

# Building Better Futures

## Empowering Grassroots Women To Build Resilient Communities

GROOTS International's Thematic Programme on Community Resilience seeks to empower grassroots women to build resilient communities. This programme emerged from member organizations' work in disaster-hit communities in India, Turkey, Honduras and Jamaica. Member groups found that disaster response programmes were opportunities for women to become active participants in shaping the futures of their communities. Through their participation, grassroots women have developed innovative solutions that address practical problems of shelter, credit, livelihoods and basic services – all of which lie at the intersection of resilience and development. What is unique about these grassroots solutions is that they also re-position women in the eyes of their families and communities. This publication highlights roles that grassroots women are playing in building resilient communities and insights emerging from resilience building efforts led by grassroots women in Peru, Jamaica, Honduras, Turkey, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.



*Production of construction materials for disaster resistant housing in Lima, Peru*

### Global initiative to develop community trainers

In 2006 Groots International in partnership with American Jewish World Service launched a global programme that seeks to build on the expertise of grassroots leaders in disaster prone areas. This unique initiative builds on the knowledge and skills of grassroots leaders in order to create a global network of community trainers who can train other disaster prone communities. Having initiated and sustained innovative community practices after earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and the tsunami, these community leaders are better equipped than anyone else to teach other disaster -prone communities how to shape risk reduction, relief, recovery and reconstruction processes to the advantage of disaster affected families and communities.

## A GENDER EQUITABLE, COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH TO RESILIENCE BUILDING

### ☒ Recognizing and resourcing grassroots women's role in community resilience building

Much of what grassroots women do to strengthen the capacities of their families and communities to cope with disaster is neither recognized nor resourced by institutions. Grassroots women undertake public roles that accelerate community recovery and ensure sustained community participation in reconstruction and development. These roles include organizing and mobilizing communities, ensuring food security, managing construction of safe shelters, improving community access to basic services and demanding greater accountability from government on behalf of their communities. Recognizing this work involves allocating resources for women to undertake these roles and ensuring that grassroots women participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of resilience building programmes.

### ☒ Investing in grassroots women's leadership and organizations

Resilience building processes take time. The economic, social and political vulnerabilities of communities living in poverty can only be reduced through sustained, long- term change. While disaster response provides women with opportunities participate in community decision- making, women need their own organizations and leadership to sustain their new public roles and bring about lasting change in their communities; to empower themselves to participate in shaping both development and resilience building programmes in their communities.

### ☒ Providing multi-purpose spaces for women and children

For women to empower themselves to take action, they need physical spaces in which women can meet and in which they can be certain that their children are safe. Regular gatherings of women are usually the first step towards organizing collective action and forming grassroots organizations. The experiences of Foundation for the Support of Women's Work in Turkey who pioneered the use of safe spaces for organizing women in the context of disaster response have demonstrated ways in which Centres for Women and Children respond to a range of practical needs such as incomes and childcare while also being used for collecting and disseminating information and negotiating with officials.



*During an exchange workshop organized by Groots International and UPLINK, Indonesia workshop for Community Trainers in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Fatima Okcu explained, "Women's first priority of women in the relief camps was to ensure the safety and well-being of their children so they set up children's tents as a safe place where children could play. Next to the children's tents they put up women's tents of 60 to 70 square metres.. Women gathered in these tents at first for social support and then to do economic activities. Later they began to organized to improve services in the tent camp. They negotiated with camp managers to improve food and sanitation in the camps and soon they had six makeshift centers for women and children in different camps"*

## ❖ Empowering grassroots women to participate in decision-making

Women are usually excluded from public decision-making. Risk reduction and post disaster recovery and reconstruction processes are opportunities to change this by promoting public participation of women with the support of families and communities. Dialogue with local authorities, government and other decision makers serves to increase accountability to communities and convey community priorities to decision-makers and thus lays the foundations of future collaborations.

## ❖ Enabling grassroots women's organizations to manage information

Supporting grassroots women's participation in programmes means assigning them clear roles. One of the roles that women have successfully undertaken that of information managers. Grassroots women have played the role of information gatherers through mapping and surveying their communities to understand community needs and to claim resources; and improve access to services, infrastructure and entitlements for their communities.

## ❖ Appointing grassroots women leaders to evaluate resilience building programmes

If it works for women in generally works for the community. Getting women to monitor the distribution of aid reduces corruption and waste; and ensures that aid is directed to those who need it most. Getting women to evaluate programmes and provide feedback on what works and does not work for their communities is a good way to make sure that that NGOs and Government get real information about community concerns.

