

NARRATIVE REPORTING ON THE EMERGENCY ASSESSMENT AMONG RETURNEE FAMILIES IN VAHARAI DS DIVISION, BATTICALOA



An assessment undertaken between 26 May – 22 June 2007

Narrative Report filed on 29 June 2007

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Background

The Vaharai Emergency Assessment (EA) employs a family-level questionnaire of over 150 questions covering 11 sectors (basic information, accessibility, demographics, shelter, water & sanitation, medical, health, protection, food & nutrition, income & work recovery, and education). The questionnaire-design process entailed a meeting with UN and related agencies in Colombo on May 7th and meetings with UN agencies and NGOs in the Batticaloa District on May 10th and 11th. Subsequent reformulations were conducted over email. The questionnaire was finalized at 12 noon on Tuesday, May 15th.

Field Implementation

The sampling framework for the Vaharai Emergency Assessment (EA) used cluster sampling at the Grama Nilidhari (GN) Division Level. The survey was undertaken in 7 of the 12 GN Divisions- 4 coastal GN Divisions and 3 interior GN Divisions. Eight percent (8%) of the total resettled population was sampled at random along the main and interior roads based on figures released by OCHA on 31 March 2007.

Prior to survey implementation, four local women were hired to assist the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) operator in data collection. These young women received two days of training during which time they were exposed to the objectives of the survey as well as the meaning and intent of each and every question. The field team also had a one-hour session with the Shelter Coordination Cell (UNHCR/UNOPS) to learn how to assess housing damages.

The survey took place between 26 May and 22 June and included 18 days of data collection. There was a five-day break given to the field teams after completion of the coastal GNDs and the commencement of the interior GNDs.

Each field team included two persons (one man and one woman): one person operated the PDA through which the data was collected and the other person assisted in the data collection and was engaged in holding individual discussions with women and/or children as well as following up on water sources and water storage systems.

Results

An individual report for each GN Division was created within 5 days of data collection, its collation, and checks on its quality and circulated to stakeholders in Colombo and Batticaloa. These reports provided raw data in an Excel format. The raw data tables are available on request.

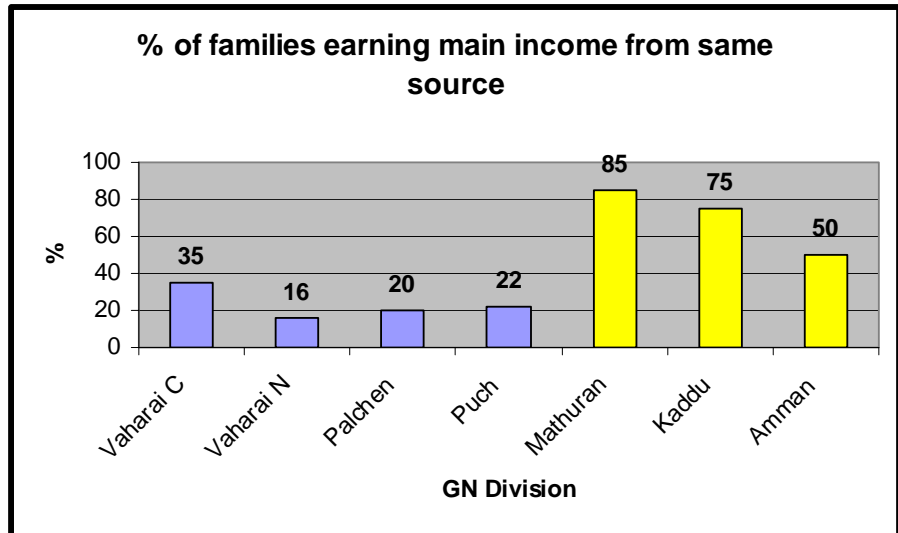
This report *complements* the previously-circulated reports and provides an aggregated analysis of all seven GN Divisions. Graphs are used to easily convey data. When relevant or when a difference is particularly striking, the data is disaggregated by coastal or interior GN Division (coastal in blue and interior in yellow).

| GN Division | Total # of returnee families as of 31/3/2007 | 8% |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------|
| Vaharai Central | 352 | 28 |
| Vaharai North | 145 | 12 |
| Ammanthanaveli | 407 | 32 |
| Palchenai | 435 | 35 |
| Puchchakerny | 611 | 49 |
| Mathurankernykulam | 141 | 13 |
| Kaddumurivu | 107 | 8 |
| | 2198 | 177 |

