

**SITUATION
REPORT ON
VANNI
DISPLACEMENT**



SEDOT

September 2008

North East Sri Lanka Situation Report: Displacement

Summary of North-East Situation Report

Current situation is dire.

Displacement is expanding through the Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar districts.

This report compiled by SEDOT, a local NGO in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu district covers the following issues that had arisen due to the current wave of displacement:

1. SHELTER
2. WATER AND SANITATION
3. FOOD
4. HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE
5. EDUCATION
6. LIVELIHOOD
7. NGO SITUATION
8. THERE IS A FUTURE: SEDOT's next step

Each section outlines the plight of these internally displaced people and identifies some of the key relief work that must be done to assist them through these rough times.



Image: A woman cooking in open and contemplating her future after repeated displacement (caption right)

Current situation in Sri Lanka's North-East area: Vanni Displacement. Government advancement, along with shelling and aerial bombardment has caused tens of thousands of Tamils living in the area of the Mannar District: Manthai West and Madhu, Kilinochchi Poonahari, Pachilaipalli and District: Karachi, Mullaitivu District: Thunukai, Ottisuttan, Karaithuraipatru and Manthai East to flee their homes in search of protection. Many of these peoples have had to experience repeated displacement, causing much strain and hardship trying to escape the shelling and bombardment.

Some have had to relocate themselves in search of protection over 6 times since last June when the Government advancement had intensified.

As a result of this displacement, these people have had to face a loss in personal security, personal wealth and livelihood due to this forced displacement. The cost of displacement is high, beyond the financial capacity of many of the displacing people. Transportation costs are steep, beyond the budget of an average family. This is due to the increased fuel price in the region following the embargo on goods, the vast distance needed to travel, and the time and safety restrictions

when evacuating these areas.

Latest statistics on the displaced are as follows:

Everyone is massing the areas of Kilinochchi East, Puthukudiyiruppu of the Mullaitivu District and their surrounding suburbs.

"First time we fled our homes because we could hear the sound of shelling very close. We asked for a tractor to transport our goods and they asked for 20, 000 Rupees. I sold them my chain for that as we did not have that sought of money at hand. Then we had to move again. This time I had to pawn my *thali*. Then after a month, again we had to move. For that we sold our electronic goods. Now we have moved the fourth time. We have nothing at hand to sell for our next move... what do we do?"

SHELTER

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

The accommodation facilities for these new IDPs may vary, but the majority are in dire need.

Those with relatives or friends in the secure areas of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu are able to attain immediate shelter following arriving to these areas. The cost of transportation and relocation are contained due to the existence of support for these people. The average cost for relocation are as follows:

- Tractor: for 5-10 kilometre journey = 20, 000 Rupees (200 US\$)
- Landmaster: for 5-10 kilometre journey= 8, 000 Rupees (80 US\$)

This is due to the areas being of high risk as well as the high cost of fuel:

- Kerosene per litre = 260 Rupees (2.60 US\$)
- Petrol per litre = 1400 Rupees (14.00 US\$)
- Diesel per litre = 340 Rupees (3.40 US\$)

The distance from one rural town to the next is approximately 10 kilometres.

Most families chose to pool their transport, meaning that the quantity of goods that are brought are even more limited.

Those with reasonable income or savings are able to transport the required timber, roofing sheets or dried palm fronds to reconstruct a temporary shelter elsewhere.

The remaining majority are left under trees, in public places such as schools, temples and churches. These people are mostly destitute, dependent on NGO relief for their daily needs.

Problems that arise from open shelter or crowded dwelling: social and health risk, hazard from mosquitoes, insects, snakes for those in bushland areas, and pollution especially air pollution (dust from draft wind) for those living in open areas.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ IDP communities living in public facilities such as schools, churches and temples and in open areas such as under trees and fields, must be transferred to semi-permanent dwellings till it is safe for them to return to their permanent homes.
- ❖ Permanent homes must be provided for those that choose to permanently relocate to their current locations.
- ❖ Relocation of these IDPs must be made in correlation to their livelihood experiences and facilities for basic needs.



Image: A makeshift cot for a child under a tree. With the coming of the wet season, the situation of these destitute people will reach crisis level.

Besides IDP beneficiaries, SEDOT has provided water and sanitation facilities for special sectors of the community, including children, elderly and disabled.

SEDOT constructed wells are often dug at approximately 30 feet to ensure year round water supply, especially during the dry season. The deepest being 57 feet in Iyanapuram.

In Arasapuram, Poonakari a water supply system with well and 7500 litre overhead tank was built in the Arasapuram Tank to enable clean water supply.

To provide for the high material needs of SEDOT's work on water facilities, factories were established by SEDOT and training provided to masons in working with firebrick and lime and sugar. Such work skill provided by SEDOT in lime and sugar is a greatly valuable skill in these times of restricted supplies to goods in the region.