## ❖ Assigning grassroots trainers to scale up effective community practice

Community leaders who have done innovative to help their communities cope with disaster know exactly what works and what does not work at the community level. Peer learning is a powerful tool in which community leaders teach and learn from one another. Grassroots groups in the GROOTS network have expertise in a range of areas that include securing and constructing safe housing; managing women and children's centers; restoring agriculture and protecting bio-diversity; ensuring food security during disasters; improving health and sanitation; providing crisis credit; organizing emergency response; monitoring distribution of aid; assessing recovery programmes and negotiating with officials. Women leaders with expertise must be supported to go out and train other risk-prone communities.





## HOW GRASSROOTS WOMEN ARE BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

### Building social networks to share risk

By organizing groups, cooperatives, federations and other kinds of formations which collectively address social, economic and political problems facing communities, grassroots women are creating strong community networks who can share risks and pool resources including knowledge and information to mitigate risk. These networks, collectives, federations and cooperatives are evolving into robust community owned institutions that can sustain and scale up community led efforts.

In Turkey, women supported by the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work have their own credit and housing cooperatives to finance individual and collective enterprises and housing for low income families who were affected by the Marmara earthquake but as renters are not entitled to replacement housing from the Government. In Honduras, a network of indigenous communities in 16 towns created their own organization called Comitè de Emergencia Garifuna. In India, women supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog in earthquake- hit areas of Maharashtra, Gujarat and in tsunami hit Tamil Nadu women have organized their own federations of savings and credit groups. Supported by Covenant Centre for Development, fishvendors, shell collectors, craftspersons and coir-workers have formed their own federations. These federations provide thousands of women with access to crisis credit and enterprise loans. In Sri Lanka, Sevanatha is supporting grassroots women in two cities to create their own associations. In Aceh, Indonesia Urban Poor Link has supported tsunami affected communities from 23 villages to create their own organization called Jaringan Udeep Beusaree. In Peru, NGO Estrategia has supported grassroots women to create their own network called Mujeres Unidas para un Pueblo Mejor.

### Constructing safe shelters

Several organizations in the GROOTS network have supported women from disaster-hit communities to learn about construction techniques as well as supervise and manage construction.

In Lima, NGO Estrategia partnered with the national housing research institute SENCICO to train communities in Pachacutec a poor, highly risk prone neighborhood in Lima to produce concrete beams and blocks for building earthquake resistant houses. Communities constructed demonstration houses as part of their training. Estrategia, in partnership with the local government, is currently developing a housing pilot program that will give housing grants to low- income families to construct earthquake-resistant housing.

In Jamaica, Construction Development and Resource Center has trained women from hurricane affected communities to build low cost hurricane safe roofs for their homes. Once women learned this technique they would ensure that contractors implemented it while building their houses.



In Maharashtra and Gujarat, India – following earthquakes- and in Aceh, Indonesia – after the tsunami women participated in supervising the quality of house construction, to ensure high quality construction and reduce construction costs.

In cyclone prone Andhra Pradesh, Sanghamitra Service Society is bringing communities together with the government to repair and improve nine cyclone shelters.

In Duzce, Turkey, after the Marmara earthquake (1999) housing became a serious problem for renters who were not entitled to replacement housing. Women in Duzce created their own housing cooperatives eratives have begun constructing houses for renters who did not receive replacement houses from the Government. The Foundation for Women's Work advocated on women's behalf to buy public land from the Ministry of Public Affairs. With assistance from Technical University of Istanbul the women's cooperative has completed construction of houses for half the families.

## **\* Protecting natural resources, upgrading livelihoods and increasing food security**

In Asia and Latin America, member groups are reviving traditional practices to protect natural resources and bio-diversity to mitigate disaster risk.

The indigenous Garifuna communities living on the north coast of Honduras received no outside rescue support or relief after Hurricane Mitch. Communities were left to fend for themselves. Community leaders who founded the Comité de Emergencia Garifuna have since decided to address food security by reviving an indigenous root crop which can be harvested in the event of floods or hurricanes and processed to make into bread which lasts for days. Garifuna farmers have also created their own seed bank to ensure that the indigenous crops can be replanted if they are destroyed in floods, landslides or hurricanes. In addition they have also planted indigenous fruit trees along the coast to prevent soil erosion.