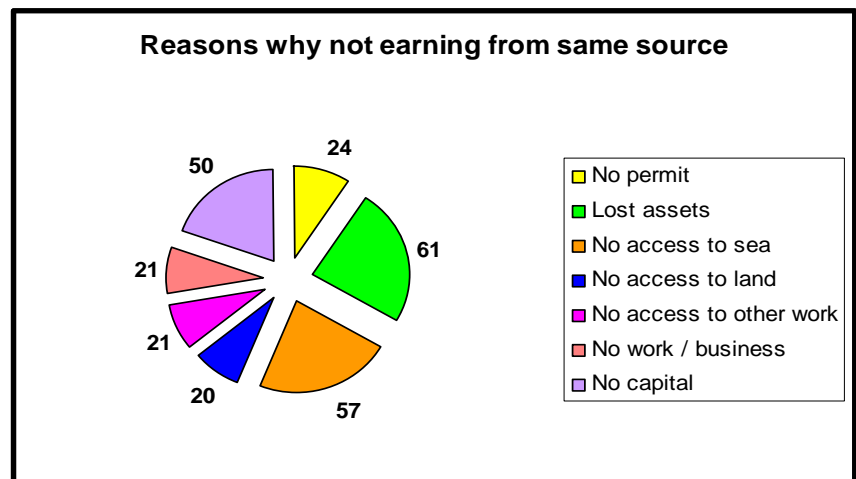
Income / Work Recovery

After their 2006 displacement, families began to return to the Vaharai DS Division as early as 17 February 2007. 67% of the respondents stated that they believed that the security situation would enable them to restart their livelihood activities.

The adjacent graph shows the percentage of families who are earning their main source of income from the same source / job now as they did before they were displaced. The results indicate that families in coastal areas are having a more difficult time with job recovery than families living in interior GN Divisions.



Families who are not earning their main source of income in the same way now as they were before they were displaced gave the reasons in the second chart below. As respondents were allowed to indicate all the reasons why they were not earning from the same source / job, the total equals more than 100%.



80% of respondents stated that they were interested in temporary manual employment. 72% of persons interested would be willing to engage in this type of work for more than 3 months. The average daily wage requested is Rs. 556.00 (average range was Rs. 500 – Rs. 650 per day).

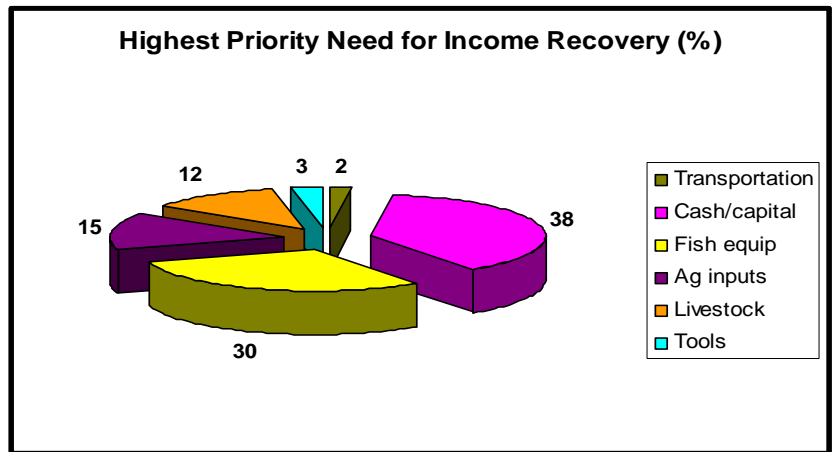
62% are interested in receiving a cash payment for this type of work whereas 34% are interested in receiving payment in both cash and food.

73% of respondents owned livestock before displacement. 17% of these same families own livestock now. Livestock typically owned were cattle, chickens, and goats.

53% of families reported owning agricultural land. Of these families, 42% reported that they do not have access to their land. In cases where access exists, the extent of the land that can be cultivated is restricted.

None of the families interviewed in Kaddumurivu GN Division own their own land. 80% of the families in this GN Division who are working in agriculture or in fishing are renting the equipment that they work with.

