

Challenges of IDP Resettlement in Sri Lanka

An Examination of Northern Spring Program in Vavuniya District

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Abstract

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and their resettlement are not new phenomena among post-war countries. This article focuses on IDPs, who have been displaced by nearly 3 decades of protracted conflict, and their resettlement in Sri Lanka. Conflict-induced internal displacement has become a major obstacle in developing the nation, due to the massive number and prolonged cycle of protracted conflict. During conflicts, civilians have been targeted by either the Sri Lankan government forces or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are identified as a liberation movement group fighting for the minority's independence from the Sinhala ruling government in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Since the end of the war in May 2009, substantial rehabilitation and reconstruction processes have taken place under the government programs. Resettling IDPs in their places of origin became a prime task under a special development program called 'Northern Spring' to rebuild the affected areas of the entire Northern Province. As a multi step program, at present 180 day program, which is the first stage in this program, has been implemented with the intention to bring back the normalcy in the affected areas. Vavuniya district is one of the five districts in the Northern Province and was chosen as a field area to examining the implementation of 'Northern Program' in terms of IDP resettlement. The results revealed that, in spite of the rapid process of resettlement implemented under this program, still the gap remains between the efforts by the Government of Sri Lanka and the satisfaction of the IDPs. The way the IDP resettlement is being implemented has created more grievances since their recovery needs are large than what they received related with safety, property and conditions of sustainability before they resettled. Despite this fact, government also has many challenges to overcome in the implementation of this program.

I. Introduction

Internal displacement has become a tragic consequence of over 26 years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka. After declaring the military victory against LTTE by the government of Sri Lanka in May 2009, the process of peacebuilding has been envisaged under several national level programs and projects. Resettling IDPs in their places of origin became a prime task under the special mega development program called 'Northern Spring' to rebuild the affected areas of the Northern Province. The Government proclaimed that their resettlement process under this program was not only focuses on rehabilitating physical resources and infrastructure in those resettled regions, but also, more importantly, give the displaced people new hopes and confidence that they could restart their lives without the threat of terror as free people in their own homes once again.

There are some prime reasons to carry out this research. After the conclusion of this armed conflict, the government of Sri Lanka launched its development programs to recover the nation rapidly. The northern part of Sri Lanka is a very significant target under the 'Northern Spring' program which covers the five districts: Jaffna, Kilinochi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya. As a newly implemented program with the main target being its implementation of IDP resettlement, it is still in the beginning stages. Besides this, during the rapid process of the resettlement exercise, it received many critiques in terms of its quality. Specifically, the first stage of this program, failed to implement during the time frame that the government expected. Therefore, the researcher was interested in this program to study about IDP resettlement.

Even though the government of Sri Lanka has given high priority to the IDP resettlement and expedited the process soon

after the armed conflict was over, there is a gap still remains between the government's efforts and the satisfaction among the re-settlers. At the same time, the ground reality in resettled areas failed to show the fact that what the government official sources described about the implementation of IDP resettlement. Therefore, this research was aimed at analyzing the situation regarding the gap.

Throughout this research on the IDP resettlement, the measures undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka, the reality between the facts and figures of the government sources, and the ground situation with reference to Vavuniya district including the confronting issues facing by resettled IDPs in relation to mainly 3 aspects of 'safety', 'property' and 'conditions for sustainability before they return'¹, particularly in the Vavuniya district were identified and finally the challenges facing by the government were explored.

Data accumulated in this research were through interview and questionnaire methods among re-settlers and government officials. The study found that, even though the process of resettlement was being implemented rapidly, re-settlers were not satisfied because of the inability to access with the expected quality as well as quantity of aid efforts and its implementation. Despite this ground facts, as a responsible mechanism, the government also has many challenges in the implementation process to fulfill all requisites regarding the IDP resettlement. Therefore, this research helps to shed light on the ground reality and the challenges for the government about resettlement.

It is probable that the strategies of the government in the resettlement process are carefully chosen to serve their citizens and to provide all citizens with the necessary aid, though it may not have been completely successful. Therefore, it is apparent that the government, to some extent, has succeeded in providing the resettling IDPs in Vavuniya district physically with such assistance before and after they resettled. None of the respondents mentioned any aid efforts from the government and NGOs that do not reach them. However, it does not mean that, they have come to their normalcy of life back. It is worth noticing that though the government has met certain obligations through its commitments relating with IDP resettlement, it has not yet fulfilled IDPs expectation; the involvement of the government, and NGOs in the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts are still highly needed which can be an indication to enhance an effective ongoing implementation.

II. Defining Internally Displaced Persons and Resettlement

1. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The existing definition for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) which has been revealed by the United Nations (UN) states that "... internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".² In this regard, there are two basic elements significant in the concept related to IDP; involuntary choice of movement and movement within the national territory. When IDPs were first counted in 1982, 1.2 million were found in eleven different countries.³ According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council report on internal displacement, the number of people internally displaced by conflict or violence as of December 2009 was 27.1 million.⁴ Sri Lanka is one of the countries where internal displacement took place due to nature and man-made disasters.

2. Resettlement of IDPs

Along with the previous concept, resettlement of IDPs generally, becomes the main focus for governments of each particular state. 'Resettlement', as it is termed by the United Nation's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement means, local integration in the areas in which IDPs initially take refuge or relocation to another part of the country.⁵ Related to Sri Lanka's situation, where they have entered into the post-war phase, IDPs' issues are considered a vital factor in their peacebuilding, development and reconstruction processes. Usually, the resettlement of the IDPs at their places of residence causes huge strains for the responsible bodies unless done in a proper manner. Therefore, this process needs international assistance in order to prevent those strains and to prevent further related conflicts.