Covenant Centre for Development is supporting women in coastal Tamil Nadu to raise nurseries for planting mangroves to protect the coastline. Farmers federations formed after the tsunami also contribute to a community grain bank with a capacity of 90 tonnes in Nagapattinam district. CCD is also working with coastal communities to help fisherfolk increase their incomes by diversifying their livelihoods and reducing their dependence on fishing.

Sanghamitra Service Society in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh, India is facilitating community involvement in planting and protecting mangroves through community mangrove protection committees. Communities are also trying to reduce the coastal communities' dependency on fuel wood.

## **Improving access to basic services**

Few people in the disaster risk reduction community talk about improving basic services as part of a risk reduction agenda. Yet the lack of access to basic services often both a symptom and a cause of community vulnerability.

In Tamil Nadu's tsunami affected areas, women identified health and sanitation as a community priority that no one was addressing. Grassroots women organized themselves into ASHAA groups (Arogya Sakhis for Sanitation and Health Action and Awareness) who are educating communities to recognize symptoms of ill-health, seek medical assistance, to improve environmental sanitation, to use herbal remedies and to access government and private healthcare services. ASHAA groups also work closely with Government primary health centres to ensure that they respond to the needs of communities. Ashaa women in twenty villages in Tamil Nadu partnered with primary health centres to prevent chikunguniya, a disease which had reached epidemic proportions in southern India.

## Providing access to credit and markets

To get back on their feet disaster-hit communities need their livelihoods restored. Grassroots women's organizations are doing more than this. They are organizing disaster-affected communities to upgrade their livelihoods by supporting them to access credit and markets to upgrade and scale up economic activities. Because most grassroots initiatives to upgrade economic activities depend on collective work and the pooling of resources, it means that they are also pooling risk and sharing losses thus reducing the economic vulnerabilities of individual women and their households.

Having organized indigenous communities to restore their agricultural practices, plant fruit trees to protect their coastline and revive traditional crops after Hurricane Mitch, Comite de Emergencia Garifuna in Honduras has created a market space for Garifuna farmers.

In Tamil Nadu, India Covenant Center for Development has supported women and men to restore contaminated agricultural lands after the tsunami; and has facilitated disaster-affected coastal communities – both men and women – to form savings and credit groups and negotiate better prices for their products in markets. A storage facility constructed in Nagapattinam district allows farmers to store grain and negotiate better prices. In addition the coir-workers federation run by women coir producers) in Kanyakumari district has opened a retail outlet to market its produce and to establish contact with big buyers.

In Peru and Jamaica, Estrategia and Construction Resource and Development Collective are training more and more women to earn an income through production of building materials and construction contracts. Estrategia is also partnering with several institutions and the local government to create a housing fund for low income families.

In Turkey, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work set up revolving funds and enterprise loan facilities for grassroots women in the disaster-affected provinces. The Foundation went on to market dolls made by earthquake-affected women, through the Ministry for Tourism. Because renters were not entitled to replacement housing grassroots women created their own cooperatives to explore housing options. Cooperatives used members' savings to acquire public land for construction of housing. By 2005 through a long, painful process the housing cooperatives were able to get credit to start the construction of houses.

In Maharashtra and Gujarat, India, Swayam Shikshan Prayog has supported the women's groups to organize federations of self-help groups to ensure that they have access to emergency loans, enterprise loans and housing loans. Federations are also working on scaling up community enterprises and piloting a health mutual that functions like a health insurance programme in which communities pool and share rather than transfer risk.

## Creating women-managed, multi-purposes spaces

Women-owned spaces have been used by different network members in ways that address both practical and strategic interests of grassroots women in disaster-affected communities. After the Marmara earthquake, with the support of Foundation for the Support of Women's Work, women living in tent camps set up women and children's tents to organize women around economic activities, distribute aid and improve living conditions in the camps. Later, the women created women and children's centers in the temporary pre-fabricated settlements and then took these centers to permanent settlements. These spaces are used by women to organize themselves; to assess children's needs and provide quality pre-school services for low income families; to gather and disseminate information on the settlements, to negotiate with officials, to run businesses and to undertake learning exchanges with likeminded women's groups.

In India after the Latur and the Kutch earthquakes, women's groups were supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog to learn earthquake safe construction by building and supervising their own women's information centers. When women have their own space or "office" where they can meet and organize their activities it contributes to formalizing their status as key actors in community development.