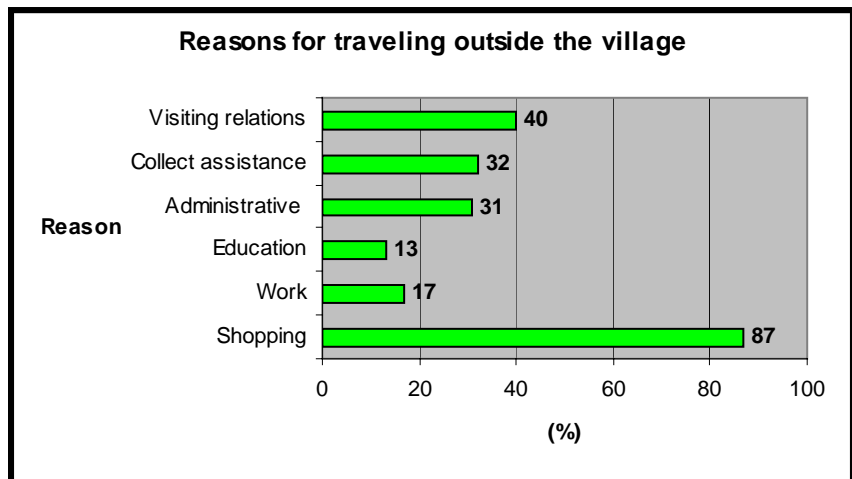
Respondents were asked what was needed the most for their income recovery: access to cash & capital was the most-frequently cited requirement (38%). Respondents were asked to identify their second most-important need for livelihood recovery as well. 24% of respondents stated that livestock was their second greatest need for livelihood recovery.



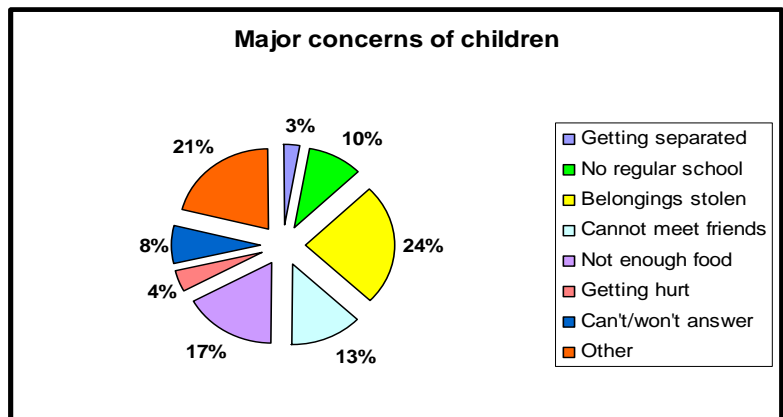
Protection

A series of questions were asked of the respondents that focused on protection issues. Some of these questions were general while other questions elicited opinions from children. 26% of families noted that some family members were missing National Identity Cards. 41% of responding families stated that one or more family members were missing birth certificates.

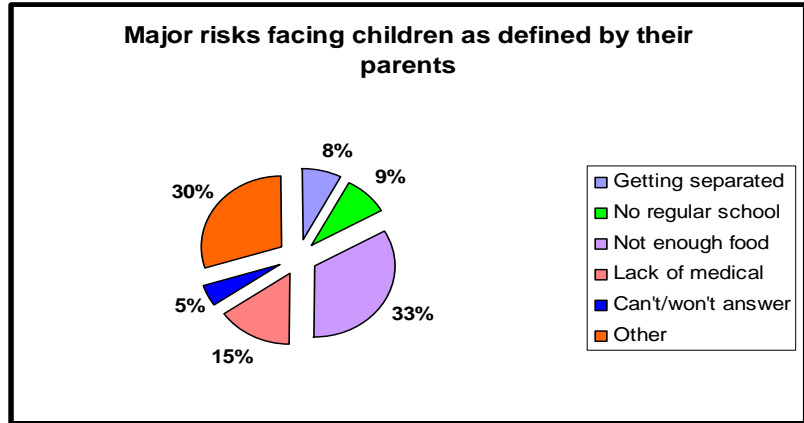
As freedom of movement is an important indicator for security and related issues of protection, respondents were asked about their travel patterns. In over 75% of families both men and women regularly travel outside of the village and use public transportation, where available. Reasons for not using public transportation were that there was no need to travel anywhere and that bus fare is too expensive.