In the framework of the resettlement of conflict-induced IDPs, it is required to exercise basic pre-conditions for the resettling families before they are resettled. According to the United Nation's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement principle 28 "Competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as to provide the means which allows IDPs to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.

In this sense, this paper deals with the issues of IDP resettlement in relation to their safety, property and conditions for

sustainability.

III. Protracted Displacement and Citizens in Sri Lanka

Internal displacement is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lankan history. Therefore, this is one such case in which protracted armed conflict, political violence, and polarization of society along ethno-political lines has produced protracted, multiple, fluid and hidden forms of displacement.⁶ There are three main causes to be addressed with regards to induced internal displacement in Sri Lanka: development, disasters (natural), and conflict.

Development-Induced Displacement (DID)

Sri Lanka had experienced with two of the world's largest irrigation systems: the Gal Oya Irrigation Project (1948-52) and the Mahaweli Development and Irrigation Project or MDIP (1970-2000). "These 'mega'-projects were spawned by a modernized ideology that fused capital-intense interventions with centralized national planning. 'They signaled the arrival of newly independent and industrializing economies on the international stage'.⁷ In addition to guaranteeing national self-sufficiency in agriculture and the generation of electricity for industrial and domestic consumption, large development projects were expected to resolve persistent social and economic challenges."⁸ This project scheme became controversial due to the government's relocation incentives leading to internal displacement from the south into the north-east predominantly in Sinhala. This trend helped fuel the grievances of the "Tamil nationalists" who viewed the pattern as 'colonization' of their traditional homeland.⁹ This colonization strategy discriminated against Sri Lankan Tamils since they were not only disproportionately excluded from the colony units, but the usual challenges of distributing irrigation water between head and tail-end areas were complicated by escalating ethnic rivalries in the areas where canals were built.¹⁰

Natural-Disaster Induced Displacement

Natural disasters such as landslides, droughts, cyclones and floods cause the population to be vulnerable. However, the sufferings from these sorts of displacement, except the previous tsunami, are usually minor and resettlement starts within days, weeks or months, but occasionally, the impact is greater. In the Sri Lankan history the tsunami of December 2004 was an unforeseen disaster. The wave swept across the country's eastern, and southern and part of the western coast affecting over 1,000 km of coastline and 13 out of the country's 25 districts. With over 35,000 people dead and about a million displaced, the tsunami casualty figures almost reached, within a single day, numbers equal to those caused by 20 years of armed conflict.¹¹ The total number of people displaced is estimated to be around 553,000. Among them 350,000 people already remained displaced as a result of the armed conflict.¹²

Conflict-Induced Displacement

Armed conflict alone causes a large influx of people from their places of origin unlike the causes of development and natural disaster. Therefore, this article mainly targeted on IDP resettlement caused by the conflict. Conflict-induced displacement began in 1915, during the Sinhalese-Muslim ethnic violence and following with 1958 riots which resulted in the displacement of more than 12,000 Sri Lankan Tamil families from the capital alone. During the early 1970s another internal displacement and resettlement was triggered by communal violence in the southern part of Sri Lanka. In August 1977 another bout of internal displacement occurred due to the anti-Tamil riots which broke out in Colombo, Kandy, Panadura, Kalutara, Jaffna and other districts. This led to the killing of hundreds of Tamils and Sinhalese and resulted in more than 10,000 Sri Lankan and estate Tamil families becoming IDPs.¹³ The volume of displacement radically changed in July 1983, most prominent example of major violence in the Sri Lankan conflict called 'Black July'. This caused a large-scale displacement in the Tamil community. Along with these, there were some atrocities done visibly by the LTTE such as assassination, harassment, intimidation, and extortion, massacres which caused more displacement. Particularly, an ethnic related forced eviction occurred against Muslims in October 1990 by the LTTE and evicted all the Muslims from the Northern Province.¹⁴

When the February 2002 Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) was signed between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, almost half of Sri Lanka's conflict-affected IDPs returned their homes. The rate of return slowed during the second half of 2005 due to the military engagements in the northern and the eastern parts of the island. By the end of 2002, approximately 732,000 IDPs were registered, of which an estimated 168,000 were residing in over 300 welfare centers and relocation villages in the northern and the eastern parts of Sri Lanka.¹⁵ At the end of November 2007, UN agencies estimated that around 185,000 people were still displaced in the northern and the eastern parts of Sri Lanka due to the fighting in 2006 and 2007. This was down from a high of 308,000 IDPs recorded in March 2007. In addition, over 312,000 people were still displaced from before

the 2002 ceasefire.¹⁶ By May 2008, the IDP caseload was determined to reduce to 481,000, including approximately, 26,000 tsunami IDPs. By August, intense fighting in the North displaced between 55,000 and 75,000 people, bringing the total number of conflict-displaced people in Sri Lanka to over 500,000.¹⁷ Between October 2008 and June 2009 during the Eelam War IV¹⁸ battle, more than 280,000 people crossed from the conflict zone to the government-controlled territory in northern part of Sri Lanka. By early June 2009, almost all of the displaced people were residing in temporary camps, this included approximately 260,000 people in camps in the Vavuniya district.¹⁹

After the battle concluded in 2009, the number of IDPs was gradually declining due to the government's efforts in resettling. This ongoing resettlement process is being undertaken by the above-mentioned development program along with other rehabilitation and reconstruction processes.

