might feel overburdened, as they have to cope themselves with the loss of their mother, and have to adjust to the new family situation. There is a danger that this might negatively influence the development of the children. “The experience of the Tsunami paused [sic!] challenges to their normal developmental tasks by adding extra burdens to cope with. The study revealed that amidst many changes within family and many demands, most children had to make crucial choices like adolescent girls and boys regarding their future. The structural changes within family also forced them to play unfamiliar roles.” (SHRDC 2006, p.46) On the other hand, by discussing his problems with his children the widower might increase the cohesion between family members and enhance mutual understanding. “Similarly, as units of families, they have also not been able to discuss the deaths due to fear of becoming sad and hurting each other. However the fact remains that each one on its own suffers internally from the losses. If the family had such a mechanism to discuss these issues, it would certainly have contributed to get closer to each other and understand one another better.” (SHRDC 2006, p.68)

#### **8.2.4.2.2 Reproductive Activities**

Widowers are now struggling with taking over the reproductive activities that, previous to the Tsunami, their wives were in charge of. Earlier only few men assisted their wives in household chores but now they are forced to change their behavior. The widowers indicate that they feel the burden of performing the dual roles of mother and father to their children and they are unsure of how to cope with it.

*“I have to bear the burden of being a mother and a father to them. I accepted the two roles.” (Ruwan 12.1/348-349)*

*“S: Yes. I have to do now what my wife did earlier. It is both a satisfaction and a problem. I have added work to do.” (Saman 11.2/291-293)*

“The immediate dilemma for widowers was how they could meet the needs of children. External support is one such coping strategy they adopted and among external supports, remarriage happens to be one of the options that the men have taken to meet day-to-day demands.” (SHRDC 2006, p.58) So even if they have duties that they did not perform earlier, like bringing the children to school or washing their clothes it is in many cases finally a female relative who steps in and takes over the biggest part of the household chores. „Failing the wife/mother, the reproductive tasks fall upon other females – such as daughter, other female relatives or even a domestic aide (who in a majority of cases would be a female)” (Wijayatilake 2001, p.84) In Ruwan’s family it was first his daughter in-law who took over looking after the household and taking care of her younger sisters in law. Her relationship to her father in law was already previously rather strained as he considered her as being presumptuous, but having no manners. It worsened after the Tsunami, and so she decided to move back to her own father’s house together with her baby and her husband. Thereafter the second eldest daughter of Ruwan moved back into her father’s house together with her husband. She left behind her house of wattle and daub and started to look after her father’s household and her two younger sisters.

*“G: Who did the washing? R: When my wife was living she did that. But now every one has to wash their own clothes G: How is the cooking done at present? R: Now the elder sister is training the two younger daughters to cook. Earlier their mother was petting them. When their mother was alive the daughters on their return from school used to say that they were tired and went to bed or else they would go for a bath. After the loss of their mother, the second daughter is taking care of the two younger sisters. Now the elder sister is making them to go near the hearth.” (Ruwan 12.1/ 71-79)*

In this case, her father returns the favor by assisting his daughter and her husband in erecting a well constructed house of their own. He even signed over his property to his son-in-law in order to help him getting a loan from the bank. Such cases are rather the exception than the rule: Normally, the assistance given to those widowers by female relatives is altruistic and unpaid. “Within the post-Tsunami scenario, the women who are helping the family of widowers tend to get exploited and overworked as they either now have to work extra while they also look after the needs of their own families which is rather exhaustive. In some situations, a responsibility is forced on them as unpaid

work for which they have not been prepared.” (SHRDC 2006, p.73) In Saman’s case, although he is complaining about his increased work load, it is mainly his mother who has taken over the care for his children. Saman has got a house that was built on his father’s land beside his parent’s home, which makes it easier for the mother to assist her son with the household chores and look after her grandchildren. Poshita lives with his children in his parents-in-law’s house, where the children are taken care of by their grandparents.

In a situation where there are sick people who have to be cared for it is almost never a male who takes over the chore. Even if there are unemployed men in the family who could step in to take over these tasks, it is a female who has to actually do it. “Secondly, while it is expected of women to care and nurture the old and sick, a husband only steps in at times of acute need, e.g. finding transport for the sick at night.” (Risseuw 1988, p. 270) One special case that highlights this issues is Nisansala. Nisansala is a girl of 16 years, who has lost her mother in the aftermath of the Tsunami. Before the Tsunami Nisansala, her parents and her two elder brothers were living together in their own house. Her father is paralyzed since a few years and her mother used to care for him. Her brother Danushka is a few years older than her. He studied up to O/L and then, about five years ago he gave up schooling and started working as a carpenter. Their father stopped working after having a stroke and becoming paralysed which was three years before the Tsunami. So Danushka was the sole income earner of the family. Nisansala used to go to school and helped her mother with the household afterwards, but she still had enough time to go to tuition classes and meet her friends. Her mother took care of the father, attended to the household and was a member of Samurdhi Society. Danushka decided over household expenses. The family does not have any relatives in the village but some are in Colombo and some live in Anuradhapura. There is only one “auntie”, a distant relative of their father, living in a village near Hikkaduwa. The relationship with the neighbours was friendly but not very close. Earlier Danushka had time to spend with his friends after work but now they have shifted to other places. The Tsunami destroyed the house of the family and the mother lost her life in the aftermath due to an infected wound. Therefore they stayed with the auntie for 2-3 months and were looked after. During that period their aunt from Colombo, who is working in Ceylon Bank in Colombo gave them money. Because the house was quite small, they moved in with their aunt, their father’s sister, in Colombo