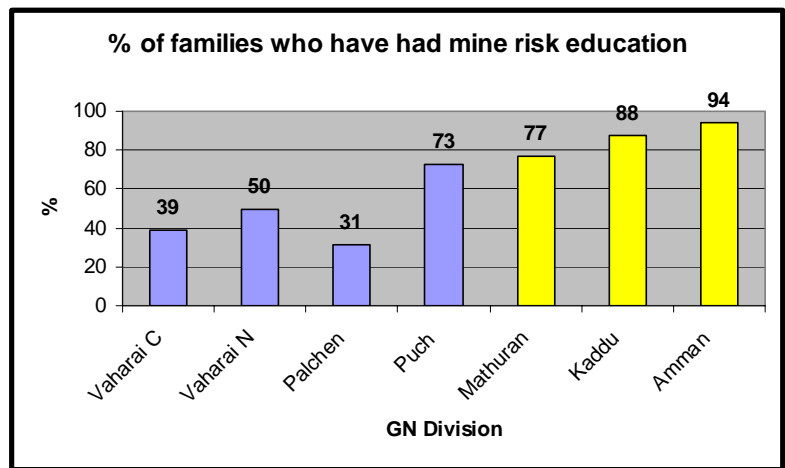
Children over the age of 10 were asked what their major concern was after their return. Due to the sensitivity of the question, children were not forced to answer and in fact 8% chose not to. The 'other' category here is substantial (21%), children had concerns about not owning enough school supplies or a bike to travel to school to allow for regular attendance.



Parents also were asked what they believed was the biggest risk facing their children after their return. Parents (8%) are more afraid about their children becoming separated from the family than children are (3%). Parents also expressed concern about their overall ability to provide for their families, which was frequently cited as 'other'.

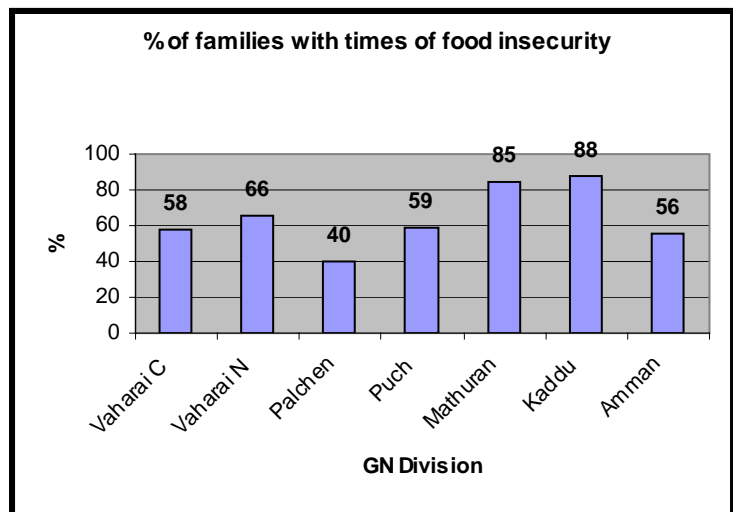


Families were asked whether or not they had received mine risk education in the past three months. The rates of mine risk education are shown in the adjacent bar graph. A PDA operator found a mine in the village of Vammivadavan in Ammanthanveli GN Division. The land mine was found at the edge of the village and 30 meters from the closest house. According to the person who found the mine, the villagers had informed Sarvodaya one month earlier, but they had not taken any action. The data collection team informed the nearest security check point on the day they found it (21st June 2007) and the security forces removed it the same day.



Food Security & Nutrition

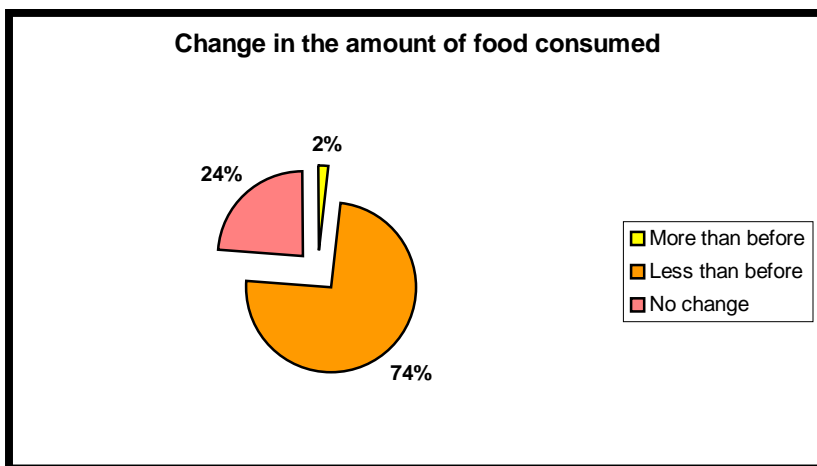
In order to understand issues of food insecurity, families were asked if there were times since their return to Vaharai when they did not have enough food to eat or did not have any money to buy food. The results are shown in the adjacent bar chart. The greatest percentage of families facing food insecurity lives in the interior GN Divisions of Kaddumurivu and Mathurankernykulam. It should be noted that families started returning to the area as early as 17 February 2007. This question does not address the period of food insecurity. It could have been within the first few weeks of return or continuing into the present.



