

The Asian Tsunami and Problem-Based Learning for Postgraduate Students in Sri Lanka

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The Asian Tsunami struck Sri Lanka on December 26, 2004. Sri Lanka was the second worst affected country after Indonesia, and this natural disaster killed in excess of 35,000 people and displaced over 1 million. The article explores the Tsunami Disaster Management Program developed by one Sri Lankan university: the Postgraduate Institute of Management at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The program encouraged postgraduate students to undertake a range of recovery management projects to improve the operation of temporary camps and restore the livelihoods of tsunami survivors. The article examines the steps taken by postgraduate students to diagnose problems within the camps and implement a comprehensive range of solutions. The recovery management projects enhanced postgraduate students' managerial skills in diagnosis and analysis, planning and goal setting, leading teams and conflict resolution as well as their awareness of their social responsibilities to local communities at a time of national crisis. The article also highlights a number of lessons for other educational institutions contemplating changing their curricula to promote a stronger focus on problem-based learning.

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