2-3 months. During their stay in Colombo, the second brother took care of their father as Danushka was not there. Meanwhile Danushka stayed in Dodanduwa at a friend's place to organize and supervise the construction of the new house. They got a new house from the Samaritans Austria, who got to know about the family situation. Now Nisansala, Danushka, the other brother and their father are living there. Danushka is again doing carpentry work behind the house. Nisansala's other brother is on and off working as a fisherman and he gives money to his brother when asked. Danushka decides over the household budget, which seems to be just sufficient at the moment. Their aunt from Colombo has told Nisansala to stop schooling in order to take care of the father and the household. Nisansala is responsible for washing clothes, cooking and cleaning the house as well as looking after her father. It is Nisansala who does now all the reproductive activities even though she is only 16 years old. Her second elder brother had already left school and was without employment most of the time. Rather than asking him to take over the household chores and the care for their father, they asked Nisansala to quit school. "Unmarried female children in their adolescent age sometimes are forced to give-up either education or employment to look after siblings and attend to household chores without any offered choices." (SHRDC 2006, p.74) The aunt promised Nisansala to provide her with a job most probably in the garment industry as soon as she is an adult. The only friend Nisansala has is a younger girl from the neighborhood with whom she can talk and discuss her worries. Nisansala has about 2-3 hours a day when she is free and can watch TV, which is her favourite hobby. The problem that Nisansala has is that her friend is going to tuition classes and therefore does not have much time for her. So when Nisansala wants to meet her she has to go to her place. Nisansala is a rather quiet girl, who does not show her worries and feelings. Another aspect of the reproductive activities, namely the rearing of girls, in particular adolescent girls, is a special concern for widowers. The mother plays a vital role in the life of an adolescent girl, especially in the time period when a Sinhalese girl is coming of age. "Leading her daughter through these activities, the mother educates, informs and instructs a female child of the natural consequences of being female. The ritual provides the mother with an avenue to educate her daughter highlighting important factors, and cultural expectations of behaviors." (Silva 2002, p.100) The father and other males in the family are normally only secondary in her socialization. In the case of the absence of the mother, there is generally a void, that the father often is not able to fill due to lack

of experience and cultural restrictions. Saman voices such a concern regarding his daughter:

*“G-How do you pay attention to your daughter? S-That is a problem. She cannot tell her problems to me and I cannot tell my problems to her.” (Saman, 11.2/308-310)*

*“G-Soon she will be a young lady? S-Yes. That is my worry. She needs female company.” (Saman 11.2/425-426)*

Also Ruwan is concerned about the future of his two adolescent daughters, whom he feels he needs to protect.

*“My two daughters are young women, not small children. This is my main concern. If I can see that their needs are properly fulfilled I can achieve the highest level of happiness. Boys can look after themselves. They can live freely, and that would not worry me.” (Ruwan 12.1/221-224)*

“The majority of the widowers expressed concern about the protection of girls as they felt that it is a priority concern as a father, yet, due to cultural restrictions with regard to showing affection and care to grown-up daughters, they felt helpless and had to seek the support of others such as mothers, aunts, women from extended families or even neighbours.” (SHRDC 2006, p.40)

#### **8.2.4.2.3 Family Relations and Remarriage**

As shown in the previous chapter, the widowers struggle with their reproductive roles even when being supported by female members of the kinship. This has a negative effect on the children and the cohesion of the family. “The consequence of this inability results in children having to leave the family and live with the extended families especially where the widowed men have not married a second time, or the whole family is forced to live with a host family. The only major care giving responsibility that fathers had taken than prior to the Tsunami, were to take children to school, wash clothes etc. In some cases, fathers have got closer to children while in some other situations they have moved even further away than before.” (SHRDC 2006, p.7)

The concern over the children, especially the daughters and their difficulties with taking over the reproductive role are two of the major reasons that lead many widowers to consider remarriage. Widowerhood is not associated with a stigma in Sri Lanka, which makes it is easier for a man to remarry than for a woman. Widowers are not subjected to special cultural practices that are associated with loss of the spouse, such as a special period of mourning. Another reason why it is easier for Sri Lankan men to remarry is that they are not as restricted in their choice of a suitable spouse as women. Widowers

can marry unmarried females who are even far younger than them. For a widow, due to cultural perceptions, it is difficult to find a younger spouse and if a younger man would agree to marry her she would be heavily criticized by the community. Men can also be the subject of gossip in case they are suspected to be engaged in an extramarital affair. Nevertheless, this does not threaten their status or reputation. In case that a relationship is not approved by society, it is the woman who is blamed for undue behavior. The widower will be encouraged to remarry, as in the community he might be pitied for having to care for himself and his children all alone. As indicated above, it is difficult for men to take over roles performed previously by their wives. Especially in the case that there are young children or adolescent girls, a widower might feel the need to remarry. "In Galle, the female children record higher among the re-married families. The feeling of the widowers has been that since the children are below 5 years or between 11-15 years the presence of a mother is required especially considering the needs of female children attaining puberty." (SHRDC 2006, p.68) Poshita indicates that his parents in law want him to get married to one of his unmarried sisters in law. He refuses it and that causes tensions in the family. It is a relatively common trend in South Asia for a man to marry one of his sisters in law in case his wife dies. This is thought to strengthen family ties and increase the acceptance of the new wife by the children. In Saman's case, his younger brother pressures him to get married soon as he indicates that he waits with getting married until Saman has found a new wife.

*"G-Is your younger brother married? S-No. He says that till I remarry he would not marry. That is also a worry for me." (Saman 11.2/428-429)*

This puts considerable pressure on him to reconcile his wishes with the different expectations on him.