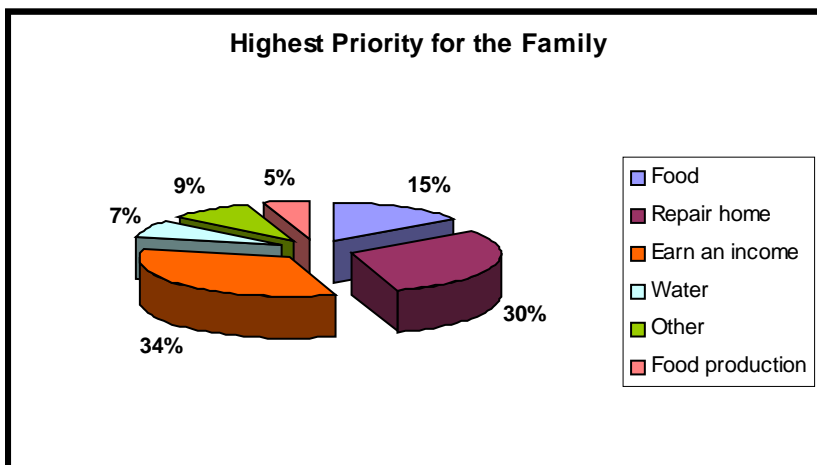
Families were asked if they had received food rations in the previous four weeks. 95% of responding families stated that they had received food rations within that time period. Due to the fact that many families in coastal GN Divisions had received food rations more than once during that time period, the questionnaire was modified prior to the survey in the interior GN Divisions. In the GN Division of Kaddumurivu, 38% of families stated that they had received rations 3 or more times in the previous 4 weeks. In the areas of Ammanthaveli and Mathurankernykulam, 19% and 54% of families respectively received rations twice during the same period.

33% of families stated that they buy their food provisions locally within their own village; two-thirds of the population is traveling to Valaichennai to buy their provisions. Persons stated that all forms of meats, vegetables and pulses are available in Valaichennai and that the majority of these items were being purchased. The exception to this general condition is in Kaddumurivu, Vaharai North and Mathurankernykulam, where persons claimed that they do not purchase meat (chicken, beef, pork and mutton) on a regular basis.

Families were asked to comment on changes in their food consumption before and after their return. The majority of families (74%) stated that they are eating less now than they were before they were displaced.



The extent to which food security is amongst the highest priorities for families since their return is reflected in the response to the question, “What is the highest priority for your family now?” 20% of the responding families stated that either food or the resumption of food production activities was their highest priority. If we take into account that 34% of families are most interested in earning an income and that 33% of families stated that they major risk facing their children was not enough food to eat (p.5), it can be assumed that earning an income is oriented towards having money to purchase food.



Shelter

The type of shelter occupied by returnees was classified into three categories: temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent. A solid cement foundation is one of the features that differentiate a semi-permanent shelter from a temporary shelter. In the four coastal GN Divisions, 44% of the respondents were living in tsunami transitional shelter.

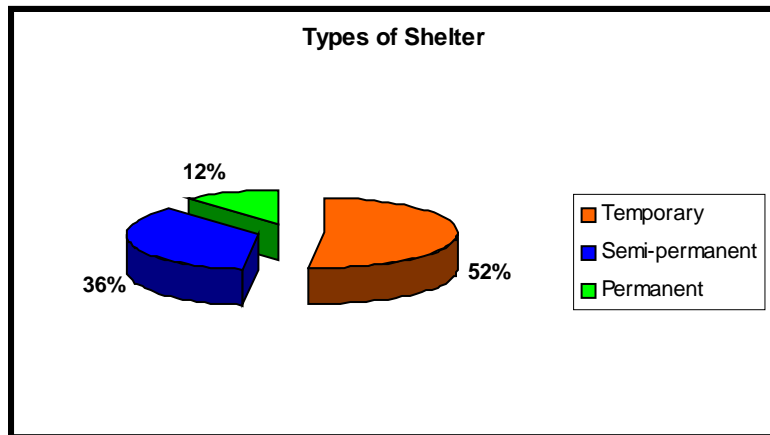
70% of the dwellings are less than 200 square feet.