In Sri Lanka, grassroots women's associations in the cities of Matara and Moratuwa are being supported by Sevanatha Urban Resource Centre and Municipal Councils along with support from GROOTS and International Center for Sustainable Cities to participate in the design and management of community centers being constructed as part of a post-tsunami reconstruction project

## Directing aid

Women from disaster-hit communities have played an active role in monitoring and directing relief aid after disasters. After the Marmara earthquake women in the tents observed that relief aid was not reaching those who really needed it so they negotiated with camp managers to take charge of aid distribution.

Women from earthquake-hit Yogyakarta told Turkish women which kinds of assistance and aid were useful and which were not. House repair materials, trauma healing and counseling for

children were useful according to Sri Rukhani, a woman leader from Puchung Growong village. But she went on to say that once basic food and shelter needs had been met people needed work and incomes. "A lot of funding came at the same time, and all of it was for house construction. No one wanted to provide livelihoods support." Women pointed out that timing of aid was critical. "Plastic tents came when they were not needed. We had to return them."



## Managing community information

Putting information in the hands of communities strengthens their ability to negotiate with decision makers and develop appropriate strategies.

In Jamaica the Construction Resource Development Centre realized that existing reconstruction programmes did not engage women or their communities, nor did it help communities to understand how they might cope with future disasters. So CRDC initiated vulnerability mapping in nine communities to help identify high risk areas and strategize on how communities could reduce risk.

In Turkey, grassroots women's organizations have conducted community surveys on safe and unsafe housing and compared their findings to Government data to find that many houses were wrongly classified.

ASHAA women's health groups in Tamil Nadu have undertaken community surveys which revealed the high health expenditures incurred by families. ASHAA women have also disseminated information to their communities on how to access government entitlements.



## 👁 Monitoring and assessing resilience building programmes

In partnership with the Huairou Commission, GROOTS International has evolved DisasterWatch as a methodology for grassroots women to monitor and assess disaster response programs. These community assessments are opportunities for grassroots women to survey communities and analyse the extent to which programmes respond to community priorities. Women's findings are then conveyed to decision makers.

On the second anniversary of the tsunami Huairou Commission and GROOTS International sponsored a DisasterWatch in which a team comprising grassroots leaders and professionals assessed the improvements and the problems experienced by their communities. The findings of this assessment were presented to District officials and National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India.

## 📢 Preparing emergency response teams

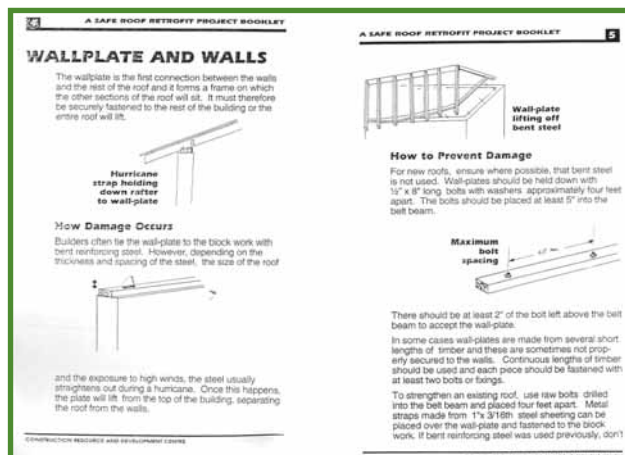
After the tsunami Sanghamitra Service Society decided that it was essential to prepare emergency task forces in the villages where they were working. SSS decided to demonstrate a strategy for disaster mitigation and emergency response in 22 of the 100 villages that they are working in. So far 4 emergency response teams comprising men and women have been trained to manage early warning and information, rescue, monitoring and distributing relief. In spite of the initial resistance to including women in these task forces, they make up 50% of the village emergency task forces. Task force members from Sanghamitra in Andhra Pradesh, traveled to tsunami affected Nagapattinam district where they were requested by NGO Rural Organization for Social Education (ROSE) to train community members to form a similar emergency task force in their village. Task forces trained by Sanghamitra have also learned to create contingency plans. But in addition to emergency preparedness activities, communities are also undertaking other disaster mitigation activities which include repairing cyclone shelters and planting mangroves to preserve the coastal eco system.

## ✦ Preparing tools and strategies for scaling up effective practice

Groots International has a strong commitment to promoting peer learning processes as a means of transferring knowledge and skills across grassroots groups. Over the last year, as part of our efforts to prepare a network of community trainers on resilience building GROOTS International in partnership with AJWS have been supporting grassroots leaders from nine different organizations to identify their skills and knowledge, prepare curriculum, tools and materials to train other disaster-prone communities.