In areas of excess communal use such as schools, residential villages, SEDOT has worked to provide piping facilities for water management and to maintain hygiene. One such project involved the use of 3000 sand bags and a 11,000 litre tank to provide water for 200 homes in the Devipuram housing scheme area.



WATER AND SANITATION

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

Displaced people's needs are both immediate relief as well as long term sustainable relief. Of the immediate needs is water sanitation. In the absence of both, health and livelihood are in danger. Due to the inadequate accommodation dwellings that follow forced displacement, disease and illness in displaced communities can create an onset of serious infection and health risks for the surrounding entire community.

When relocating, most look for water and solid waste management facilities for suitability. However, this is not always viable, and as the situation becomes more desperate such requirements are often unsatisfied. Instead, simply security needs are sought.

Many are required to travel long distances for water. Approximately 8 litres of water is required for each individual daily for drinking, cooking and self-hygiene needs.

Currently, some of those located near dams or unclean wells have no option but use that water for cooking, bathing as well as drinking purpose. This poses a high health risk especially the spread of diseases.

Those without toilet facilities near are required to dig holes to dispose of their wastes. This, although not problematic in vast low density areas, poses a high health risk in medium to high density areas. The majority of the areas to which these new IDPs have relocated in Kilinochchi East and Mullaitivu are high and medium density.

Those situated in public places are confronted with major shortage of sanitary and water facilities. With the onset of the wet season, without adequate management the threat of the spread of diseases is accentuated.



Images: (Left and right) SEDOT's Devipuram overhead tank and water system project. (Middle) Well project in Kanesapuram.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ Providing relief items needed for sanitary health. This is importantly required for vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly and disabled.
- ❖ Semi-permanent or permanent water and sanitation facilities must be built or renovated if inadequate in the current locations or in the areas in which semi-permanent or permanent dwellings are to be constructed.
- ❖ Cleansing of drinking water implemented in areas of contaminated waters.
- ❖ An important health awareness need to relation to drinking water hygiene and management in general that must be implemented concurrently.
- ❖ Distribution of water hygiene kits provided to enable the IDPs to carry out the necessary sanitation requirements.
- ❖ SEDOT plans to introduce solar water heaters which is not only environmentally friendly and cost efficient to kills germs that are a threat to health and wellbeing.

FOOD

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

Whilst relocating, the only food items that are transported were non-perishable items. Even these items were not brought by all IDPs due to the emergency nature of their displacement.

Those without food items and finances to purchase goods are dependent on relief aid for their daily survival. Such relief aid is not reliable, creating a hunger problem especially for those vulnerable groups.

Seafood and vegetables has been the staple food for many of these communities. Now, with vast areas of fishing and vegetation being vacated due to the Government advancement, the general market price of these goods has risen exponentially. The cost of fish is now 450 Rupees (4.50 US\$/kg) making it unaffordable for many. This leads to inadequate nutritional supply for the vulnerable social groups, especially pregnant and lactating mother, children, the elderly and disabled.

Due to the loss of livelihood items in the process of displacement, many have lost their source of income. This has significant impact on their ability to provide for their families daily needs.

Inability to transport the required cooking utensils and the shortage of firewood create problems for cooking. The cost of firewood is 600 Rupees a bicycle load (6.00 US\$). This is far beyond the affordability of these IDPs. Consequently, daily cooking and providing food for the family is a major hurdle.

Recently an IDP family was admitted to hospital for food poisoning from eating day old rice. Such food and health hazards are elevated in open cooking and living arrangements such as those of the new IDPs.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ Providing nutritional food items for those vulnerable groups in the IDP community.
- ❖ Providing communal working initiatives and education as to dealing with daily needs.
- ❖ Micro financing small scale food production such as small vegetable plots to enable nutritious food production. This will require not only the needed capital but also equipment and seeds for initiating such production.
- ❖ Establishing large scale food production centres to accommodate for the increased food needs in the area.
- ❖ Provide food safety awareness programs to avoid food poisoning and contaminations.
- ❖ SEDOT is also introducing sawdust cookers to make an environmentally friendly and cost efficient alternative to firewood for cooking and preparation of drinking water.

HEALTH and MEDICAL CARE

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

Due to the current medical embargo to the Vanni region, the population at large is facing a shortage of medical goods.

For the new IDPs, this embargo is felt even greater. Those with long term illnesses are faced with the inability to seek medical treatment. With the relocation of Mallavi, Pallamadu, Velankulam, Mulangkavil, Akarayan, Vaneeri, Madu General Hospitals, vast amounts of medical facilities have been lost in the process of relocation. Supply of medical equipment from beds through to syringes cannot be replenished. Furthermore, as these hospitals have relocated to various areas, patients may not have displaced to similar areas, making commuting to these locations are major problem. As a result, treatment for the elderly, ill and disabled has been severely affected.