7% of dwellings have more than 8 residents.



Damage to dwellings was assessed only for permanent housing units. Overall, 80% of the damage is considered to be 'light' however, families living in permanent housing structures were interviewed in only 4 of the 7 GN Divisions. The majority of returnees in Vaharai DS Division live in temporary or semi-permanent shelter.

The Vaharai DS Division is both a conflict and tsunami-affected area, as such there are two implementation modalities for housing reconstruction: owner-driven and donor-driven. In addition to the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) owner-driven program, North East Housing Reconstruction Program (NEHRP), a number of non-governmental



organizations are involved in building permanent housing. In the EA sample, the most frequently-cited donor agencies (other than the GoSL) were: GTZ, Red Cross / IFRC, CARE, KPNDU, and ACTED. ACTED is supporting owner-driven housing in the village of Mathurankernykulam. The Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) was another frequently-cited agency, but it is questionable whether or not it will resume any future activities in the area.

Health and Medical

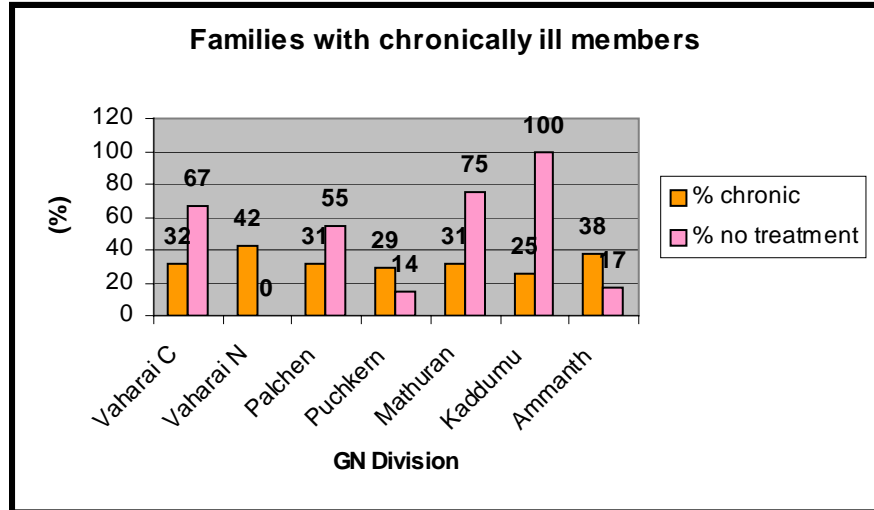
While the Italian Red Cross operates a mobile clinic, respondents in only 2 of the 7 GN Divisions (Puchchakerny and Kaddumurivu) knew about it. Respondents who knew about the mobile clinic reported that it is held once a month.

The majority of respondents use the hospital in Vaharai Centre, although families in Ammanthaveli reported using the hospital in Katharively and families in Mathurankernykulam reported using the hospital in Valaichennai. Residents of Vaharai Centre are centrally-located

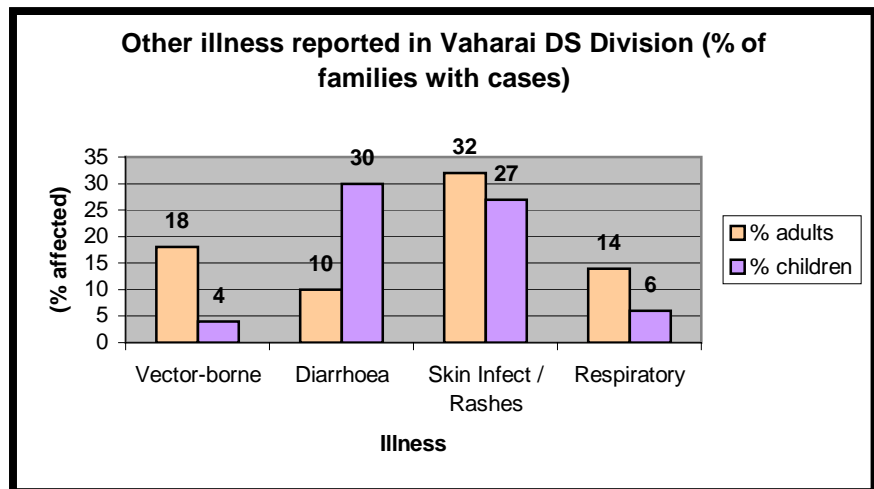
with respect to the hospital, but the residents of Puchchakerny need a travel time of 110 minutes (on average) to reach the Vaharai Central Hospital.