IV. IDP Resettlement in the Sri Lankan Context

Resettlement is a vital tool and in this regard, international responsibility-sharing mechanism with regards to protection, can be a key element in comprehensive solution strategies. It aims to provide protection to refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental human rights are at risk in their country of asylum.²⁰ In this regard, IDP resettlement in Sri Lanka has nearly the same timeline as internal displacement history.

According to existing international standards, such as international humanitarian law and human rights mechanisms, which are to serve as a guide for governments, as well as international humanitarian and development agencies, in providing assistance and protection to IDPs,²¹ the term 'return' is used to imply the return to one's home and land. Resettlement, on the other hand, is generally a term used to imply being located to a place other than one's place of origin. The Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement differentiate the two terms in principle 28 as, "to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country."²² In the Sri Lankan context, many government officials use the terms 'return' and 'resettlement' interchangeably without much thought to what this means in accordance with international standards. This has resulted in a situation where, upon returning to the district of origin, regardless of whether a person has returned to one's own home and land, there is an assumption that the return is complete.²³

The resettlement process started in several areas before the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) in 2002; it was not success and got stuck for several times due to the extent of the armed conflict and other related issues. Despite this, CFA allowed large numbers of IDP resettlement; many of the IDPs continuously remained displaced because of the issues about their safety and dignity. When the cease-fire prevailed for nearly four years as a result of heavy pressure by donors as well as domestic private sectors, the overall environment had been periodically changed, especially in the extreme conflict affected areas of the North and the East. Thus, the mobilization of people to their former hometowns has increased. There were interim arrangements and fund assistance given by the North East Reconstruction Fund (NERF), a Subcommittee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIHRN) and a Subcommittee covering De-escalation and Normalization (SDN) were introduced to build confidence. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was expected to oversee ceasefire violations by the armed forces and the LTTE and speed up relocation. With these institutions in place, bilateral donors and multilateral aid agencies held a series of conferences to define recovery and reconstruction needs. The government and the UNHCR, anticipating a major repatriation of refugees from Tamil Nadu, India and possible return and resettlement programs for IDPs expanded their interventions.²⁴ A total of 311,202 displaced people (81,225 families) returned home between January 2002 and June 2003.²⁵ The rate of IDPs being returned slowed, especially in the second half of 2005. When the government and the LTTE completely broke down the CFA in January 2006, the situation descended into an open war, and again intensified large-scale displacement.²⁶

IDP resettlement started again in March 2007; IDPs were reported facing coercion in being forced, either in the form of physical, through threats to be cut off from food supplies or the provision of security denied. Many of them have not wanted to go back to their homes unless the insecurities were fully overcome.²⁷ When the Eastern Province liberated by the government forces in July 2007, the 'Negenahira Navodaya' (Eastern Revival) program was launched by the government and started to resettle IDPs. According to the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, all the IDPs in the Eastern Province have already resettled now.²⁸ In the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, which covers five districts Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Jaffna,²⁹ resettlement commenced in 2009 under the 'Northern Spring' program which was launched to resettle with more than 280,000 new IDPs who were trickling from Vanni³⁰ during the final stages of the battle since 2008. This sudden influx of a massive number created an enormous financial burden not only for the government of Sri Lanka, but also for the UN, INGOs, NGOs and other donor agencies. This continued resettlement process also later expanded to Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Jaffna districts. At present, the government of Sri Lanka claims that 95 percent of the

IDPs have resettled in the North under this program (see **Table 03**).³¹

Northern Spring Program and IDP Resettlement

'Northern Spring' development program focuses on three main aspects: security, resettlement and infrastructure development. It is divided into three categories: a 180-day program, a short term program and a long term program. At present, the government is implementing the 180-day accelerated program announced in June 2009 to resettle people. The process of implementation involves specific steps such as de-mining areas meant for resettlement and reconstruction, building up a basic infrastructure development such as electricity, water supply, sanitation, agriculture, irrigation, livestock development, inland fisheries, health, solid waste disposal, education, athletics, and transportation. There are separate plans for the rehabilitation of former LTTE cadres, especially child soldiers.³²

There are three main objectives in this 180 day program: to resettle the IDPs as quickly and safely as possible in their places of origin; provide them better facilities than they previously had by way of improving basic infrastructure; and provide services and livelihood facilities to pick up life and move on.³³ This program on resettlement of IDPs has been supported by a number of national as well as international donors (see **Table 1, 2, 4 & 5**).

Table 01: Expenditure as Assistance

Expenditure	Rs. Million
Expenditure by the Ministries	8,865.93
Nation Building & State Infrastructure Ministry Expenses	2,222.17
Nation Building & State Infrastructure Ministry Expenses (Foreign Funds)	993.39
Expenditure by Northern Province Ministries	1,215.29
Total	13,296.78

Source: <http://www.np.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311> on (01.11.2010)

Table 02: Total Expenditure as of December 2009

No. of Activities	3,071 Nos
Total Estimated Cost in Rs. Million	4,737 Mn.
Expenditure as of 4th December 2009	2,039 Mn.

