



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

Head Office: 254 Jaffna Road, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka

Ph/Fax: +94 (0) 212285727

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

22 JULY 2008

Looming Humanitarian Crises in Vanni

As a result of artillery shelling and aerial bombardment by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and Air Force (SLAF) 12,504 families (45,338 persons) have been displaced within the Vanni (the "Vanni" consists of the districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu and parts of the Mannar and Vavuniya districts) since the end of June.

These 45,338 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) join the 107,048 IDPs in the Vanni who have been displaced since the return to war in April 2006. Most of these IDPs have been repeatedly displaced, some up to ten times, since being displaced from the Jaffna District in 1995; many also lost their homes and possessions in the 2004 tsunami.

Location of Recent IDPs	Families	Persons
Mulankavil & Vellankulam areas	7,650	27,540
Vannerikulam	1,004	3,614
Kilinochchi District	2,470	8,892
Oddusudan and Mankulam areas	1,470	5,292
Total	12,594	45,338

The humanitarian situation in the Vanni is becoming critical due to the resumption of war and limited access to the conflict areas that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) allows to international NGOs, the UN and the media. Additionally, the GoSL has placed severe restrictions and embargoes on the transportation of essential items such as food, medicine, fuel, and construction materials to the Vanni. The ability to address the humanitarian needs that have resulted from the GoSL military offensives and aerial bombing is severely **limited as a result of these restrictions and embargoes**.

Prior to the recent displacement most sectors had the minimum stocks necessary to address the needs of the IDPs but there was **limited amount of contingency stocks available for any new IDPs**. Stocks available in the Vanni are now dangerously low, especially in the food, shelter, water & sanitation and health (WASH) sectors.

The ability of all humanitarian organizations operating in the Vanni to provide humanitarian assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable populations is greatly compromised by the GoSL fuel quotas. These fuel quotas are enforced on all UN agencies, international NGOs, and even Sri Lankan government institutions and agents. UN Agency and international NGO monthly fuel supply requests are regularly halved by the Ministry of Defence severely curtailing their ability to operate.

These embargoes and restrictions are violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and the Geneva Conventions. Coupled with the incessant attacks on civilians by the SLA, SLAF and SLA Deep Penetration Units (DPU), which utilize Claymore mines in ambushes on civilians.

TRO Response

Volunteers from TRO, other local NGOs and Community Based Organization (CBOs) are providing emergency relief assistance to the IDPs with the assistance and support of TRO, local NGOs & CBOs and the Tamil Diaspora. TRO is also providing transportation and cooked meals to the IDPs, which is hampered by the limited supplies of fuel.

Due to a lack of construction materials to build temporary shelters and toilets most of the IDPs are living under trees, tarpaulins, tents, or other locally available materials. Heavy "out of season" rains have further contributed to the IDPs'



Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation

Head Office: 254 Jaffna Road, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka

Ph/Fax: +94 (0) 212285727

suffering and have increased the risk of the spread of disease due to the lack of adequate sanitation facilities. The lack of adequate shelter for IDPs and their belongings during the rains has great suffering.

International NGOs have committed to provide 1,300 of the required temporary shelters and Non-Food Relief Items (NFRI), but an additional 5,000 temporary shelters are required in the short term.

Mannar District Situation (See Table 1 & Map for details)

Civilians from the Adampan, Andankulam, Madhu, Vidathalthivu, Iluppaikadavai, Thevanpidy, and Moonampiddy areas have totally displaced. 7,650 IDP families (approximately 32,000 persons) are now living in tents and under trees in the Mulankavil and Vellankulam areas.

As a result of an attack by the SLAF in Mulankavil and Nachchikuda 764 families displaced to Vannerikulam and 240 families displaced from Vellankulam to Vannerikulam.

Mullaitivu District Situation (See Table 1 & Map for details)

Civilians from Mallavi, Thunukai, Pandiyankulam (2,470 families / 8,892 persons) were displaced and have sought shelter in Akkarayan, at the Ampalaperumal Temple, and Murukandy in the Kilinochchi District

1,470 families (5,292 persons) from Vavuniya North (Nedunkerni, Iththimadu, Kunchukulam) have been displaced to the Oddusudan and Mankulam areas.

Schools

Entire schools have also been displaced as a result of the return to war. The teachers and principals of these schools have also been displaced and have had to leave without their educational items (books, chairs, desks etc.) These schools are, where possible, functioning on the premises of existing schools in the areas into which the IDP population has displaced. Classes are conducted under the trees and in temporary classrooms constructed from locally available natural materials. Due to the parents' fear of shelling and bombing many parents are reluctant to send their children to school and as a result attendance is down in many schools.

Table 2		
District	Number of Schools Displaced	Number of Students
Mannar	13	7,200
Mullaitivu	6	3,800
Vavuniya North	9	4,000

APPEAL

TRO appeals to the GoSL to allow unimpeded access by humanitarian agencies and humanitarian emergency relief including food, medicine, NFRI, fuel and construction materials and to ensure that civilians are not targeted by artillery and aerial bombardments.

TRO urges the International Community to hold the GoSL accountable for violations of IHL and IHRL and ensure that humanitarian assistance and access are unimpeded.

TRO thanks the Tamil Diaspora for its ongoing support and request that the Diaspora continues to support the response to this humanitarian crisis and raise awareness of the suffering of the people of the NorthEast.

Table 3		
April 2006 - July 2008 IDPs by District		
Location	Number of Families	Number of Individuals
Jaffna	6,258	21,192
Kilinochchi	14,245	54,527