In total, persons with physical disabilities were found in 10 of the families interviewed (in 3 GN Divisions: Vaharai Centre, Puchchakerny, and Kaddumurivu).

The adjacent bar graph shows the percentage of families that reported that they had chronically-ill family members (orange) and the percentage of those chronically-ill family members who **DO NOT** have medical treatment and medical care (pink).



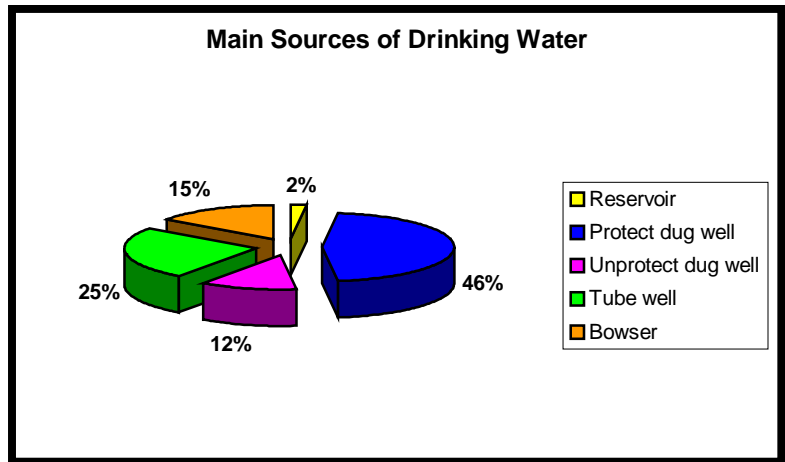
In addition to chronic illnesses, families were questioned about the incident of communicable and other infections / diseases suffered by family members and were asked to report the number of adult family members and children who suffered from the illnesses listed in the adjacent bar chart.



Water and Sanitation

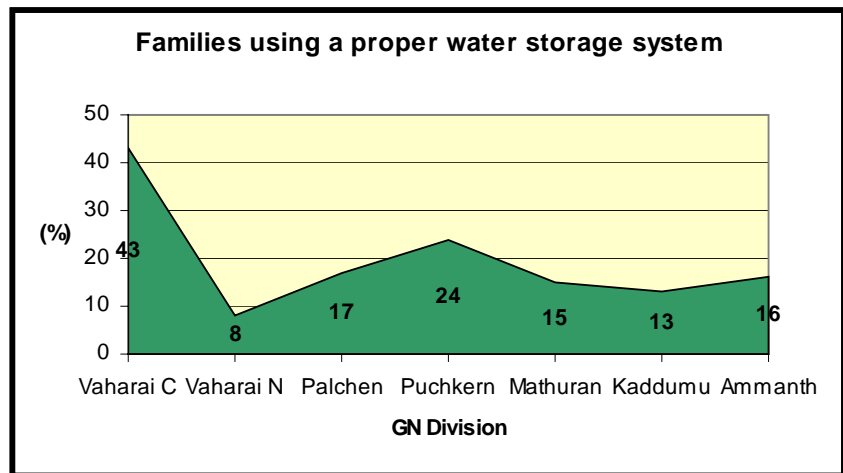
65% of the families surveyed **DO NOT** have access to toilet facilities.

Families were asked about the place from which they collect their drinking water. The responses to this question are shown in the adjacent pie chart. Families were asked about the source of water for other domestic purposes: 50% indicated a protected dug well. Water from the lake in Mathurankernykulam is used for other domestic purposes in this village.



The majority of respondents (81%) stated that they considered their drinking water to be clean. The largest exception was in Kaddumurivu GN Division where only 38% of respondents considered their water to be clean. Even though families consider their drinking water clean, a number of respondents still take precautionary measures. 32% of families boil their water before drinking and 15% filter water through a cloth. All of the responding families in Mathurankernykulam have their drinking water delivered by bowser and large water tanks for public use are strategically located throughout the village.

The safety of drinking water is contingent also on whether or not families store their drinking water supply in covered containers. The adjacent chart shows the percentage of interviewed families who store their water in covered containers.