Community leaders look at emergency task force manual



Safe roofing booklet



## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OFFERED BY COMMUNITY EXPERTS

### Comite de Emergencia Garifuna Honduras

- Organizing women to undertake disaster relief.
- Sustainable agriculture
- Food security

### Construction Resource and Development Center, Jamaica

- Building hurricane resistant roofs.
- Community risk mapping
- Prevention of river flooding (river groining)

### Estrategia, Peru

- Production of earthquake-resistant building components
- Construction of earthquake resistant houses.
- Strengthening the organizational capacity of the grassroots women
- Consciousness-raising, collection and dissemination of information for community advocacy.



### Sanghamitra Service Society, Andhra Pradesh, India

- Setting up emergency response teams
- Undertaking contingency planning
- Repairing and maintaining cyclone shelters

### Rural Organization for Social Education, Tamil Nadu India

- Setting up emergency task forces
- Integrating village development activities into the responsibilities of the Emergency Task Forces.

### Aceh and Yogyakarta, Urban Poor Link, Indonesia

- Running temporary shelters and community kitchens
- Community policing
- Supervising house construction
- Composting
- Social support groups for women

### Foundation for the Support of Women's Work, Turkey

- Confidence building and empowerment training
- Setting up and managing centres for women and children
- Running community enterprises
- Negotiating with officials

### Swayam Shikshan Prayog, Tamil Nadu India

- Improving village health and sanitation
- Reducing health expenditures
- Creating a village health fund
- Accessing to government health services and other basic services
- Building linkages with village councils

### Covenant Centre for Development, Tamil Nadu India

- Building federations of savings and credit groups to undertake community enterprise
- Taking women through each stage of federation building
- Improving health through herbal medicine
- Linking community entrepreneurs to markets
- Improving health through herbal medicines



## SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES, LONG TERM STRATEGIES & CHALLENGES

At our regional workshop in Indonesia to strengthen community trainers, community leaders from disaster prone communities in Indonesia and Turkey analyzed their stories to identify challenges, opportunities and long term strategies for participation used by women and men from disaster-affected communities.

### Entry points for collective action on practical needs after disaster

- Food security
- Pooling and distributing available money and supplies
- Collective labour and sharing tools for house repair
- Income generation
- Livelihoods
- Health and well being
- Child care and family support
- Protecting land and housing from encroachment
- Restoring basic services
- Composting and waste recycling
- Collecting information and reclaiming settlements (village mapping, community needs assessment)
- Negotiations with officials

### Long term strategies for sustaining efforts and leadership

- Mobilizing resources and information to participate as equals in decision making
- Reviving or building community organizations
- Establishing democratic participation and decision making processes
- Establishing public centres by and for women
- Reclaiming homes/land in traditional villages to anchor the communities' abilities to participate in decision making (which depends on their physical presence in their settlements).
- Mobilizing youth and educating children
- Building relationships with NGO's and other actors who can support communities to influence policy / decision- making and will work with them over a long time.

### Naming the challenges

- Mismatch between community needs and aid delivered, along with badly timed aid/ entitlements
- Bureaucratic procedures for accessing support
- Exclusive focus on relief and inadequate attention to long term process of recovery and rehabilitation
- Corruption by NGOs, government, communities and donors
- No spaces, respect or requirement for communities to participate in decision making.
- Women do not participate equally in public decision- making and implementation – concentration of women in the private sphere
- No reliable information available



## What's wrong with existing resilience building programmes and policies

Women are seen as victims and beneficiaries not stakeholders.

No requirement for women's participation or for community participation in decision making.

Mismatch between aid provided and community priorities.

Resilience building and risk reduction is de-linked from development programmes

Risk reduction tends to focus mainly on physical resilience and emergency response.

Professional experts and their expertise 'disappear' when projects end.

Grassroots women and disaster prone communities are excluded from decision making processes

## How policy makers can make a difference

Allocate resources and assign roles to grassroots women and their communities in designing, implementing and assessing programmes.

Set standards for women's participation in disaster risk reduction

Put resources, information in the hands of grassroots women and enable them to take decisions and identify priorities.

Design programmes that package risk reduction with grassroots development priorities.

Broaden risk reduction to address social, economic and political marginalization which make communities vulnerable.

