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24/5'04

**PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT :
SRI LANKA**

Compilation of the information available in the Global IDP
Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council

(as of 7 April, 2004)

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Sri Lanka: setbacks in peace process perpetuate suffering of internally displaced people

By the end of 2003, more than 345,000 people, out of a total internally displaced population of 730,000, had returned home since a ceasefire ended two decades of civil war in early 2002. While the government and Tamil rebels are committed to creating conditions for large-scale returns, the internally displaced are not adequately protected and assisted. Wide-reaching reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts are needed in order to find durable solutions for the returning population as many continue to face threats to their safety, dispossession of their property, landlessness and a lack of basic infrastructure and basic services. More than 380,000 people remain internally displaced. Two large groups, in particular, are in need of better security arrangements before returning: non-Tamils displaced from rebel-held areas and Tamils displaced from government High Security Zones. Displaced women, especially female-headed households, are among the most vulnerable. Some 90,000 displaced are still accommodated in government-run welfare centres where they live in precarious conditions.

The peace process stalled when the Tamil rebels withdrew from the negotiations in April 2003. Political turmoil leading to early elections in April 2004 has further strained an already fragile security situation. New episodes of displacement have occurred in the Trincomalee district due to inter-communal violence and the situation is tense in several other areas. Donors have indicated that further aid to Sri Lanka will depend upon progress of the peace process although humanitarian aid will continue. It is crucial that both parties in the conflict fulfil their obligation to protect, and facilitate assistance to, the internally displaced, in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Background and causes of displacement

More than two decades of civil war in Sri Lanka between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) devastated large parts of the island. The war claimed the lives of an estimated 64,000 people and uprooted more than one million others. An estimated 200,000 people fled overseas, while the large majority remained internally displaced on the island. Many had to flee several times and ended up becoming permanently displaced in welfare centres, or moving to friends, relatives or abandoned buildings. In some areas, families have been displaced as often as five times. Many have been forced to live in displacement for years. Some, like the Muslim population now residing in camps in Puttalam, have been displaced since the early 1990s (CPA February 2003, p. 25). The war caused widespread destruction in the north and east of the country. It is estimated, for example, that the conflict damaged close to 90 per cent of the houses owned by displaced persons in the north-east (ADB, UN & WB May 2003, p. 32). The people of the north-east are still waiting for comprehensive rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-affected areas, which is a prerequisite for the durable return of those who fled the violence (Ferdinands January 2004). Reconstruction efforts have been slow to date and an estimated 58 per cent of the damaged units remain totally uninhabitable, about half of them in the Batticaloa and Jaffna district (ADB, UN & WB May 2003, p. 32).

Hopes for a durable peace were raised after a ceasefire was signed in February 2002. Continued peace talks, sponsored by the government of Norway, led to an agreement in Thailand in January 2003, in which both sides committed themselves to facilitate returns to war-affected areas through a joint Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (CPA July 2003, pp.1-4; Government of Norway, 9 January 2003).

Prospects for a continuation of the peace process worsened during 2003. In April, LTTE suspended the peace talks after having been excluded from a donor conference in Washington. The political climate

continued to deteriorate during the year, ending with the suspension of the Parliament by President Chandrika Kumaratunga in February 2004 and a call for parliamentary elections to take place in April four years ahead of schedule (AI 27 February 2004; UN IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004). The situation destabilised further with the unexpected split in the LTTE caused by the break-away of its former eastern commander, Colonel Karuna Amman (BBC World, 5 March 2004).

Ever since the peace talks broke down there has been a disturbing tendency to resort to violence. Inter-communal tension led to the displacement of some 35,000 people in the eastern Trincomalee district in May 2003, while in another part of the district hundreds of families were reported to have fled violence in November and December 2003 (TamilNet 24 May 2003, USAID 31 January 2004). The months preceding the elections also saw an upsurge of election-related violence in certain areas.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's coalition party, United People's Freedom Alliance, won the elections without securing an absolute majority. The result has raised concerns about the future of the peace process as the coalition may have to seek support from political parties that are opposed to any federal solution to the conflict with the LTTE (BBC 4 April 2004).