Source: <http://www.np.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311> on (01.11.2010)

Table 03: Resettlement of IDPs: Outflow of IDPs from Relief villages (July 13th 2010)

	January	July
Total IDPs (August 2009)	342,894	
No. Relief Villages	30	6
Resettled	261,320	303,436
Balance in Relief Villages	81,574	39,458

Source: <http://www.np.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311> on (01.11.2010)

Table 04: Completed and ongoing Projects

Project completed and ongoing	Status	Cost (Rs Mn)
Construction of Mannar bridge and Causeway	Completed	2,460
Rehabilitation of A9 road 158 - 176 Km	Completed	1,070
Rehabilitation of Murungan Silawathurai Road 0-15 km	Completed	700
Reconstruction of Thirukethiswaram Temple area roads by RDD	Completed	220
Vavuniya Horapothana Road 0-9.6 & 35.0- 46.2 Km	Ongoing	676
Rehabilitation of Jaffna Manipay Karinagar Road 14.5- 25 Km	Ongoing	398
Rehabilitation of Jaffna Point-Pedro Road 15 - 20.65Km	Ongoing	181
Reconstruction of A32 17 Km concrete road	Ongoing	1,240
Repairs to 58 provincial roads in 5 districts	Ongoing	310

Source: <http://www.np.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311> on (01.11.2010)

Table 05: Ongoing Multi-Sectoral Donor Funded Projects

Project	Amount
NECORD - II (Loan) - ADB	US\$ 33.14 Mn
NECORD - II (Grant) - ADB	US\$ 22.78 Mn
TAARP (Tsunami Affected Area Rehabilitation Project)	US\$ 27.84 Mn
RAP (Re Awakening Project) - WB	US\$ 81.14 Mn
NEHRP (North East Housing Reconstruction Program) - WB	US\$ 120.70 Mn
PEACE (Pro-Poor Economic Advance and Community Enhancement Project) - JICA	Rs 1,550 Mn
ENReP (Emergency Northern Recovery Project) - WB	US \$ 65 Mn
NECORD - II (Supplementary Loan) - ADB-(agreement signed)	US \$ 16.60 Mn
NRCP (Northern Road Connectivity Project) ADB - Prov. Allocation	US \$ 25.08 Mn
CARE (Conflict Affected Region Emergency Project) - ADB	US \$ 150 Mn
LGIP (Local Government Infrastructure Improve. Project) WB - Prov. Allocation	Rs 560 Mn
NELSIP (North East Local Services Improvement Project) - WB	US \$ 86 Mn
Provincial Road Project - WB	US \$ 20 Mn

Source: <http://www.np.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311> on (01.11.2010)

V. IDP Resettlement in Vavuniya District under Northern Spring Program

Vavuniya district is one of the districts in the northern region which enormously suffered repeated displacements during the conflict period. It resulted in enormous dislocation of families, homelessness and lost their means of livelihood. During the period of 1990 to 1997, the Vavuniya district was divided in two parts: namely cleared area, where the civil administration ran smoothly under the government, and uncleared area where the civil administration was fully controlled by the LTTE. The whole area of Vavuniya North, part of Vavuniya and Vengalchettikulam divisions were affected and the families were displaced during both the conflict and the war. Most of the affected families of Vavuniya North division and the North of Vavuniya cleared areas in the mainland fled to south of Vavuniya. At the same time substantial number of the people moved to India to find refuge.³⁴

Resettlement and Rehabilitation process started from 1995 in Vavuniya district and was in continuous process. However, people were highly reluctant to resettle in this period due to some obstacles: such as High Security Zone (HSZ) and land mine issues, problems in housing grants, delayed and insufficient resettlement allowance. In some periods, resettlement of IDPs temporarily stopped mainly due to the severe war. However after MoU signed in 2002, this process was to a certain extent accelerated and continued with large numbers. Part of Vavuniya, Vengalchettikulam and Vavuniya South divisions were included in the implementation of resettlement program.³⁵ New areas have been approved for resettlement of families after MOU and displaced families moved to Vavuniya district from other areas for resettlement.

After the completion of the prolonged battle in 2009, the entire civil administration was brought fully under control by the government. The resettlement of the people in their former hometowns or villages has taken place in Vavuniya district along with other districts in the Northern Province with the implementation of the special program called 'Northern Spring'. There are more people giving their willingness to resettle in their original places. Earlier it was estimated that 4,681 families consisting 18,723 members were expected to resettle in their original places. But at present, the situation has changed and the Divisional Secretaries have reported that, there were 15,200 families consisting of 54,083 members had given their consent to resettle in their native places and at present 7,417 families consisting of 24,964 members were resettled in their places of origin.³⁶

In order to find the gap between the government sources and the ground situation with regard to the implementation of the Northern Spring program, both the primary and secondary sources were utilized. Implementation of the 'Northern Spring' program is still an ongoing process. Therefore, there is very limited officially published data and information available. Field research was implemented in the Vavuniya district. A specialized field study was done that covered only Vavuniya, which is one of the Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions of the Vavuniya district. At the same time, this particular DS division has covered distance as to include re-settlers next to the Vavuniya North DS division. The reasons for this research to be implemented in this district was: firstly, the author had stayed in this district for more than 4 years, secondly, her undergraduate study and research was about the impact of the armed conflict on internally displaced children in Sri Lanka and a field study was done on the IDP children in the Vavuniya district. In order to conduct the field study, first visit was made in May, 2010