In addition, these new IDPs are more vulnerable to illness and health risks. Snake bites, fever, and infectious diseases such as malaria and diarrhea are high risk diseases in IDP communities.



SEDOT Nurture project provided food item and infant milk powder the IDP community in Vannarikulam and Ramanathapuram. Along with these food items, baby essentials such as baby cologne, powder and Dettol was provided.

Emergency transportation for serious patients is inadequate especially due to the shortage of ambulances and fuel supply.

It is also worth noting that water and sanitation is interdependent to health as inadequate water and sanitation increases the health risk amongst these communities.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ Water and sanitation requirements must be fulfilled to prevent spread of diseases and other water and sanitation related health issues.
- ❖ Medical awareness programs must be done to cover all new IDPs so as to explain to them their new conditions and the issues that they must take extra care in.
- ❖ Due to the lack of medical items resulting from the government embargo on medical goods, alternatives must be identified and provided for normal illnesses such as fevers and coughs.
- ❖ Transportation facilities for emergency medical needs of IDPs must be organized.
- ❖ First aid classes provided for IDP communities to enable them to deal with emergency aid, such as snake bites.
- ❖ Mobile medical services must be extended to new IDP locations.
- ❖ Identification and transferring of those individuals in the IDP community who need to be directed to care institutions due to their personal health and wellbeing. This includes the elderly and children without adequate care.
- ❖ Relocated hospitals must be provided with whatever medical assistance necessary for them to provide medical service for their patients. Providing temporary shelters and medical equipment to replenish lost items in the process of displacement.
- ❖ Staff must be organized to adequately provide for the under staffing in these hospitals.



Images: (Left) a beneficiary from SEDOT Nurture program and SEDOT staff at work on site.

SEDOT has provided school bags and stationery items for children from Bharathipuram and Kandawalai in Kilinochchi district.

A group of IDP children with a poverty background around the Kilinochchi district have been identified for our Mathioli project giving them monthly scholarships for them to continue their education.

SEDOT has built 5 wells and renovated 5 more in the local schools in the Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu district to deal with the sudden rise in school students due to the IDP children attending these schools.

Such projects need to be expanded as the schools that are being affected by this displacement have increased. Strain on the water supply in these schools, especially due to the presence of IDP communities residing in the school compound means that SEDOT must provide such assistance urgently.



Images: SEDOT in consultation with the people and bright smiles from the kids.



EDUCATION

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

There are a total of 115 displaced schools operating in the Kilinochchi District alone. Integrated schools operate in main schools, sometimes 10 schools in one compound clusters.

As a result of this direct strain on the schools, there arises a shortage in teachers, teaching shelters, and water and sanitation facilities. Many classes are now being taken under trees due to lack of schooling facilities.

Students have been scattered throughout the area due to the nature of the displacement. As a result no displaced school is able to function as a school in complete nor are all students able to continue their education in their original school administrations.

Students have been adversely affected by the strain of displacement. National examinations and curriculum have been disturbed. Students are found to be unable to complete their examinations to progress to higher education. There are instances of vacating school exam halls whilst writing their examinations due to bombs falling near their school.

Psychological impact is immense. Many students fear to attend schools. This fear is shared amongst the parents due to the threat of aerial and long range shelling.

Teachers from Vavuniya District, under Sri Lankan control are unable to continue teaching in the Vanni area, as they fear claymore and shellfire from the Government when travelling through the A9 Road.

Teachers from the evacuated areas have also had to displace. As a result, many have been unable to continue teaching in the schools new temporary locations as they have relocated at a further distance. Overall, a severe shortage in teaching staff has been met in schools all around the area.

Shortage of school equipment and facilities is an extra strain as much of the school equipment has been left behind due to the sudden urgent displacement from their permanent areas.

Due to the strain in the schools, it has been brought forth that morning and evening classes are run. The morning classes are to accommodate the permanent residents of the area and the evening

classes those new IDPs. However, there arise many problems as a result of this, including transportation facilities (such as school bus services) and also inadequate staffing.

Students have displaced having left behind much of their educational equipment. As a result, there arises a shortage in individual educational needs being met.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ Recreational education provided for IDP students to help them overcome the trauma and strain of displacement and redirect their goals in education.
- ❖ Providing student resource packs to enable students the equipment to re-enter the school system.
- ❖ Provide accommodation and equipment for staff and schools that are administered in new locations.
- ❖ Provide awareness programs to emphasize the importance of education for the future wellbeing of these students and their community. This is especially important for those children that have been removed from education to enter the workforce by their parents.
- ❖ Establish new pre-school facilities or extend the existing pre-schools to accommodate for the new IDP children.
- ❖ Encourage voluntary teaching initiatives within the new IDP community to enable the continuation of primary and nursery education. Provide the necessary facilities to enable this to be implemented.