#### **8.2.4.2.4 Livelihoods**

Even though the situation of widowers is not as severe as the situation of widows they also struggle with reconciling the productive and reproductive role that they have to play. "Particularly those who were in the fishing industry complained that either they are not able to earn as much as before or that they are not able to work as fishermen due to their new family situation. The time consuming nature of this industry is not practical to balance between caring and providing roles." (SHRDC 2006, p.32) During the period in which the research was undertaken, the fishermen could not go fishing as it was off season and the sea was too rough for venturing out into the sea with small boats. This leaves Saman as well as Poshita without a stable income during that season. Therefore,



Saman earns an income by collecting and selling shells and by cleaning boats, for which he earns Rs. 1500 per boat. Both these jobs do not provide him with a sufficient income and are not available on a regular basis. Therefore, Saman wants to find a regular job that is close by his home. Until then he continues working as a fisherman during the season and does odd jobs during the off season. Also Poshita is currently without a regular job but indicates that he is willing to do any kind of odd job to provide an income for him and his children. He mentions that he would even clean latrines if he would have no other way of earning an income. To consider taking up such a job shows a considerable amount of adaptive capacity or frustration considering the fact that physical labor and especially labor that is associated with dirt and impurity carries significant stigma and is connected with loss of status. “With regard to going back to their previously held jobs, the majority of widowers have been able to return to their former jobs. However a significant number have ended up taking jobs even lower than what they had before such as from contractor status to labourer[sic!]. Psychosocially, this could be stated as positive, particularly making the adjustment between what their demands are and what is available.” (SHRDC 2006, p.59) Currently Poshita is living together with his children in his parents-in-law’s house, so no extra costs for accommodation arise. His children are provided food by the grandparents, so he only has to buy food for himself and spend money on his children’s clothing and education. To assist him with the education for the daughters he receives Rs. 2,000 every four months, supposedly from an NGO.

Ruwan was able to get back to the fish business although he has lost a considerable number of assets and therefore could not recover fully.

*“G: What were your assets lost due to Tsunami? R: My trade centre was destroyed. I also lost three motor cycles, boats and 3 new engines. When I went to Colombo there were Rs 14,000 in my shop. The loss amounts for around Rs. 800,000.” (Ruwan 12.1/267-269)*

His wife had savings in a bank account which he and his children inherited and so he used his share of Rs. 50,000 to restart his business. He also was able to obtain a loan of Rs. 50,000 from Pragdhana Bank for a very low interest rate in order to buy a van. Later on he received another two times a loan at a higher interest rate of total amount of Rs. 150,000. This helped Ruwan in improving his fish stall and restart his fish retail business.

Even though the interviewed widowers struggle with going back to their previously held jobs and regaining their economic status held prior to the Tsunami, they nevertheless, manage to ensure a sufficient income to support their families.

## 9 Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study draws upon all four major current approaches to anthropological research of disaster, the archeological/historical, Political Ecology, the sociocultural/behavioral and the applied/practicing approach. This analysis of disaster includes a historical perspective. By applying the Access Model of Wisner et al. (2007) to the events of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 one is able to get a holistic picture of the disaster. The Access Model has a diachronic approach to the study of disaster, as the situation previous to the disaster, the disaster behavior and response and post-disaster cultural change are being analyzed. The description of the experience and the impact of the disaster, triggered by the Tsunami, constitutes a major part. This study shall not only contribute to the body of scientific anthropological disaster theory and research but it foremost understands itself as a piece of applied anthropological disaster research. It provides information on why the Tsunami disaster took place. It also broaches the issue of misuse and overexploitation of the environment. Policy makers and disaster practitioners are assisted in understanding the underlying socio-economic structures and mechanisms. This shall help them in improving their efforts in the areas of disaster mitigation and reduction. The study operates at the micro-level, at the individual and household levels, but it also takes into account complex processes at the local, national and international levels. These approaches to disaster research correspond with the conception of social anthropology as a holistic science.

The description and analysis of the situation of Sinhalese men and women in Sri Lanka previous to the Tsunami explains the creation of vulnerabilities. Gender structures the social system of a society and therefore influences the way affected people experience and cope with a disaster. Even though Sri Lankan men and women were affected by the same natural hazard, a tsunami, the impact on them was different. Unequal relationships between the genders existed previous to the disaster and are a factor in the creation of gendered vulnerability. Importance lies on the effort to see gender not as an exclusive component, but always in the context of and interplay with other categories such as class, age, ethnicity, etc.. They are equally deeply rooted in the society and only together they create structures of domination and unequal social relations which produce different vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities of the affected people in the interplay with the hazard, the Tsunami, induced the disaster. In this study, social,

economic, physical and informational/educational vulnerability could be identified as determining factors for triggering the disaster.

Social vulnerability is a determining type of vulnerability which has a big influence on other types as well. It is indicated, for example, by marginalization, lack of social cohesion and social helplessness. Relations between members of the society, including relations between the genders at different levels of society, the state, community and the household are characterized by inequalities and structures of domination. The socialization process into being a man or a woman in Sri Lanka is a major aspect of the structures of domination. Boys in Sri Lanka are brought up in the spirit of their perceived future role as a provider and protector. Girls are socialized to be submissive, to comply with the concepts of shame and fear and to perform their role as wives and mothers. Even though there is equal participation in schooling by boys and girls, structural problems and fostering of traditional role perceptions in schools interfere with equal educational attainment of girls.

Prevailing socio-economic structures and practices create economic vulnerability, especially of women. The prevailing concept of the man as head of the household and main bread winner in Sri Lanka discriminates against women. Most reproductive activities are ascribed to women, since the role perception changes very slowly. Existing regulations and policies regarding civil law fail to support such changes. They also hinders women in their equal participation in the labor-market. This is one of the reasons why many women, especially those with care-giving responsibilities, are compelled to work in low paid jobs, such as the ones in the cottage industry or in garment factories. Nevertheless, the income that women contribute to the livelihood of their families constitutes a substantial share.