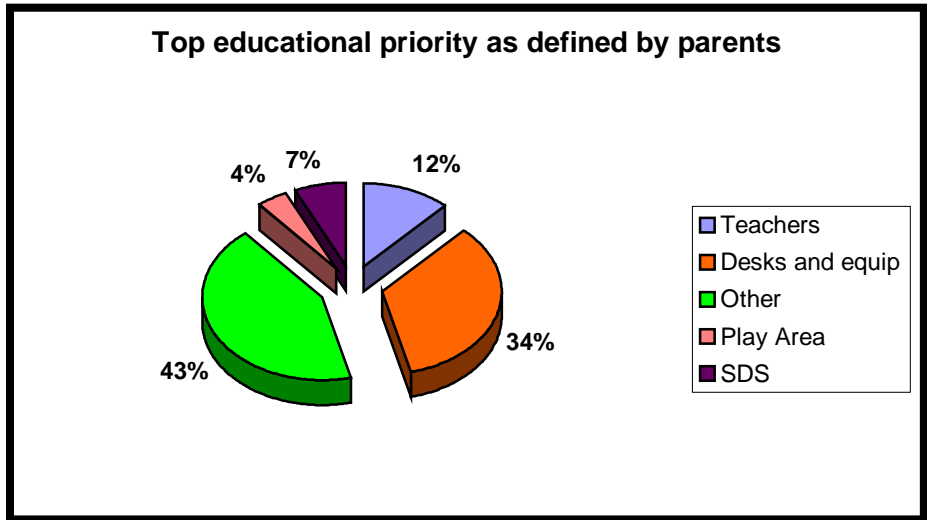


Education

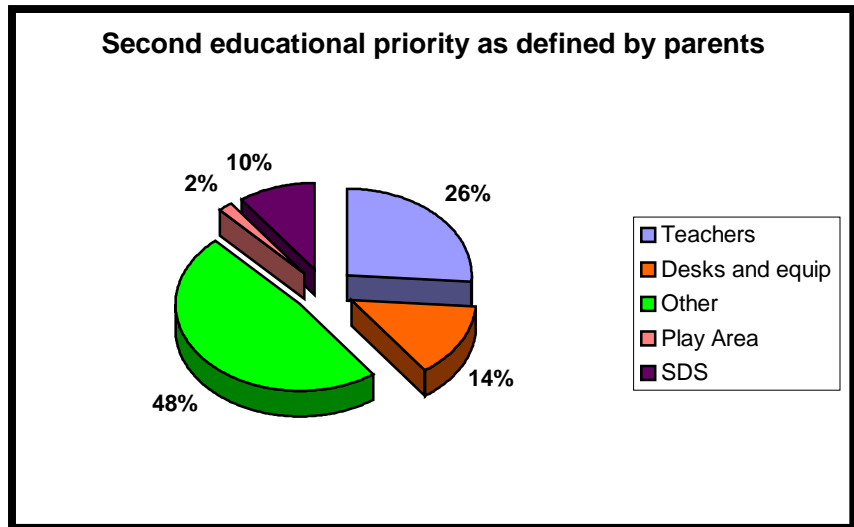
65% of the families that were interviewed have children of school-going age.

In 5 of the 7 GN Divisions, school-going age children are going to school. In the Ammanthaveli GN Division, 3 families with school-going age children are not sending their children to school for the following reasons: fear that they will get separated from the family or the child is not interested in attending school. In the Kaddumiruvu GN Division, one family is not sending their children to school because they need her/him to work at home.

Parents of school-going children were asked what they thought was the primary educational priority in their community. The responses to this question are given in the adjacent graph (SDS = School Development Society). Responses in the 'other' category included stationary supplies and footwear for children, more school buildings, a secondary school, better transportation and electricity and water supply for the school.



Parents also defined what they thought was the second highest educational priority in their community. When comparing the adjacent pie chart to the one above it becomes apparent that the 2 greatest educational needs in the area are desks / chairs / and equipment followed by more teachers. Responses in the 'other' category again included water and electricity, secondary classes, transport, school materials for children and more buildings.



Only two children were found who could not sit for either the 'O' or 'A' level examination due to displacement.

94% of school-going children received school supplies while they were displaced. Only 2% of these children were not allowed to bring these supplies back with them when they returned.

The school serving the children of Mathurankernykulam only goes to Grade 9 after which the children stop attending school. Respondent families also reported that the secondary school in Vaharai Centre does not offer 'A' levels.