LIVELIHOOD

PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE:

Majority of those who have had to displace have fled are from agricultural working backgrounds or fisheries. Therefore, they have had to flee leaving behind the basis of their income, the land and sea from which their income was generated.

Most of those who have been displaced have lost their livelihood items and material. Therefore they are unable to re-enter the workforce in their new locations. This has an inevitable impact on the income generation for these people.

The cost of relocation in itself is an expensive venture as illustrated earlier in relation to transportation. Inability to transport required materials for daily life means that these people must repurchasing goods they have left behind. This will further dig into their fast depleting savings.

The inability to make a livelihood in their new situations affects the families and especially the economic breadwinner's psychological mindset. Lack of income is a psychological strain on the economic breadwinner.

SEDOT has engaged in many projects to enable people in need to stand on their own feet and remove them from the cycle of relief dependency.

Having selected families in the IDP communities, SEDOT provided cows to those large families that could benefit most from cow milk, especially important due to the rising price of milk powder and the high level of calcium deficiency in the IDP communities.

SEDOT also worked to identify income generators in IDP communities. Using palmyrah seeds, SEDOT was able to make over 250 families raise an income of approximately 22,500 Rupees with produce that they previously did not see as financially viable. SEDOT was the first to take the initiative to use these seeds for production at such a large scale.

Micro financing project for IDP communities were provided in the Kallaru region to encourage collective income generating initiatives.



Images: SEDOT, helping for a future.

For those that had a successful career and stable income, this crisis situation would mean that they would have to seek new methods for income generation. Women now must seek hard labour to make up for the financial strain on the family.

Hunger and poverty strikes hard on these people, making this desperate situation an environment conducive to theft, and other bad social behaviours.

REQUIRED RELIEF:

- ❖ Implement a vigorous program on getting the new IDP people out of poverty
- ❖ Micro finance livelihood projects to enable these new IDP people to re enter the workforce and enable income generation.
- ❖ Encourage and coordinate cooperative business and working partnerships.
- ❖ Ensure the relocation of people according to their skills. For example, placing fishing communities near coastal locations so as to let them continue their fishing ventures.

NGO SITUATION

Today the NGO situation has completely changed. It is now even questionable if the limited work that the NGO community was doing for the people will continue. This is due to the recent call by the SL government for all UN agencies to leave the Vanni region.

In the past, the NGO community was unable to deal with the scale of the displacement. Resources have been near exhausted due to the repeated displacement of many people, and the consequent need for the NGO agencies to re provide relief.

SEDOT has had to relook at water and sanitation facilities since most of the areas in which wells and toilets were built for the IDP community are now deserted towns. One example of the extreme nature of this situation is in Kanesapuram where eight displaced schools were functioning in an open field. 2 wells and 10 toilets were built to accommodate these combined schools needs by SEDOT. Within two weeks of operating, these facilities had to evacuate due to displacement from that area as well. With the schools fleeing, SEDOT had to also leave for safety. Although the toilets and wells have been deserted, the needs of the people that were to use them

has only exacerbated as they have now moved and concentrated themselves to even more densely populated areas.

Government embargoes on emergency relief goods have brought further strain on the work of NGOs for the IDP people. Embargoes on fuel, tarpaulin, food items and cement make relief work extremely difficult.

The inability for NGO facilities to move freely in all IDP areas due to the lack of safety for themselves makes it near impossible to provide the necessary relief for those people. Providing daily water and perishable items required open access to these areas. The absence of such access isolates these IDPs from the urgently needed aid.

THERE IS A FUTURE...

SEDOT'S NEXT STEP:

SEDOTs aim for the coming period is to provide full relief to IDP people. Importantly, we seek to instill in the mindsets of these people that there is a future and that they must not get stuck in the poverty cycle due to this experience. As most wish to return to their permanent homes, SEDOT will try to provide the necessary semi-permanent help for these people. For those that wish to remain in their new locations, SEDOT will pursue a permanent approach to the relief provided.

SEDOT seeks to provide as much as possible to bring relief for these people. We will give a hand in helping these people through these rough times. With the departure of iNGOs from the Vanni area, it becomes an even greater burden for SEDOT to fulfill. SEDOTs success in work is dependent on the good will of the people in the international community that understand and empathise with the plight of these people, and are keen on providing relief for them.



*Images: (Left) Piling their homes in one load. This is the typical state of transportation for the displaced.
(Right) SEDOT hard at work to give a hand to the people.*