The misuse and overexploitation of natural resources in the coastal areas of Sri Lanka created the environmental vulnerability of the disaster-affected population. The brushwood and mangrove forests were cleared to create building space or start aquaculture businesses. Illegal coral mining, the breaking off of corals from shallow reefs in the sea has led to the destruction of coral reefs. Both mangrove forests and coral reefs constitute an important natural protection against erosion, different forms of

surges and tsunamis. Due to the ongoing destruction, large parts of the Sri Lankan coast-line lack natural protection.

Educational and informational vulnerability was another prevailing problem among Sri Lankan people. In the morning hours of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 the affected people were hit completely unawares by the Tsunami. Neither did they know about this hazard nor was there any warning system in place, which resulted in a high death toll and enormous destruction.

A major part of this study deals with the description of disaster behavior and response by the affected population in the different stages of the Tsunami disaster. The characteristics of the stages of a disaster can vary according to the kind of disaster that happens and the kind of people being affected. Disasters are totalizing events and have diverse effects on different aspects of life of the affected population such as livelihoods, security, housing condition, social relations, and mental state.

Generally, more women than men died in the Tsunami, as existing socio-economic conditions and gender norms reduced the survival chances of women. Men were socialized to be stronger than women and were taught skills that turned out to be life-saving. Many women drowned due to the lack of abilities such as swimming or climbing a tree. In some other instances it was their clothes that hindered them in fleeing. According to the findings of O'Brien and Atchison (1998) and Enarson and Morrow (1998) women showed a great concern with home and family. In the case of the Tsunami, many women, instead of running away, started to protect their houses or closed the doors before leaving the house. This resulted in women getting caught by the waves and drowning.

Becoming a widow does not only mean having to cope with emotions after losing the spouse, but it also means having to undergo changes of status and lifestyle. Some economic factors and cultural practices tend to make female-headed households even more vulnerable in the aftermath of a disaster, which is also the case in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Tsunami. It is important, as Finlay (1998) and Enarson and Morrow (1998c) postulate, not only to point out the vulnerabilities but to also show the capacities and potentials widows have to cope with the disaster. In order to support

them, the various strategies widows employ have to be recognized and they have to be assisted in applying them. A widow in Sri Lanka is considered unprotected, and her sexuality is an area of concern for the society. In order to ensure the respect and support of the community, a widow has to follow a special code of conduct and is subjected to certain restrictions. Being respected by the community, in turn, gives her protection and security. Another strategy of widows to secure protection and security for them and their children is to activate their kinship networks as they ask relatives to move in with them. This is especially important in cases where widows are relocated to new surroundings, where they lack their previous neighborhood support networks. Widows have to take over the role as provider and show enormous strength in reconciling productive and reproductive responsibilities. This is a demanding task and widows face difficulties in securing a livelihood. The structures of the society are not supportive for them in taking over the role as economic provider. For most widows remarriage is not an option to solve problems of income generation and security. This can be ascribed to cultural restrictions and concerns over children and family bonds.

The assumption made by Fordham and Ketteridge (1998) that men show different emotional responses to disaster events compared to those of women could be substantiated in this study. In the Sri Lankan context, widowers have difficulties in coping emotionally with losing family members. Their socialization and existing norms of how a “typical” Sinhalese man should behave, such as not showing any emotions, is not supportive in coping with loss. To get over the emotional trauma, some men engage in heavy drinking. The inability to cope with their feelings interferes even with their altered living conditions. In many cases men feel overburdened with their new caregiving responsibilities. Especially care for their daughters poses a problem, as they feel unable to assist them in the transition process from being a child into becoming an adolescent woman. Widowers have to take over household chores which formerly were done by their wives. Many of them do not have the competences needed to perform the reproductive role and therefore need assistance from female relatives. Even though they struggle with regaining the economic status held previously to the Tsunami, since they also face difficulties in reconciling the productive and reproductive roles, their role as economic providers was not severely affected, as they manage to ensure sufficient income to support their families. One form of coping men opt for is remarriage. This

eases their feelings of loss and solve some of the difficulties they have with doing household chores.

Even though there are differences in how men and women are affected by the Tsunami, they are not exclusive categories. The disaster disrupted family structures and left women and men without their respective spouse. Both widows and widowers now struggle with their new personal living conditions, especially with being a single parent. Widows as well as widowers show enormous resilience and coping capacities by trying to adapt to their altered living conditions. Both groups, even though in different forms, for support largely draw on social networks in the relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation process. Disaster response efforts have to take into account social, economic and political structures and gender differences. The new challenges widows and widowers have to face nevertheless do not always require two completely different responses. A further study is needed in order to find appropriate measures to reduce vulnerability and mitigate future disasters. Such preventive strategies have to be implemented at the individual, group or community and state level. Wisner et al. (2007), in their seven-part risk reduction strategy, name the communication of the understanding of vulnerability and the analysis of vulnerability as their first two objectives. Based on these first two strategies, further measures can be taken. The following recommendations for further steps refer to the risk reduction strategy but are only aspects of such measures:

One of the risk reduction objectives, the fifth objective, deals with the improvement of livelihoods. (Wisner et al. 2007, pp.351-353) In order to enable women, and widows in particular, to secure their livelihoods, vocational training programs and income generation projects should be started. It is important that these programs do not only follow traditional gender roles. Also widowers with care-giving responsibilities who previously were fishermen should be offered vocational training. For fishermen it is especially difficult to reconcile work with care for young children, they need to find alternative ways to earn a living. By establishing state-sponsored after-school childcare centers, single parents could be supported in their care-giving responsibilities. This would ensure that children are supervised while their mothers or fathers are out for work, as not all single parents have a functioning family or neighborhood network that could assist them in this.