and data was collected from the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services which presently deals with all the IDP related issues. Similarly interview was conducted with the Ministerial Secretary of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services about the government's efforts before and after the implementation of 'Northern Spring' program. At the same time, all the official data and information which published were collected even though there was a very limited amount of published sources available. The two methods used throughout the field study included a questionnaire and interviews (see **appendix 1 and 2**). During the visit in Vavuniya district, the author visited a resettled village, observed the situation and had random discussions with some re-settlers regarding their satisfaction related to their resettlement. However, conducting interviews in a proper manner was not possible at that time. Moreover, during that time, resettlement process in Vavuniya was at its initial stage. Therefore, the presence of deployed armed forces in the resettled areas caused the tension among the people. Individual interviews were conducted with the Government Agent (GA) of Vavuniya district (the entire district functions under this officer), and the Additional Government Agent (AGA) of Vavuniya District (ranked under the GA) additional data and statistics related to IDP resettlement before and after the implementation of 'Northern Spring' in the Vavuniya district were collected. In order to obtain more information on the recent progress and the processes of IDP resettlement, some undergraduate students living in Vavuniya were trained to conduct interviews and questionnaires were delivered to them to collect data in two resettled areas in Vavuniya DS division, Paranaadakal and Nochchimodai.³⁷ Thirty questionnaires were distributed and 15 interviews were conducted in each village. The questionnaires and questions for the interviews were well designed. The responses were sent back to the author as documents via the postal service. Related text books, journals, periodicals and other written secondary sources were utilized in this study as secondary sources.

As the UN Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement mentioned in section V, principle 28, competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to resettle the IDPs in their places of origin or in another part of the country within the national territory. They are also obligated to establish proper conditions as well as to provide basic means to ensure their safety and dignity. According to this notion, this research was conducted through these three basic aspects: safety, property and conditions for sustainability, which should be provided to the re-settlers before they resettle or return. 'Safety' as understood in this research is an absence of violence and or threats, a presence of law and law enforcement and removal of landmines. The term 'property' includes the restitution of property, repair or reconstruction and compensation. Finally, conditions for sustainability mainly focus on social assistance, livelihoods, and basic services with infrastructure. Based on these basic aspects, the ground reality of resettlement of IDPs was analyzed using the data and information collected through the field studies done in Vavuniya DS division³⁸ in the Vavuniya district.

According to the responses of re-settlers, with regard to the efforts implemented under the 'Northern Spring' program, more than half of the respondents felt that their lives had improved after they resettled in their homelands compared with their previous life in the Vavuniya district. However, those replies clearly showed that physical resettlement did not gain satisfaction even though they remained in their own places. The problems they are still facing could be briefly explained as follows:

1. Safety

Absence of violence and threats still needs strong emphasis. Obviously, before they were displaced from their places of origin, armed conflict was highly prevalent and along with that, insecurity was profuse. Therefore, people did not have the freedom of movement. Moreover, forced recruitment for armed groups, abductions of people, and robbery were also common issues the people faced.³⁹ However, the data collected from re-settlers showed that (see **fig.1**) animal threat especially from pigs was the most predominant unlike other issues such as violence, robbery and drunker disturbances after they resettled.

In terms of the presence of rule of law and law enforcement, majority of the re-settlers were satisfied with the current effectiveness of the law and legal actions since there were very limited amount of abductions, no more tax restrictions, reduction of killings and robbery and rare death threats. This was due to the fact that after the LTTE was defeated all the areas came under the control of the Sri Lankan government. The reason for dissatisfaction if any was due to the presence and interventions of para-military groups in some regular activities of re-settlers.

Another important problem was identified regarding the present land mine-removal activities. Presently all the Grama Niladhari (GN) divisions are allowed to resettle except Mahilankulam GN division, a part of Omanthai and a part of Maruthamadu GN divisions.⁴⁰ However, some lands which belong to citizens and families are still contaminated with land mines even though they have been resettled. Safe land is urgently needed for them not only for their secure move but also for their use for cultivation since it is their means of income generation.⁴¹ Among the respondents, still no one was reported to have the experience of dealing with landmines.

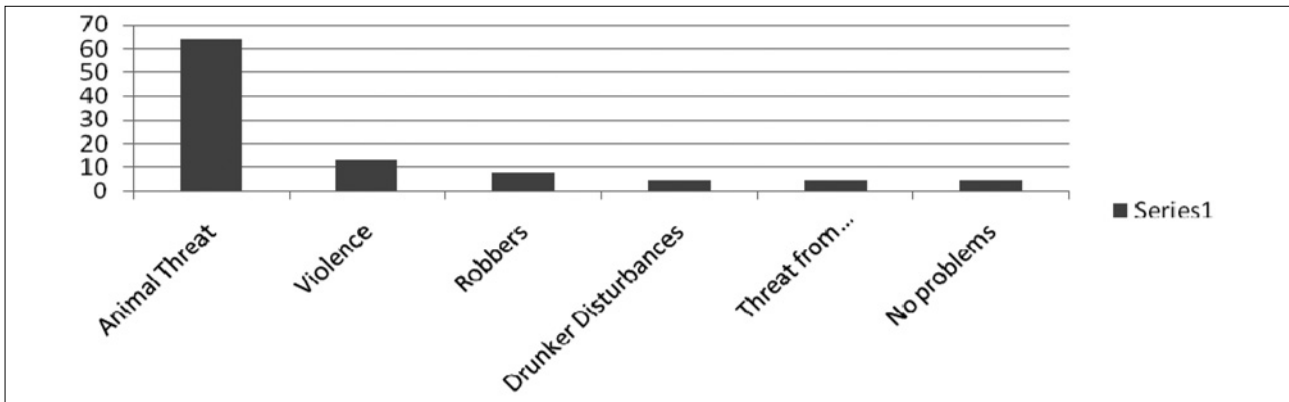


Figure 1 Absence of Violence and threats

2. Property

The loss and damage or destroy of assets as well as movable and immovable properties have experienced by many people in this district.⁴² After they resettled, they could not generate enough income and as a result they were facing more challenges and problems with their survival. As far as the restitution of their lost, damaged or destroyed properties and compensation for repair or reconstruction provided by the government⁴³ is concerned but most of them were not satisfied due to multiple reasons. The assistance provided for them was given in a step-by-step process and couldn't be received as a lump sum; therefore, repair or reconstruction got delayed until the whole amount was received. In addition to this, some of them only received an initial compensation sum of Rs. 25, 000 which was not enough even for a partial repair or reconstruction. At the same time, a few re-settlers applied for compensation; but there was no improvement in the actions taken by the government regarding their requests. Even though many re-settlers did receive some amount, they did not feel that the amount which received was enough for them to recover from the losses.