Invest in building community expertise. Get community trainers to refine and scale up effective practices.

Create forums for dialogue among grassroots women and policy makers.

## Dispelling myths

Here are some common myths about women's participation in resilience building which need to be dispelled.

### **Women are a vulnerable group.**

While men and women experience different kinds of vulnerabilities in the context of natural disaster, putting women in the "vulnerable" category along with children, elderly and disabled is misleading. In every disaster grassroots women have played active roles to support their communities to cope with and recover from disasters.

### **Grassroots women's approaches to resilience exclude men.**

A lot of resistance to gender equity stems from the belief that men will be excluded. The fact is that grassroots women's efforts and aspirations are centred around the wellbeing of their families and communities. Grassroots women's priorities are clearly not exclusively women's concerns but community issues such as secure housing, better incomes, improving quality of education, health and sanitation in their communities.

### **"Community participation" means that women will automatically be included.**

Unless there is a conscious effort to build women's confidence and capacities to participate in community decision making they will remain at the periphery of all development or risk reduction programmes.

### **Community consultations equals community participation.**

Community consultations can be one element of community participation but meaningful participation is about supporting community based organizations to design, manage and evaluate resilience-building programmes on an ongoing basis.



## THEMATIC PROGRAMME ON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

### Honduras

In 16 towns affected by Hurricane Mitch on the northern coast of Honduras with Comité de Emergencia Garifuna. To find out more contact Ana Lucy Bengochea or Suzanne Shende at afro@hondutel.hn

### Jamaica

In the hurricane-prone cities of St Thomas and Kingston in Jamaica, with Construction Resource and Development Centre. To find out more contact Carmen Griffiths at Deav\_will@yahoo.com

### Peru

In earthquake-prone low-income neighborhoods in Lima, Peru, with Estrategia and Mujeres Unidas Para Un Pueblo Mejor. To find out more contact Marilu Sanchez at marilush@terra.com.pe

### Indonesia

In earthquake-affected Yogyakarta and Tsunami affected Aceh with Urban Poor Link Indonesia. To find out more contact Wardah Hafidz at Upc@centrin.net.id

### Andhra Pradesh, India:

In cyclone-prone Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh State, southeastern India, with the Sanghamitra Services Society; Emergency Task forces. To find out more contact Mr, S. Sivaji Sanghamitra.org@gmail.com

Global Secretariat is located in New York. To find out more write to Global Facilitator, Sandy Schilen at Grootsss@aol.com

### Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, India

In earthquake-affected areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra with Sakhi Women's Federations; and Tsunami-affected Tamil Nadu with ASHAA groups supported by Swayam Shikshan Prayog. For more information please contact P.Chandran at sspinfo@gmail.com

### Tamil Nadu, India

In drought-prone and tsunami-affected areas of Tamil Nadu with Covenant Centre for Development. For more information please contact V.C. Nadarajan at nadarajan.vc@gmail.com

### Tamil Nadu, India

In tsunami-affected Nagapattinam District with Rural Organization for Social Education. For more information please contact G. Ahila / Karthik at roseweman@rediffmail.com

### Turkey

In earthquake-affected Adapazari, Izmit and Duzce in Marmara Region, Turkey, with Foundation for the Support of Women's Work who partner with women's cooperatives. To find out more write to Sengul Akcar at sakcar@tnn.net

### Sri Lanka

Low income communities in tsunami hit cities Matara and Moratuwa with Sevanatha Urban Resource Center. To find out more write to K. Jayaratane at Kayjay5939@yahoo.com or Vajira Pathirana at oshadhi@sltnet.lk

Focal Point for Thematic Programme on Community Resilience is located in Mumbai. To find out more contact Prema Gopalan, sspindia@vsnl.net or Suranjana Gupta at Suranjanagroots@aol.com

## GROOTS International

GROOTS is an acronym for Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood. GROOTS International is building a global movement of rural and urban grassroots women's groups who are improving quality of life in poor, marginalized communities in the South and North through bottom-up, pro-poor, socially just, pluralistic solutions. GROOTS International is committed to the empowerment of grassroots women to:

- Develop their communities using pro-poor socially just, equitable, policies and solutions
- Advance governmental and institutional accountability to grassroots women
- Strengthen women's leadership to access and transform power at different levels
- Bridge the local and global by bringing grassroots analysis, solutions and voices to local, national, regional and global decision making.

GROOTS International is a member network of the Huairou Commission.