The sixth risk-reduction objective focuses on integrating the reduction of risk into disaster recovery. (Wisner et al. 2007. pp. 353- 366) Resettlement requires special attention, as consideration should be given to the location where single parents are given new houses. The provision of functioning infrastructure for new residential areas should be given priority. It is equally important to make sure that families are relocated in areas where they are living close to relatives or former neighbors. This assists widows and widowers in maintaining their family and neighborhood network, in order to be able to draw on them for security and assistance. Many widowers struggle especially with their new reproductive responsibilities. Therefore, there is a need for a counseling service in order to enable them to cope with it. Community centers should be established, which could house after-school child care centers, counseling facilities, libraries and common rooms for village associations. The different village societies are stakeholders that should lead the planning and construction process in order to ensure self-sustainability. Such centers could assist the communities to enhance their resilience and help them in strengthening community ties.



## 10 Bibliography

- Abeyasinghe, R. (2002). *Illicit alcohol*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.
- Alexander, D. (2000). *Confronting Catastrophe: New Perspectives on Natural Disasters*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, M. B., & Woodrow, P. J. (1989). *Rising from the ashes: Development strategies in times of disaster*. Boulder: Westview Press [u.a.].
- Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ariyabandu, M. Malalgoda (2003). Bringing together Disaster and Development -: Concepts and Practice, Some Experience from South Asia. In: P. Sahni & M. M. Ariyabandu (Eds.), *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia* . New Dehli: Prentice Hall of India.
- Ariyabandu, M. Malalgoda (2006). Gender Issues in Recovery from the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: The Case of Sri Lanka. In: *Earthquake Spectra*, 22(3), 759–775.
- Ariyabandu, M. Malalgoda, & Wickramasinghe, M. (2003). *Gender dimensions in disaster management: A guide for South Asia*. Colombo Sri Lanka: ITDG South Asia.
- Bari, F. (1998). Gender, Disaster, and Empowerment: A Case Study from Pakistan. In B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp.125–149). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Bernard, H. R. (Ed.) (1998). *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*. Walnut Creek Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Bernard, H. Russell (2006). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Lanham MD: Altamira Press.
- Blaikie, P. (1994). *At risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability, and disasters*. London New York: Routledge.
- Bolin, R., & Stanford, L. (1999). Constructing Vulnerability in the First World:: The Northridge Earthquake in Southern California, 1994. In: A. Oliver-Smith & S. M. Hoffman (Eds.), *The angry earth: Disaster in anthropological perspective* (pp. 74–88). New York: Routledge.
- Bolin, R., Jackson, M., & Crist, A. (1998). Gender Inequality, Vulnerability, and Disaster: Issues in Theory and Research. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 27–44). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnography*. Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.
- Bulankulame, I. (2005). *Frozen tears: Political violence, women, children, and problems of trauma in southern Sri Lanka*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- Cannon, T. (1994). Vulnerability Analysis and the Explanation of 'Natural' Disasters. In: A. Varley (Ed.), *Disasters, development and environment* (pp.13–30). Chichester: Wiley.

- Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2005). *Annual Report 2004*. Colombo.
- Cox, H. (1998). Women in Bushfire Territory. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 133–142). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Dahdouh-Guebas, F.; Jayatissa, L.; Di Nitto, D.; Bosire, J.; Lo Seen, D. & Koedam, N. (2005). How effective were mangroves as a defence against the recent tsunami? In: *Current Biology*, 15(12), R443-R447, Retrieved July 1, 2009, from [http://www.vub.ac.be/APNA/staff/FDG/pub/Dahdouh-Guebasetal\\_2005b\\_CurrBiol.pdf](http://www.vub.ac.be/APNA/staff/FDG/pub/Dahdouh-Guebasetal_2005b_CurrBiol.pdf).
- de Silva, W. (2002). The Family: Continuity and Change. In: S. Jayaweera (Ed.), *Women in post-independence Sri Lanka* (pp. 211–244). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Department of Census and Statistics (2009). *Statistical Abstract 2008: Table 4.7: Percentage of poor households based on the official poverty line by district*. Retrieved April 11, 2009, from [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract\\_2008\\_PDF/abstract2008/table%202008/Chap%204/AB4-6.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract_2008_PDF/abstract2008/table%202008/Chap%204/AB4-6.pdf).
- Department of Census and Statistics- Sri Lanka (DCS) (2009a). *Statistical Abstract 2008: Table 14.16-Number of undergraduate entrants by university, academic stream and sex, 2004 - 2007*. Retrieved July 20, 2009, from [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract\\_2008\\_PDF/abstract2008/table%202008/Chap%2014/AB14-16-1\\_2.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract_2008_PDF/abstract2008/table%202008/Chap%2014/AB14-16-1_2.pdf).
- Department of Census and Statistics- Sri Lanka (DCS) (2005). *Housing and Non Housing Building Units Damaged by the Tsunami 2004 -Galle District*, Retrieved from <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Tsunami/final/Galle/index.htm>.
- Department of Census and Statistics- Sri Lanka (DCS) (2006). *Annual Report of the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 2004*. Retrieved April 11, 2009, from <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/samplesurvey/annual%20report-20041.pdf>.
- Department of Census and Statistics- Sri Lanka (DCS) (2008). *Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey: Final Report - 2007*.
- Dewalt, K. M., & Dewalt, B. R. (1998). Participant Observation. In H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 259–299). Walnut Creek Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit (DRMU) (2006). *Human Rights Impact of Post Tsunami Policy: Report on Pilot Study in Ampara and Galle District*. Colombo Sri Lanka.
- Dynes, R. R. (1998). Coming to terms with community disaster. In E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question*. London: Routledge.
- Enarson, E. (1998). Through Women's Eyes:: A Gendered Research Agenda for Disaster Social Science. In: *Disasters*, 22(2), 157–173.
- Enarson, E., & Morrow, B. H. (1998). Conclusion: Toward Gendered Disaster Policy, Practice and Research. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 225–231). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Enarson, E., & Morrow, B. H. (1998). Why Gender? Why Women? An Introduction to