3. Conditions for sustainability before return

According to the 'UN Guiding Principles of Internally Displaced Persons' conditions for sustainability, should be prepared and properly be set for those people in a satisfying manner before they return to their homelands. Even though the two previously mentioned features relate to this particular feature, this section mainly focuses on social assistance, livelihoods, basic services and infrastructure with respect to the experience of resettlement assistance in the Vavuniya district.

During their arrival re-settlers were provided with initial assistance from the government in order to restart their new lives.⁴⁴ Many houses were either partly or completely destroyed in the whole area of DS divisions of Vavuniya North, part of Vavuniya and Vengalachettikulam.⁴⁵ According to some respondents they had not received anything except 16 tin sheets and 8 bags of cement as assistance. This caused difficulties to even construct a temporary shelter. According to the District Government Agent (GA) of Vavuniya there have been some issues when resettling people. There is a lack in providing tin sheets to resettled families and the Rs. 5000 payment and food assistance were not given due to a shortage. The GA of Vavuniya had sent a request to the Ministry of Resettlement to supply tin sheets immediately to those re-settlers who had not received them. But most of the respondents were not satisfied with the quality as well as the sufficiency of the assistance (see fig.2).

The Vavuniya district as a whole is predominantly an agricultural district and has land extent of 21,010 hectares to

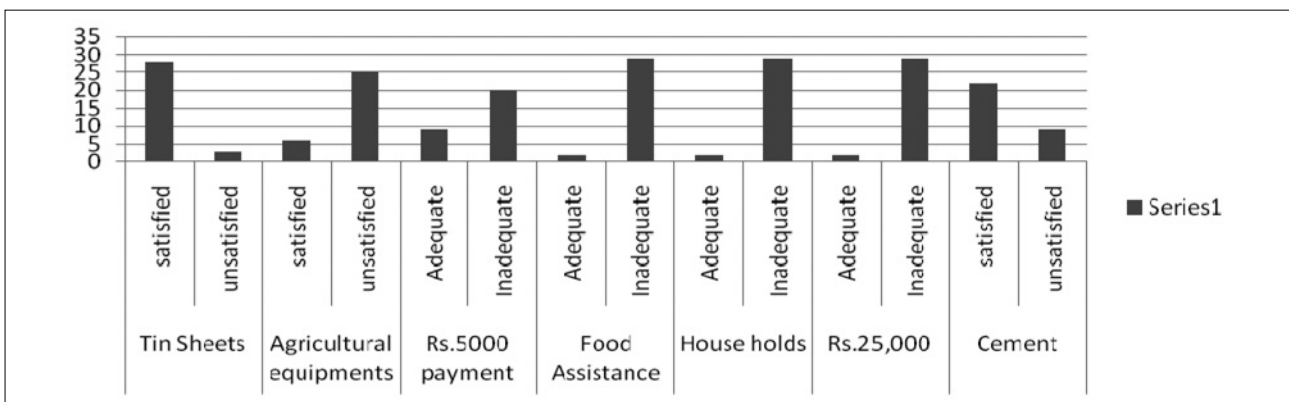


Figure 2 Satisfaction level and adequate access of Initial assistance among re-settlers

undertake the paddy cultivation. In addition, cultivation of other field crops, livestock farming, forestry and inland fisheries are the main components. 30,092 farm families are engaged in agriculture related activities.⁴⁶ Most of the land for agriculture was abandoned due to the conflict and displacement. The findings of the research shows that, even after the resettlement some of them did not have access to their lands for cultivation due to unremoved land mines, allocated small plot of land to use, water scarcity, and inefficient assistance. These issues make re-settlers unhappy in terms of the assistance given to them for agricultural development. Similarly, livestock farming along with crop agriculture highly affected due to the displacement which made considerable damage to the animal populations. Government provided assistance to restart livestock farming,⁴⁷ however, in the ground, re-settlers could not have access to sufficient means of assistance.

Regarding health and education services, the data collected through field study manifested that providing better health services for the places where the limited public were resettled was also a prime condition for wanting to increase the lives of the people. Identified problems that they were facing consisted of a limited venue of clinics and hospitals; people who needed special care were not even entitled to receive their health services. In addition, there were no counseling centers provided for people who had mental disabilities or who were under trauma due to the negative experiences from the conflict or the loss of loved ones. Problems identified with regard to education throughout the field study were lack of educational facilities such as shortage of educational, physical and human resources, overcrowded schools and in some cases, inadequate buildings.

Apart from these issues high level of unemployment, lack of job opportunities or ways of generating income, and low wages made them more vulnerable even though they were resettled in their places of origin. Even though they received assistance from the government, the economic problems facing the families were highly observable during the field study. People expected the government to provide self-employment opportunities to overcome these struggles of daily life.