Slow return

Some 730,000 people were internally displaced as a result of the war, according to UNHCR (UN IDP Working Group 10 November 2003). When travel restrictions were lifted and military activities ended in early 2002, many of the displaced returned, at least temporarily, to assess the security situation and what remained of their properties. Thousands who returned to the north did so spontaneously and largely without support from the government. At the end of December 2003, UNHCR reported that over 345,000 had returned, with more than half having moved to or within the Jaffna district (176,400). Other districts to which large numbers of people returned include Kilinochchi (69,600), Mullaitivu (35,600) and Vavuniya (24,000) (MRRR & UNHCR December 2003).

Since December 2002, the rate of monthly returns has gradually decreased. A UN report says return slowed down considerably during 2003 with less than 5,000 people returning every month from July onwards. Even lower numbers returned during November and December. This may reflect not only an upsurge of violence and political turmoil, but also the beginning of the monsoon in the north and east of the island (MRRR & UN June 2003; UN IDP Working Group 9 February 2004).

Most of the returnees are subsistence farmers, fishermen, agricultural labourers or unskilled workers who need strong support from the government and aid agencies. A survey conducted by UNHCR and the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees during 2002 showed that 150,000 internally displaced families (92 per cent) were in need of assistance in order to restart their lives. However, the government has so far provided little assistance to the returning population (MRRR & UNHCR May 2003, CPA February 2003, p. 39).

At the end of December 2003, some 386,000 people were still registered as internally displaced. The majority are located on the northern districts of Jaffna (62,000), Mullaitivu (60,600), Kilinochchi (43,300) Vavuniya (44,300) and Mannar (33,000), while in the east the districts of Batticaloa (27,500) and Trincomalee (20,500) are amongst those most affected by displacement. Puttalam district in the west is home to some 47,000 internally displaced, most of them Muslims evicted by the LTTE in early 1990s from Jaffna and Mannar (MRRR & UNHCR December 2003).

Displaced people in state-run welfare centres continue to face a precarious existence. Originally designed as a temporary measure, thousands of people have ended up spending a decade living in squalid, overcrowded conditions. At the end of 2003, some 92,000 people were still living in 315 centres facing difficult conditions. Several surveys have shown that the inhabitants of several welfare centres in Trincomalee suffered from malnutrition and psycho-sociological problems (Tamilnet 14 March 2003, WFP 17 October 2003).

Major obstacles to return

There are continuing major obstacles to return of the internally displaced people. Some of the main issues are

- the continued existence of High Security Zones (see next section);
 - the lack of infrastructure in war-torn areas;
 - landlessness and the lack of income-generating opportunities;
 - the unresolved issue of for restitution of property;
 - security concerns, especially regarding landmines; and
 - inadequate efforts to integrate the displaced who have opted to stay where they are (25 per cent of the displaced in the north-east according to one study)
- (UN IDP Working Group 9 February 2004; UNHCR Global Appeal 2004; ADB, UN & WB May 2003, p. 11).

Some 100,000 Muslims, displaced since 1990 from Jaffna and Mannar, and 25,000 Sinhalese who fled LTTE attacks in the northeast are seeking security guarantees before returning. Although the LTTE is officially committed to allow for the return of the displaced Muslim population as well as resolving issues related to restitution or compensation for property losses, the prevalent security climate continues to dissuade these groups (CPA February 2003, p.36; CHA March 2004).

High Security Zones

A substantial part of the north-east, particularly the areas where the displaced are to return, is still occupied by the Sri Lankan army and the police who claim that the return of thousands of internally displaced cannot take place due to security concerns. Mannar and Jaffna districts are most affected by this problem (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 35).

The military presence not only hinders the resettlement of the returning population, but it also negatively affects economic activity, in particular by placing severe restrictions on fishing activities (CPA February 2003, p.50; CHA December 2003). The Security Zones were a bone of contention during the fourth round of peace talks in January 2003, when the Sri Lankan government demanded that the LTTE disarm before allowing some 50,000 civilians to resettle in these areas. Sidestepping the problem, the parties agreed to start resettling people outside the security zones (GoSL 8 January 2003). Since then, the issue has remained unresolved hampering the return of tens of thousands of displaced people (JRS 8 January 2004).

