

Living with Natural Hazards; Tsunami

SANTIAGO-FANDINO, Vicente^{1*}

¹Independent Environmental Advisor

Tsunamis are a common natural hazard originated by earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions and even meteorological conditions. These events have hit coastal areas particularly along the Pacific Ocean (Rim of Fire), Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the northern part of the Indian Ocean resulting in large impacts to the environment and coastal settlements.

Adaptation by organisms and ecosystems after being hit by tsunamis follow nature's processes for adaptation to the new realities, which also applies in the case of mankind but in this case intelligence, reasoning and complex social structures makes the process more complex reflecting in turn in how the restoration and reconstruction process may develop and its success.

Efforts made to reconstruct and restore impacted areas have proven to be very complicated and controversial oftentimes, this mainly due to differences of opinion on the approaches to be taken and decision-making processes added to the societal aspects. Moreover, lack of direct and effective participation of impacted communities, sectorial and top down decision-making further exacerbates the debate resulting in reducing trust by the locals, diminished resilience and increases emigration amongst other aspects.

Tsunamis are complex natural events requiring the integration of sound research and knowledge, the same is required to understand local communities where traditions, customs and societal components are crucial before decision making. Living in Tsunami exposed areas call for building trust with authorities as well as developing early warning and disaster prevention policies, appropriate defence systems and mechanisms, provision of education and awareness raising as well as the understanding of the affected communities needs, capabilities as well as their customs and traditions together with their living environment. Proactive and integrative policies rather than sectorial and reactive top down ones bring all these elements together whereby strengthening local communities, increasing resilience and allowing the reconstruction and restoration process to be effective and successful.