Access to public services also incorporated with the implementation of the resettlement process. Current on going processes to provide these services carried by the government as well as non-governmental organization were expected to overcome the prevailing issues related with public services among re-settlers.⁴⁸ However, scarcity of water was a prominent problem. Lack of water purifying facilities prevailed and access to safe drinking water was a daily struggle since most of the people had to walk long distances to collect pure water. Presently, cleaning common wells and reconstructing tube wells were carried out by the government to overcome the electricity, water supply and sanitation services related issues.⁴⁹

VI. Challenges for the Government to resettling IDPs

After defeating the LTTE in 2009, the government of Sri Lanka was committed itself to assist for IDP resettlement under the special development program along with the assistance from several international organizations. Even though the rapid process of resettlement was implemented, in some cases, re-settlers were not satisfied with the expected quality as well as the quantity of aid efforts and its implementation related to safety, property and conditions for sustainability, before they were resettled; the government also accepted that there were problems with regard to the IDP resettlement. Despite the critics against the government, as a responsible mechanism, the government also had many challenges in meeting re-settlers expectations in the implementation of resettlement.

1. Number of IDPs

It must firstly be recognized that, for the government to resettle a large number of IDPs was a challenge which was more severe than the military challenge against the LTTE. Moreover, the obvious mass departure caused by the final battle was also an unprecedented challenge to the government of Sri Lanka to ensure an effective manner of resettlement for the IDPs. Though the government had been funded by various international bodies or states, it is still facing such critical situations in implementing the IDP resettlement. There are still a few thousands IDPs in the camps and the government is trying to resettle them in their previous homes.⁵⁰ Despite the international pressure to resettle the IDPs at an early date, there are some basic prerequisites in relation to resettlement from the government.

2. Security

Creation and maintenance of a safe and secure environment for re-settlers is one of the major tasks. In terms of security, the government was conscious of the possibility of re-organization and re-emergence of terrorism by the cadres who might be hiding among the IDPs. Already over 9,000 who surrendered to the Sri Lankan military forces had been directed into the rehabilitation program.⁵¹

3. De-Mining

Mine action is also a major prevailing challenge for the government. It does not mean only the physical clearance of mines and UXOs, but is also about the reduction of their social, economic and environmental impact. The objective of mine action is to reduce the risk from landmines to a level where people can live safely, in which economic, social and health development can occur without danger, and in which the mine accident survivors' needs can be addressed. Nearly 3800 sq. km in the Vanni have been reported as highly contaminated with over 1.5 million land mines. Procurement of 15 de-mining machines and initiating the de-mining operation were done at a cost of Rs. 893 million by the government and through international assistance. Simultaneously, this de-mining operation has been carried out in two stages: firstly, de-mining the roads approached to locations of the damaged buildings; secondly, de-mining of locations where building constructions need to be attended prior to re-settlement; and finally, humanitarian de-mining areas to be de-mined for resettlement and agricultural activities.⁵² In addition to this, the concept of land use is also a decisive factor for de-mining. Where residential land is given priority over lands for livelihood purposes, it has resulted in a situation where those returning to their homes are in most cases unable to restart livelihoods due to contamination of land, waterways and wells. Therefore, considering this situation, it is clear that providing safety for the people who are resettled or who are about to be resettled is a priority and a challenge for the government of Sri Lanka.

4. Property

As far as 'property' was concerned, IDPs regularly lost much of their property due to their displacement. The destruction or theft of crops and livestock, bombing or burning of shelters and confiscation or forcible occupation of private homes by military or paramilitary forces are common experiences faced by the IDPs, especially in situations of armed conflict. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights emphasized on the compensation to returning IDPs for the loss of their property including homes, crops, livestock and other belongings.⁵³ In this sense, the government of Sri Lanka has the responsibility as the only existing competent authority, for the restitution of property or providing compensation for its loss. Unfortunately, due to the tight fiscal squeeze and the global economic crises, the government is still facing challenges for finding adequate funding for compensation for property loss. From the government's side, the difference between estimated cost and actual spending relation to IDP resettlement alone shows the inappropriateness of the whole program within a certain time frame. Furthermore, due to the enormous amount spent on 26 years of armed conflict and the development work of the rest of the country, the government is delaying the payment of compensation or restitution for the property.

5. Conditions for Sustainability

In addition, the government still has challenges of providing 'conditions of sustainability' in terms of reconstructing basic infrastructure and providing better facilities for re-settlers before they feel settled down in their home-towns. Essential infrastructure and services should be established and ensure that the IDPs could have better facilities than they previously had when they return. Along with this, restoration of services for the people is vital. Such services include rehabilitation of Divisional Secretaries (DS) offices, hospitals, maternity homes, schools, cooperative outlets, Agrarian Services Centers, post offices. Restoration of clean and safe drinking water cleaning and construction of new wells have also become a challenge for the government. Shortage of heavy equipment and machinery required for rehabilitation of roads, tanks, canals, culverts, irrigation, jungle clearing and other infrastructure is delaying the implementation. Furthermore, procurement of earth moving and construction machinery and equipment at a cost of Rs. 6,909,868,999 million were made.⁵⁴ Therefore, all these challenges made it difficult for the government to advance this resettlement process within a time frame.