- Women and Disaster. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 1–8). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Enarson, E., & Morrow, B. H. (1998). Women Will Rebuild Miami: A Case Study of Feminist Response to Disaster. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 185–199). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Fenstermaker, S. (1995). Doing Difference. *Gender and Society*, 9(1), 8–37. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from [www.jstor.org/stable/189596](http://www.jstor.org/stable/189596).
- Fernando, P., & Vijitha Fernando (Eds.) (1997). *Facing Disasters, Securing Life*. Colombo: ITDG.
- Finlay, C. Christine (1998). "Floods, They're a Damned Nuisance": Women's Flood Experiences in Rural Australia. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp.143–149). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Flood, G. (1976). "Nomadism and its future: the Afar," In: *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia*. Edited by A.M. Hussein, pp.64-66. (African Environmental Special Report 2). London: International African Institute.
- Fordham, M., & Ketteridge, A. Michelle (1998). "Men Must Work and Women Must Weep": Examining Gender Stereotypes in Disasters. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 81–94). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Fothergill, A. (1998). The Neglect of Gender in Disaster Work: An Overview of the Literature. In B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 11–25). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Gamaathige, A., & Abeysinghe, S. (2004). *Status of female employment in the private sector: A case study of Sri Lanka*. Maharagama Sri Lanka: Tharanjee Printers.
- Gamburd, M. Ruth (2002). *Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's migrant housemaids: The kitchen spoon's handle*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.
- Gerson, J. (1985). *The variability and salience of gender: Issues of conceptualization and measurement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC, August.
- Gilbert, C. (1998). Studying disaster: Changes in the main conceptual tools. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 11–18). London: Routledge.
- Goonesekere, S. (2002). Constitutions, Governance and Laws. In: S. Jayaweera (Ed.), *Women in post-independence Sri Lanka* (pp. 41–78). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Goonesekere, S. (2006). *A gender analysis of Tsunami impact: Relief, recovery, and reconstruction in some districts in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi Colombo: UNIFEM; Centre for Women's Research.
- Hauser-Schäublin, B., & Röttger-Rössler, B. (Eds.) (1998). *Differenz und Geschlecht: Neue Ansätze in der ethnologischen Forschung*. Berlin: D. Reimer.
- Hauser-Schäublin, B., & Röttger-Rössler, B. (1998). Differenz und Geschlecht -: Eine

- Einleitung. In: B. Hauser-Schäublin & B. Röttger-Rössler (Eds.), *Ethnologische Paperbacks: . Differenz und Geschlecht. Neue Ansätze in der ethnologischen Forschung*. (pp. 7–22). Berlin: D. Reimer.
- Hewitt, K. (1983). *Interpretations of Calamity*. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- Hewitt, K. (1998). Excluded perspectives in the social construction of disaster. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 75–91). London: Routledge.
- Hoffman, S. M. (1999). The Worst of Times, the Best of Times:: Toward a Model of Cultural Response to Disaster. In: A. Oliver-Smith & S. M. Hoffman (Eds.), *The angry earth: Disaster in anthropological perspective* (pp. 134–155). New York: Routledge.
- International Strategy for Disaster Reduction - ISDR (Updated 31-03-04). *Terminology of disaster risk reduction: Terminology: Basic terms of disaster risk reduction*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/library/lib-terminology-eng%20home.htm>.
- Jayasinghe, K., & Thomas, D. (2009). The preservation of indigenous accounting systems in a subaltern community. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 22(3), (pp.351–378). Retrieved from: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/09513570910945651>.
- Jayaweera, S. (2002). Women in Education and Employment. In: S. Jayaweera (Ed.), *Women in post-independence Sri Lanka* (pp. 99–142). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Jayaweera, S. (Ed.) (2002). *Women in post-independence Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, J. C. (1998). Research Design and Research Strategies. In: H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 131–171). Walnut Creek Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Khondker, H. Haque (1996). Women and Floods in Bangladesh. In: *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 14(3), (pp.281–292).
- Kottegoda, S. (1997). Gender and Disasters: Key Issues. In P. Fernando & Vijitha Fernando (Eds.), *Facing Disasters, Securing Life*: (pp. 7–16). Colombo: ITDG.
- Kottegoda, S. (2004). *Negotiating Household Politics: Women ´s Strategies in Urban Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists Association.
- Kreps, G. A. (1998). Disaster as systemic event and social catalyst. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 31–55). London: Routledge.
- Lavell, A. (1994). Prevention and Mitigation of Disasters in Central America:: Vulnerability to Disasters at the Local Level. In: A. Varley (Ed.), *Disasters, development and environment* (pp. 49–63). Chichester: Wiley.
- Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative Content Analysis [28 paragraphs]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), Art. 20. Retrieved August 06, 2009, from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0002204>.