Property restitution

Upon arrival, many returnees discover that their houses and properties have been destroyed, looted or taken over by other displaced people (The Refugee Council, September 2003). Requisition of land and buildings by the military occurred frequently during the war, with no compensation generally paid to those evicted. Lost or missing legal documentation is also a main issue facing a large number of the returning population.

In the government-controlled areas, there are a number of state institutions and NGOs involved in assisting in the restitution of property, including the District Courts, the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, the Legal Aid Foundation, the Human Rights Commission, Mediation Boards, the Legal Aid Commission and the Police (CPA February 2003, p. 57). However, when their houses and properties are situated in the HSZ, there is no solution in sight as long as the two parties to the peace process do not resolve the issue.

The issue of land and property restitution is a major question for some 125,000 returning non-Tamils who were displaced from LTTE-controlled areas. As the LTTE has set up a parallel administrative structure and judicial system, land and property issues come under the purview of both the government and the LTTE administration. It is presently unknown what type of redress will be afforded to those who left their properties during the conflict. Particularly affected by this situation are the Muslims who were evicted from Jaffna and Mannar in the early 1990s as their properties and premises were either taken over by the LTTE or rented to others.

Subsistence needs

In the wake of the peace agreement, some mechanisms for food and medical supplies were restored in the north and east, and numerous rehabilitation efforts have been started both by the government and donors. The humanitarian situation in Vanni has remained worrisome despite the easing of a government embargo on war-related material in rebel-held areas from early 2002. In northern areas earmarked for resettlement, water and sanitation needs remain acute, with a widespread lack of drinking water and sanitation facilities. It is estimated that the proportion of people with access to safe water is only 20 per cent, while access to sanitation facilities is limited to 25 per cent of the population (ADB, UN & WB May 2003, p. 49).

Health services in the north and east were disastrous for years as many medical professionals and healthcare workers fled the conflict, causing a serious shortage of doctors, nurses and medical specialists (MSF 9 February 2002). As of May 2003, over 40 per cent of health care posts were vacant, mainly in the skilled and professional categories (ADB, UN & WB May 2003, p. 5). However, MSF reports that services slowly are being re-established and that health personnel are returning to resume work in the north and east (MSF 9 January 2004).

Landmines and human rights abuses remain main threats

The presence of landmines is still a serious risk factor in Sri Lanka. Between 600,000 and one million landmines remain scattered across the conflict area, mainly concentrated in the northern Jaffna and Vanni regions. Most of them are buried in heavily populated and fertile areas, representing a serious threat to civilians (EU 9 January 2004; CHA December 2003). However, mine clearance progressed during 2003, with a significant decrease in the number of mine incidents reported per month (OneWorld.net South Asia 13 November 2003). Mine education is reportedly only provided upon return and none is provided in IDP camps or settlements prior to return (CPA February 2003, p. 7).

Displaced people still face risks to their safety and rights although violence has generally subsided since the ceasefire. Women and children are particularly at risk: during 2003, human rights violations continued to be reported in the north and east, including extortion, threats, continued child recruitment and abduction (UNICEF 22 January 2004, CHA March 2004). Other security concerns affecting internally displaced people included extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detentions and harassment by soldiers at checkpoints.

National and international response

Structures to help the internally displaced population are in place. In an effort to better streamline and coordinate assistance, the Sri Lankan government established the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees in December 2001. Along with UNHCR, the lead UN agency for internally displaced in the country, the ministry developed a framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation to assist IDP resettlement and rehabilitate war-affected communities. UNHCR has also been involved in delivery of non-food items, education, water and sanitation improvements, and IDP protection schemes with ICRC.

During 2002, the government launched a National Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation and defined a joint strategy with the UN Country Team to meet the immediate needs of people returning to their home areas (UNHCR June 2003). Also, at peace talks in Thailand in early January 2003, the government and LTTE agreed to facilitate returns to war-affected areas through a joint Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (Government of Norway, 9 January 2003).

Donor support has focused mainly on restoring infrastructure in areas of return. Main sectors of assistance have been roads, transport, irrigation systems, schools and health services. In June 2003, donors pledged some US\$4.5 billion to support the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka. The Multilateral Group (UN Country Team, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund and International Organisation for Migration) have cooperated to develop a transitional strategy to address the needs of the returnees and to better help bridge the gap between relief and development (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group 6 August 2003). However, the suspension of peace talks and the subsequent dissolution of parliament have further hampered the reintegration of internally displaced, especially as it has delayed reconstruction in the war-affected zones.

