

Board Paper: **BP_2008_2_1****Final Report of the Tsunami Memorial Research Fund (TMRF)**7th Board Meeting of *LIRNEasia*. 27 November 2008

- 1.0 The TMRF was established with the contributions made by *LIRNEasia* researchers who worked on the National Early Warning System Sri Lanka (NEWS:SL) report. While the work was donated, the project was subsequently funded by IDRC. The researchers did not take their payments, thus creating the TMRF. It was supplemented by contributions from *LIRNE.NET*/Professor William Melody and Professor Robin Mansell, both members of the *LIRNEasia* International Advisory Board. Subsequently, payments due to Rohan Samarajiva from the CIDA funded portion of the Dam Safety Project were also added to the Fund.
- 2.0 The Fund was completely spent by 2008 and is now closed. This is the Final Report. It documents what was achieved with a total of slightly over LKR 2 million (or USD 20,000).
- 3.0 As a discretionary fund, the TMRF allowed for project development and relationship building which enabled *LIRNEasia* to have a much bigger profile in the disaster risk reduction space than its actual resources justified. The achievements will be described not in chronological order or in order of disbursements, but in order of significance of outcomes.
- 4.0 The most significant achievement was the participatory research on dam safety that provided input to, and facilitated, the World Bank credit for Water Resources Planning and Dam Safety for USD 71 million, commenced in August 2008.¹ More than the actual amount of money spent (CIDA and the partners contributed more) the existence of the Fund enabled us to start the project while the other resources were being assembled. This success will hopefully also serve as the foundation for the proposed *LIRNEasia* Lanka think tank initiative.
- 5.0 The TMRF also enabled us to build a collaborative relationship with the Lanka Software Foundation (LSF; where the ED had served as a founder director and chair) that has usefully supplemented the early warning work that has been the signature of *LIRNEasia*. After the false tsunami warning of September 12, 2007, *LIRNEasia* offered the National Disaster Management Center a technical solution on more effectively communicating with the media and first responders. It commissioned Respere, company spun off from the Sahana disaster management initiative of LSF to develop an SMS module for the award winning disaster management database suite that could be used for the above purpose.² It was completed and now forms part of the suite open for use by all. The development work also allowed us to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of SMS for early warning, a subject that had been intensely discussed since the 2004 tsunami³ and which fed into the thinking that went into the cell broadcasting study for the Maldives.⁴ The funds spent in this regard included the payments to Respere and

¹<http://www.worldbank.lk/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/SRILANKAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21704475~menuPK:64282137~pagePK:41367~piPK:279616~theSitePK:233047,00.html>. See also:

<http://lirneasia.net/2008/08/lirneasia-2005-06-work-in-dam-safety-pays-off-but-incompletely/>

² <http://lirneasia.net/2007/03/sahana-wins-software-award-given-last-year-to-wikipedia/>

³ <http://lirneasia.net/2005/01/sms-as-part-of-early-warning-system/>

⁴ <http://lirneasia.net/projects/2008-2010/mobile20bop/vertical-aspects/mobiles-for-disaster-warning/>



the ticket purchased for a member of the Sahana team to attend the award ceremony described in footnote 2. In actual fact, the SMS module was funded through the larger Last-Mile HazInfo project through approved reallocations within that project budget. But had it not been for TMRF we could not have responded as quickly as we did.

- 6.0 The Last-Mile HazInfo project which ended in March 2008 was one of most successful and one that has a good image.⁵ However, we had no good answer to the question of what next. With the resources available through TMRF, we were able to pay Natasha Udu-gama, a disaster risk-reduction expert who had originally come to Sri Lanka to volunteer with Sarvodaya,⁶ to do some bridging work to the supplement that allowed us to do regional dissemination and then develop the certification/training project that we almost got funded through CIDA in 2008. Now we are planning on developing that proposal as a component of a larger World Bank credit to the Tourism Ministry. The expenditures included payments to Luxman Siriwardene to handle delicate government relations and educate Natasha on that subject.
- 7.0 In 2005, we submitted a proposal to the World Bank country office to develop a web-based mechanism for giving voice to the tsunami-displaced. This was not the best of our projects, hampered by poor delivery on the part of partners and demanding too much effort to fulfill the World Bank country office's bureaucratic needs. However, we were pleasantly surprised to see that it had been the inspiration and prototype for Sri Lanka's leading community journalism site, Groundviews.⁷ The TMRF contribution was for partially meeting the matching funds requirement of the World Bank; the rest of the matching funds came in the form of donated labor.
- 8.0 In 2008, we used the last of the TMRF funds to pay for the participation of Rohan Samarajiva and Natasha Udu-gama at the rather expensive Davos conference on International Disaster and Risk Conference. We were planning to send only one person, but Pete Anderson, one of our principal partners in early warning work had organized a special session,⁸ but had several cancellations. So we helped out. But there was a big payoff in that it finally got us on the radar screen of the ISDR, the principal UN organization on disaster risk reduction.⁹ It has already resulted in a paid invitation to a US system workshop in Bonn.¹⁰ If not for TMRF, the Davos participation would not have been possible because the Last-Mile HazInfo project was over and we had no ongoing grant in the disaster space.
- 9.0 Approximately USD 500 from the Fund was spent on Burma cyclone relief in 2008. This amount was supplemented by individual contributions from LIRNEasia staff to make up a total of USD 1,500.¹¹ The donation was made through the Amarapura Nikaya (Buddhist Order) with strong links with Myanmar monks. In addition to the obvious humanitarian objective, the donation was seen as laying the groundwork for future work in Burma.

⁵ <http://lirneasia.net/projects/2006-07/evaluating-last-mile-hazard-information-dissemination-hazinfo/>

⁶ <http://lirneasia.net/profiles/natasha-udu-gama/>

⁷ <http://www.groundviews.org/>

⁸ <http://lirneasia.net/2008/09/early-warning-and-or-mangroves/>

⁹ <http://www.unisdr.org/>

¹⁰ <http://lirneasia.net/2008/10/natasha-at-un-workshop-to-link-disaster-management-to-space-technology/>

¹¹ <http://lirneasia.net/2008/05/lirneasians-donate-for-burma-cyclone-victims/>

Annex 1: Tsunami Memorial Research Fund accounts**Tsunami Memorial Research Fund**

| | Debit | Credit |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Funds received | | 1,362,277.51 |
| Funds received - Rohan Samarajiva fees from Dam Safety project | | 735,000.00 |
| Expenses made for | | |
| Dam Safety project | 1,022,447.94 | |
| Web Hamuwa project | 345,863.84 | |
| Preparation of sustainable early warning project proposal | 210,133.04 | |
| LSF travel support | 100,800.00 | |
| Gordon Gow public lecture on disaster mitigation | 83,125.00 | |
| Burma relief | 50,000.00 | |
| International Disaster and Risk Conference (Davos) | 291,825.82 | |
| | <u>2,104,195.64</u> | <u>2,097,277.51</u> |

(6,918.13)