

## **Citylinks Partnership: Post-Tsunami Recovery Program in Cuddalore & Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, India with Cities of Florida, USA**

**Project Name:** CityLinks Post-Tsunami Recovery Program in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, India in partnership with Cities of Florida, USA  
**Client Name:** United States Agency for International Development  
**Country:** India  
**Length of assignment:** 2005 – 2007

### **Project Brief**

On December 26, 2004, a tsunami destroyed India's southern coast leaving behind hundreds dead, damaged property worth millions and shambled infrastructure. The districts of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu state bore the maximum brunt. In Nagapattinam, 6,065 people lost their lives and 1,922 were reported missing. The death toll in Cuddalore reached 617 and 192 were reported missing. Nearly 2,96,000 people in both districts were directly or indirectly affected by the disaster. To assist with the recovery process, International City/County Management Association (ICMA), with financial support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the CityLinks Post-Tsunami Recovery Program. The CityLinks Program brought together city practitioners of Palm Bay, Palm Beach Gardens, Port Orange and Oldsmar, Florida (US) with city officials of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam to share resources and technical expertise to improve the lives of urban residents. This program was supported by Urban Management Centre (UMC). UMC, in partnership with representatives from Florida analyzed the technical assistance needs and implemented various pilot projects to aid recovery of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam. The partner cities selected target areas in the two cities for technical assistance — CAD mapping, financial management strategies, improved water supply services, flood mitigation, playground and park redevelopment.

### **Detailed Description of the Actual Services Provided by UMC**

#### *1. CAD Mapping*

UMC realized that implementation of plans for physical improvement of cities is possible only with updated topographical and land use maps. Officials from visiting US cities realized that both Cuddalore and Nagapattinam had ancient maps. Satellite images of the cities were procured, interpreted and verified. Local government officials provided old maps of the cities to verify details of municipal wards and boundaries. Florida officials trained local government officials in usage of AutoCAD to develop an interactive and vibrant mapping system.



#### *2. Financial Management Strategies*

UMC/ICMA targeted re-engineering of financial procedures and systems of the two cities and worked to reconcile accounts of property tax, water charges and professional tax. Following an extensive survey of existing properties in Cuddalore, UMC/ICMA and the US delegation along with local government officials undertook identification of new properties. The survey helped update the

database with over 10,000 new properties and also revealed vital information about number of properties escaping the tax net due to lax officials. The restructuring of the financial system gave the cities over 75% increases in their assessments with over \$800,000 in back taxes collection and \$540,000 collected subsequently from other cities.

### *3. Improved Water Supply Services*

UMC/ICMA improved access to and quality of drinking water. The overall objective of the water improvement programs at Cuddalore and Nagapattinam was improvement of the existing water supply system in relation to quality and quantity of water provided to each user by the municipality; improvement in access to information for citizens and increase transparency in urban governance for better service delivery. UMC/ICMA conducted a survey of citizens to determine why some residents of both cities did not connect to the municipal water system followed by a water testing study at the end-user level. The team also procured 13 and 12 pressure gauges for Nagapattinam and Cuddalore respectively and installed them to enable monitoring of water supply pressure. To protect the consumers from health risks, the team installed 4kg capacity chlorinator with 2 cylinders (one as stand-by) with auto change over system for each town to ensure better quality of water. The CityLinks team then developed a publicity awareness campaign to educate citizens about the actions undertaken by municipal corporations of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam following the survey to convince citizens about the quality of water. Eventually, almost 20,000 citizens in each of the cities had access to safe drinking water.



### *4. Flood Mitigation*

Cuddalore and Nagapattinam's infrastructure decay increased due to lack of a proper, implementable flood mitigation plan. The objective of the CityLinks project was to build capacity of the two cities to mitigate the impact of future floods resulting from heavy rains, storm surges and tsunamis. In order to reduce the risk of flooding in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, the CityLinks team, in consortium with local stakeholders, local consultants and Florida partners designed city specific plans for mitigation of flooding. UMC/ICMA facilitated the study, development and implementation of storm water drainage and ditch maintenance plans. The team cleaned drainage sites in low lying areas in both cities, with 750 running meters of drainage cleaned in Cuddalore. In Nagapattinam, interconnections for 12 of the city's historic retention ponds were cleaned, which has allowed for water to flow more freely. Flood prone areas were identified through updated base maps and the capacity of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam to mitigate the impact of future floods resulting from heavy rains, storm surges and tsunamis were strengthened.



### *5. Playground and Park Redevelopment*

The tsunami destroyed all community interaction and recreational spaces. Municipal officials from both cities expressed the need for rebuilding recreation spaces specifically for children to help them overcome the trauma of the disaster. The cities and partners felt that projects must have participation from the community so as to help the people overcome their tragedies. The CityLinks team designed and built community playgrounds in Cuddalore from January 17-21, 2007 and in Nagapattinam from January 24-28, 2007. Designers visited the two cities for creative planning and drawing sessions and face-to-face meetings with parents, teachers, school administrators and other interested community members. The CityLinks team organized a Design Day followed by a brainstorming session to finalize the designs of the playgrounds. Following the finalization of the design drawings, a community-build process was initiated where volunteers of all ages worked side by side for the five day construction activity.