The Sri Lankan government and aid agencies have been slow to provide sufficient assistance to returnees and one international NGO claims that international aid is decreasing (RI 6 January 2004). Those returning from Vanni prior to the date of the ceasefire are reportedly denied any resettlement assistance (BRC March 2003). The Unified Assistance Scheme (UAS) provides a start-up grant for returnees to purchase basic tools, inputs and find temporary shelter to regain a productive livelihood. They are also given a permanent housing allowance (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group 28 November 2002). Although more people benefited from government assistance through the UAS package during 2003, the lack of funding and administrative delays have left thousands of returning or resettled families unassisted to date (JRS 8 January 2004, TamilNet, 20 February 2004). Donors have indicated that further aid to Sri Lanka will depend upon the progress of the peace process although humanitarian aid will continue (BBC 18 February 2004). It is crucial that both parties in the conflict fulfil their obligation to protect, and facilitate assistance to, the internally displaced, in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND

Background

Socio-ethnic profile of Sri Lanka

- Sinhalese (74 percent of the population); Religion: Buddhism; Language: Sinhala
- Tamils (18 percent of the population); Religion: Hinduism; Language: Tamil
- Muslims (7 percent of the population); Language: Tamil
- Breakdown of population according to religion: Buddhists 69%; Hindus 15%; Christians 8% and Muslims 8%
- Between 25 and 39 percent of the population can be classified as poor, depending on the poverty measure
- Nearly 90 percent of the poor reside in rural areas with poverty conditions in the North and the East being far more severe than in other parts of the nation

"The categorisation of the population according to ethnicity is as follows: Sinhalese 74%, Tamil 18%, Moor 7% and Burgher, Malay and Vedda 1%. The Sinhalese predominantly live in the southern regions and parts of the central highlands. But there is also a large Sinhalese minority in the East. Most Tamils and Muslims reside in the northern and eastern portions of the island, although there are also sizeable Tamil and Muslim communities in Colombo and other urban areas in the south. Although there has been an increasing polarization of ethnic groups as a result of the long armed conflict, all communities have lived in close interaction with one another for centuries.

The majority of the Sinhalese are Theravada Buddhists, and the majority of Tamils are Hindus. However, there is also a large group of Christians within both ethnic groups. The breakdown of the population according to religion gives the following picture: Buddhists 69%, Hindus 15%, Christian 8%, and Muslim 8%.

Sri Lanka is divided into three geographical zones: the wet lowlands in the southern parts of the country where also the capital Colombo is located, the central highlands and the dry lowlands in the north, where the ongoing war is concentrated." (DRC May 2000, p. 48)

For further information on the socio-economic profile of Sri Lanka see "DRC Sri Lanka 2000-2003 : Annex 2", May 2000, pp. 48-50 [Internal link]

"Between 25 and 39 percent of the population can be classified as poor, depending on whether or not poverty is measured with a low or twenty percent higher poverty line. Poverty is *predominately a rural phenomenon* with nearly 90 percent of the poor residing in rural areas. Farmers cultivating small plots of land, with few off-farm sources of family income, and casual workers account for a large share of the poor. Two decades of civil conflict have left large numbers of families displaced, disabled and desperate. Poverty conditions in the North and the East are far more severe than in other parts of the nation, compounded by massive destruction of economic and social infrastructure." (GoSL December 2002, PRSP, Executive Summary - Introduction)

Roots of the ethnic conflict

- The history of Sinhalese and Tamil communities before colonialism was one of ethnic and cultural mixture
- Colonialism introduced beliefs about racial superiority and identity which resulted in two opposed nationalisms (Sinhala and Tamil) and laid the foundations for the present ethnic conflict between the two groups
- Following independence in 1948, the Tamil community and its politicians faced constant marginalization which led to the creation of the Tamil United Liberation Front in May 1976 advocating for the first time a separate Tamil State in Sri Lanka, the Eelam Tamil nation

"While there have always been tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamil kings, they cannot be compared to the violent intercommunal strife between the communities that materialized in the twentieth century. Under pre-modern conditions, political and religious centres were more symbolic than real, with the units of political and cultural life enjoying considerable autonomy so long as the centre received its due share of ritual homage. Because of caste, pre-modern Sri Lanka was also segmented in a hierarchical sense." (UN Commission on Human Rights 25 January 1994, para.15)

"The antagonism between the different religious groups grew during colonialism as beliefs about racial superiority and nationalist theories were introduced. This resulted in two opposed nationalisms, Sinhala and Tamil, and these are considered the main underlying cause of the present conflict between the two groups. [...]