VII. Conclusion

This article has attempted, firstly, to provide a brief historical overview of the protracted internal displacement and resettlement; secondly, to address the issues facing by the re-settlers after they resettled under the implementation of special mega development program called 'Northern Spring' and finally, to show the challenges from the government as the responsible mechanism to fulfill all needs of the re-settlers before and after they resettled. In order to conclude this analysis, although the rapid resettlement started after the conclusion of both the conflict and the war, the gap between the government measures undertaken with regard to resettlement and the reality on the ground still prevail due to many causes. To fill the gap between these two sides can be done with overcoming the challenges in the implementation process. Results of this research clearly show that people would not be satisfied with physical resettlement even if they have their own homes unless there is a properly provided material system. In the absence of durable solutions for this serious issue, re-settlers' life will become drifted

into risk for survival in their own hometowns. It has been recognized that recovery needs are largely due to the displacement as a means of prolonged conflict. Though, the first phase 180 day program actively collaborated in recovery efforts for the re-settlers, still it needed to find the ways as earlier as possible to ensure safety, property and conditions for sustainability in an effective manner. Since so many countries the world over are facing serious issues posed by intra-state conflict and internal displacement despite the development notion, Sri Lanka should become as a nation giving earnest hope to the world not only how to succeed from the dark days by terrorism throughout the past but also deliver the lessons as how to overcome the challenges all the way through building and sustaining peace.

End Notes

- ¹ As the UN Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement mentioned in section V, principle 28, competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to resettle the IDPs in their places of origin or in another part of the country within the national territory. Also, they are obligated to establish proper conditions as well as to provide basic means to ensure their safety and dignity. In this regard, this paper chose the three basic aspects, which should be provided to the re-settlers before they resettle or return. These 3 aspects are safety, property and conditions for sustainability.
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20. If so, what were the items you received?

.....

21. Where and when did you receive these items?

.....

22. From whom did you receive these items?

Government NGO UNHCR

23. Did anyone come to you before or after you were given the items to discuss your needs?

Yes No

24. Were the items that you received useful and adequate?

Yes No

25. Did anyone discuss the needs of children? Disabled? Women? Or the elderly?

Yes No

26. If so, was this done before or after distributions?

before after

● **Shelter**

12. Did your House

Destroyed Damaged Not damaged or destroyed

27. If 'damaged' or 'destroyed'

Permanent house built Temporary shelter provided
 Ongoing shelter activity Nothing has done

28. Are you satisfied about the assistance?

Yes No

29. If 'No' Why?

.....

● **Agriculture**

30. Total extent of cultivatable land

Paddy
 High land

31. Present land available for cultivation

Paddy
 High land

32. Did you receive government's assistance for agricultural development?

Yes No

33. Did you receive agricultural equipments?

Yes No

34. What sorts of equipments you received?

Water Pump Sprayer Tractor Sprinkler others

35. What are the problems facing in cultivation at present?

.....

● **Livestock**

36. Did you receive livestock assistance?

Yes No

37. What sort of livestock? Cattle rearing Goat rearing Buffalo rearing Poultry

● **Health**

38. What is your access to health-care?

Distance
 Frequency of clinics, hospital

39. Are you aware of any counseling services available in this area?

Yes No

40. Are there disabled people in your location?

Yes No

41. Is there any assistance available for them?

Yes No

● **Education**

42. How many children are going to school in your family?

43. If not attending, what are the reasons?

Access Financial Uniforms Supplies Others

44. Have school uniforms, books, supplies been distributed?

Yes No

45. What is the distance from your home to the school?
46. How is the quality of the school and the teachers?
- **Employment**
47. What were your major income sources before displacement?
.....
48. What are your major income sources after you resettled?
.....
49. What is your daily wage now?..... () adequate () No
50. What are local employment opportunities in your area?
51. Do you involve in the same employment activities what you had before displaced?
() Yes () No
52. Are women involved in any income generation activities? () Yes () No
- **Water/ Sanitation- / construction Toilets**
53. What are your sources of water? () open Dug well () Tube well
54. Is the water of good quality? () Yes () No
55. Are there problems regarding access to drinking water? () Yes () No
56. Did you receive any assistance for access of water?
Satisfied () Yes () No
57. Did you receive assistance for construct Toilets?
Satisfied () Yes () No
- **General**
58. Do you have access to religious Temples () Yes () No
59. Do you have access to banking facilities () Yes () No
60. Do you have access to postal services () Yes () No
61. Do you have problems in transport services
Railway services () Yes () No
Bus services () Yes () No
62. Do you have access of electricity? () Yes () No
63. Are you satisfied about improvement of roads () Yes () No
64. What do you think about the present government's efforts about resettlement of IDPs?
.....
65. Has this resettlement process improve your condition of life? () Yes () No

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation!!!

Appendix-2
Site Information Recording Sheet

*Site Summary***Name of Village/ Location****G.N. Division****Interviewer Name:****Interviewee Name:****Age:****Sex:***Description of the situation***Safety**

Absence of violence and threats	
<i>Problems identified-before displaced What are you doing about it now?</i>	<i>Problems identified-after resettlement What has others done about it?</i>
Removal of landmines	
<i>Problems identified- after resettlement What are you doing about it now?</i>	<i>Problems identified-after resettlement What has others done about it?</i>
Presence of rule of law and law enforcement	
<i>Problems identified- before displaced What are you doing about it now?</i>	<i>Problems identified- after resettlement What has others done about it?</i>

Property

<i>Problems identified What are you doing about it now? What has others done about it? (Compensation/ repair or reconstruction)</i>

Conditions for sustainability of return

<i>(Transitory) social assistance</i>
<i>Problems identified What are you doing about it now? What has others done about it?</i>
<i>Livelihoods</i>
<i>Problems identified What are you doing about it now? What has others done about it? (Compensation/ repair or reconstruction)</i>
<i>Basic services and infrastructure</i>
<i>Problems identified What are you doing about it now? What has others done about it? (Compensation/ repair or reconstruction)</i>