ABSTRACT

The December 26, 2004 earthquake and the tsunami that it generated across the Indian Ocean have been described as one of the “worst disasters” in recent history. Very few natural hazards in recent history have had such widespread, catastrophic consequences. One month after the Indian Ocean Tsunami, a group of social science researchers from the Disaster Research Center (DRC), University of Delaware, and the Emergency Administration and Planning Program (EADP), University of North Texas, participated in an Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) reconnaissance team, which traveled to some of the most affected areas in India and Sri Lanka. The team engaged in a two-week field research expedition that yielded important data and information on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery from this devastating tsunami. Through extensive field research and observations, the team identified a number of emerging issues, including: education and awareness regarding tsunamis; the devastation and the loss; the economic impact; health and mental health issues; irregularities and inequities in community based response and recovery efforts and in the distribution of disaster relief aid; gender and inequality; and relocation and housing issues, among others. In this presentation, we will focus on our observations, critical issues, and preliminary outcomes in India, particularly focusing on issues related to recovery efforts following the tsunami and the role of the government and NGOs in the recovery planning process; we will also emphasize the need and importance of sustainable recovery and development initiatives.