- Mayring, P. (2008). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (10., neu ausgestattete Aufl.). Weinheim: Beltz.
- Militzer, D. (April 2008). *Disaster and Gender: The Indian Ocean Tsunami and Sri Lankan Women*. Bachelor thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. Retrieved July 11, 2009, from:  
<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/10364/1/Disaster+and+Gender.pdf>.
- Ministry of Education. *Present Education System and Management Structure*. Retrieved July 18, 2009, from [http://www.moe.gov.lk/Education\\_his\\_3.html](http://www.moe.gov.lk/Education_his_3.html).
- Ministry of Education (2003). *Table 16 : Pupils by gender, medium of instruction and school grade in government schools, 2003*. Retrieved August 17, 2009, from [http://www.moe.gov.lk/Excel/Tab16\\_03.xls](http://www.moe.gov.lk/Excel/Tab16_03.xls).
- Moore, H. L. (1996). The differences within and the differences between. In: T. d. Valle (Ed.), *European Association of Social Anthropologists: . Gendered anthropology* (pp. 193–204). London: Routledge.
- Moore, H. L. (2000). *Feminism and anthropology* (Repr.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morrow, B. H., & Enarson, E. P. (Eds.) (1998). *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Murshed, Z. (2003). Community Capacity Building for Risk Reduction in South Asia. In: P. Sahni & M. M. Ariyabandu (Eds.), *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia* . New Dehli: Prentice Hall of India.
- National Earthquake Information Center (July 16, 2008 20:03:31 UTC). *Magnitude 9.1 - OFF THE WEST COAST OF NORTHERN SUMATRA*. Retrieved August 17, 2009, from <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/eqcenter/eqinthenews/2004/usslav/index.php>.
- Nielsen, J. M. (1984). *Sex and Gender in Disaster Research*. Boulder: University of Colorado, Department of Sociology.
- O'Brien, P. W., & Atchison, P. (1998). Gender Differentiation and Aftershock Warning Response. In B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 173–180). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Oliver-Smith, A., & Hoffman, S. M. (1999). Anthropology and the Angry Earth: An Overview. In: A. Oliver-Smith & S. M. Hoffman (Eds.), *The angry earth: Disaster in anthropological perspective* (pp. 1–16). New York: Routledge.
- Oliver-Smith, A., & Hoffman, S. M. (Eds.) (1999). *The angry earth: Disaster in anthropological perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Perry, W. Ronald (1998). Definitions and the development of a theoretical superstructure for disaster research. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 197–216). London: Routledge.
- Prince, S. (1920). *Catastrophe and Social Change*. London: Kind [WAA]
- Quarantelli, E. L. (1998). Introduction: The basic question, its importance, and how it is addressed in this volume. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 1–7). London: Routledge.
- Quarantelli, E. L. (Ed.) (1998). *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question*. London: Routledge.
- Risseuw, C. (1988). *The fish don't talk about the water: Gender transformation,*

- power, and resistance among women in Sri Lanka*. Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill.
- Robertson, D. (1998). Women in Emergency Management: An Australian Perspective. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 201–206). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Rosenthal, U. (1998). Future disasters, future definitions. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 146–159). London: Routledge.
- Rosetto, T., et.al. (2007). The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26, 2004: Observations in Sri Lanka and Thailand. *Natural Hazards*, 42(1), (pp.105–124), Retrieved from:  
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/nhaz/2007/00000042/00000001/00009064>.
- Ryan, B. (1953). "The Sinhalese Kinship System," *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol.VI, Nos.3 and 4, Lucknow University (India), pp.143-63.
- Sahni, P., & Ariyabandu, M. M. (Eds.) (2003). *Disaster Risk Reduction in South Asia*. New Dehli: Prentice Hall of India.
- Scanlon, J. (1998). The Perspective of Gender: A Missing Element in Disaster Response. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 45–54). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Schweizer, T. (1998). Epistemology: The Nature and Validation of Anthropological Knowledge. In: H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 39–87). Walnut Creek Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Silva, D. de (2002). *Life cycle rituals among the Sinhalese* (1st ed.). Dehiwala: Sridevi.
- Silva, J. de (2005). *Globalization, terror & the shaming of the nation: Constructing local masculinities in a Sri Lankan village*. Victoria BC: Trafford.
- Social and Human Resource Development Consultants (SHRDC) (2006). *After the big wave: A study on the coping strategies of widowers, widows and their children affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka*. Nugegoda, Sri Lanka
- Stallings, R. A. (1998). Disaster and the theory of social order. In: E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster?: Perspectives on the question* (pp. 127–145). London: Routledge.
- Stolcke, V. (1996). Is sex to gender as race is to ethnicity? In T. d. Valle (Ed.), *European Association of Social Anthropologists: . Gendered anthropology* (pp. 17–37). London: Routledge.
- Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) (2006). *Labour Market Information Bulletin: July to December 2006*. Retrieved July 20, 2009, from <http://www.tvec.gov.lk/lmi/december2006.htm>.
- The World Bank (2005). *Treasures of the education system in Sri Lanka: Restoring performance, expanding opportunities, and enhancing prospects*. Colombo: World Bank Colombo Office. Retrieved July 20,2009, from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSRILANKA/Resources/TreasuresEdSys.pdf>
- Torry et al., W. I. (1979). Anthropological Studies in Hazardous Environments: Past Trends and New Horizons [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, 20(3), (pp.517–540). Retrieved August 11, 2008, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2742110>.

- Toscani, L. (1998). Women's Roles in Natural Disaster Preparation and Aid:: A Central American View. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 207–211). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Trotter, II, R. T., & Schensul, J. J. (1998). Methods in Applied Anthropology. In: H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 691–735). Walnut Creek Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Valle, T. d. (Ed.) (1996). *Gendered anthropology* (repr.). London: Routledge.
- Varley, A. (Ed.) (1994). *Disasters, development and environment*. Chichester: Wiley.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125–151. Retrieved January 30, 2009, from [www.jstor.org/stable/189945](http://www.jstor.org/stable/189945).
- Wiest, R. E. (1998). A Comparative Perspective on Household, Gender, and Kinship in Relation to Disaster. In: B. H. Morrow & E. P. Enarson (Eds.), *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp.63–79). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Wijayatilake, K. (2001). *Unravelling herstories: A three generational study*. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research.
- Williams, H. (1950). *Ceylon. Pearl of the East*. London: Robert Hale.
- Wisner, B., Blaikie, P., Cannon, T., & Davis, I. (2007). *At risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters* (2. ed., repr.). London: Routledge.
- Zaman, M. Q. (1999). Vulnerability, Disaster and Survival in Bangladesh:: Three Case Studies. In: A. Oliver-Smith & S. M. Hoffman (Eds.), *The angry earth: Disaster in anthropological perspective* (pp. 192–212). New York: Routledge.

## **Interviews and Unpublished Research Material**

In order to ensure confidentiality and conceal the identity of the interlocutors of this study, they were given aliases.

Interview with a disaster affected woman; cond. on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006 , Transcript-Nr. 1.1

Interview with Menaka; conducted on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript - Nr. 2.1,

Interview with Menaka; conducted on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript - Nr. 2.2

Interview with Nisansala; conducted on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, Transcript - Nr. 3.1

Interview with Nisansala; conducted on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, Transcript - Nr. 3.2

Interview with Danushka; conducted on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 4.1

Interview with Danushka; conducted on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 4.2

Interview with a disaster affected woman, cond. on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript-Nr.7.1

Interview with a disaster affected woman, cond. on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript-Nr.7.2

Interview with Sandamali; conducted on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 8.1

Interview with a disaster affected woman, cond. on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, Transcript-Nr.9.1

Interview with a disaster affected woman, cond. on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript-Nr.9.2

Interview with Saman; conducted on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 11.1

Interview with Saman; conducted on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 11.2

Interview with Ruwan; conducted on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 12.1

Interview with Pushpa; conducted on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 13.1

Interview with a disaster affected woman, cond. on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript-Nr.14.1

Interview with Sarala; conducted on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 16.1

Interview with Danoja; conducted on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 18.1

Interview with Danoja; conducted on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 18.2

Interview with Poshita; conducted on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Transcript –Nr. 19.1

Interview with Poshita; conducted on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Transcript –Nr. 19.2

Expert-Interview with staff of Artacharya Foundation, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Hikkaduwa.

Expert-Interview with staff of Siyath Foundation, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Dodanduwa

Expert-Interview with staff of the Women's Cooperation, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006 in Walitera



## **Abstracts**

### **Abstract in English**

On December 26th 2004 an earthquake of the magnitude of 9.1 took place in the Indian Ocean and triggered a massive tsunami that hit the coastline of twelve countries, including Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka the Tsunami killed around 31,000 people, 4,000 persons were reported missing and around 550,000 people lost their homes. The present study analyses, from a gender perspective, the vulnerabilities of disaster affected Sinhalese men and women. Only the interplay of vulnerable people with a natural hazard, such as the Tsunami, create disaster. The study inquires about the different impact of the Tsunami disaster on widows and widowers, their coping strategies and the changes that have taken place in their daily life since then. The analysis is based on a theoretical model of vulnerability, the Access Model, which was developed by Wisner et al. (2007). The concept of vulnerability emphasizes the interplay between natural hazards and the major structures of a society. A disaster is seen as a cycle that begins a long time before the actual onset of a hazard through the creation of vulnerabilities and does not end with the reconstruction of damaged buildings and reestablishment of livelihoods.

### **Abstract in Deutsch**

Ein Erdbeben im Indischen Ozean mit der Stärke 9,1 auf der Richterskala löste einen Tsunami aus , der auf die Küstengebiete von 12 Staaten traf und dort massive Zerstörungen anrichtete. Allein in Sri Lanka starben 31 000 Menschen, 4000 Menschen wurden als vermisst gemeldet und 550 000 Personen haben ihr Zuhause verloren. Diese Arbeit analysiert, aus einer Genderperspektive, die Vulnerabilitäten von, von der Katastrophe betroffenen, singhalesischen Männern und Frauen. Nur im Zusammenspiel von einer verwundbaren Bevölkerung mit einer Naturgewalt, wie einem Tsunami, entstehen Katastrophen. Die Arbeit erforscht die unterschiedlichen Auswirkungen der Katastrophe auf Witwen und Witwer, deren Bewältigungsstrategien und die Veränderungen, die sich seit dem in deren Leben abgespielt haben. Die Analyse basiert auf einem Modell on Vulnerabilität, das von Wisner et al. (2007) entwickelt worden ist. Dieses Konzept von Vulnerabilität betont das Zusammenspiel von Naturgewalten und gesellschaftlichen Strukturen. Es sieht eine Katastrophe als Zyklus an, der lange vor

dem Ausbruch einer Naturgewalt durch die Herausbildung von Vulnerabilitäten beginnt und der nicht mit dem Wiederaufbau von zerstörten Gebäuden und der Wiederherstellung des Lebensgrundlage der betroffenen Menschen endet.

# Curriculum Vitae

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Julia Doppler  
Date of Birth: 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1979  
Place of Birth: Vienna  
Nationality: Austria

## EDUCATION

06/99 A-levels at the Gymnasium, Institut Sacré Cœur Pressbaum

## UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

03/00 – 10/09 University of Vienna: Social and Cultural Anthropology

11/04 – 08/05 University of Peradeniya: Sociology

## GRANTS AND FIELD RESEARCH

04/06 Grant for “Short Research Stays Abroad (KWA)” from the University of Vienna

04/06 – 07/06 Field research in Sri Lanka

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

08/09- 10/09 Supervisory staff at Schloss Schönbrunn

12/08- 05/09 Supervisory staff at Schloss Schönbrunn

01/07- 10/08 Education officer for Südwind NÖ

06/02 – 03/07 Tour guide and supervisory staff  
at the Kindermuseum Schloss Schönbrunn

## PRESENTATIONS:

forthcoming in March 2010: Twelfth National Convention on Women's Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka: “A Gendered Analysis of Vulnerability and Disaster- Risk Reduction in Sri Lanka”

2006 7<sup>th</sup> Socrates Intensive Program, Vienna: “Gender and Tsunami. Sinhalese Communities on the South-West Coast of Sri Lanka”

2008 Discussion-round of “Talaash- network of young researchers and artists on South Asia”, Vienna: Introductory presentation on “Gender dimensions of the conflict in Sri Lanka”

## MEMBERSHIPS

Talaash- Network of young researchers and artists on South Asia

Austrian- Sri Lankan Friendship Association (SLAFA)