The present ethnic conflict is by most scholars traced to the radical changes that took place primarily in the twentieth century. Those changes included "[I]n particular the explosion of population, the stagnation in the economy, the resulting competition for economic resources, and the influence of Western ideas about nationalism." (Seneviratne, Stavropoulou 1998, p. 362)

"Colonialism also introduced beliefs about racial superiority and nationalist theories, [...] It appears, at least, to have strengthened a deep-rooted feeling among the Sinhalese Buddhist community that over the centuries it had been forced to defend itself and its island against invaders (the imperialist rulers and the Tamil minority) who had degraded what had been a remarkable Sinhala civilization. In the nationalist days of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Buddhist religion and the Sinhalese language inevitably became the answer to the search for a Sinhalese identity.

Tamil nationalism at the same time grew as a response both to South Indian Tamil and to Sinhalese nationalism. Close linguistic, social and cultural links to South India account for the fact that many Hindus in Sri Lanka have looked there for religious, cultural and political inspiration. Just as the South Indian nationalist Dravidian movement called for the re-establishment of the ancient Dravidian kingdom, so Sri Lankan Tamils invoked ancient Tamil rule in Sri Lanka to support the claim that with the termination of British rule the country ought to revert to its time-honoured patterns of ethnically divided governance. Yet, as it has been pointed out, 'ironically, it is the special connection, the shared history, with the Sinhala, however estranged the two groups might be, that in the end differentiates the Tamil community in Sri Lanka from that in South India and gives it a residual identity of its own. Unlike the South Indians, Sri Lankan Tamils [...] feel peripheral or marginal in relation both to the Sinhala and to the South Indians, a condition that compounds their sense of frustration and distress and intensifies their longing for a homeland. This condition is particularly acute, it is suggested, for the Sri Lankan Tamil expatriate.' Even more ironically, the Sinhalese community perceives itself as a vulnerable minority in the Indian subcontinent as a whole, particularly vis-à-vis the 50 million Tamils in the province of Tamil Nadu in India. This 'siege mentality' has led to the description of Sri Lanka as 'the island of the two minorities'." (UN Commission on Human Rights 25 January 1994, para. 19-20)

"The beginnings of terrorism in Sri Lanka are inextricably entwined with the activities of the State. In the 30 years from the mid-1940s, successive governments took measures to reduce the number of Tamils in the professions and the public sector. These measures interacted in diverse and complex ways with a potent Sinhala Buddhist exclusivism which gradually became the animating ideology of the Sri Lankan state. Particularly amongst the arriviste, lower caste Sinhalese, the spread of anti-Tamil chauvinism was soon perceived as a promising means of increasing economic opportunity. As time passed, the electoral promise of pandering to this chauvinism tempted even the most cosmopolitan of Sinhalese politicians.

Arguably, the most adverse legislation for Tamils came from the language policy of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike's government. The introduction of the 1956 'Sinhala Only' Act, which replaced English with Sinhala as the language of official government business, clearly disadvantaged large numbers of Tamils. Its effect was compounded by widespread protests in Tamil areas in which school principals would not allow the teaching of Sinhala while school children refused to study the language.

[...]

The bloody terrorism that has ravaged Sri Lanka since 1983 is fuelled by the refusal of many Tamils to operate within a state system which denies them political power, employment and educational opportunities whilst engendering socio-economic disparity." (CPA July 2003, pp. 2-3)

The ethnic conflict contains both political and territorial dimensions

- Initially, the territorial conflict concerned the legitimacy of ethno-political claims to the North-East
- The essence of the political contention has been about equal individual and group rights of Tamils and Sinhalese and the right to co-constitute the political system of the country
- The conflict between the political groupings of the Peoples Alliance, led by Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP/PA) and United National Party / United National Front (UNP/UNF) has been continuously connected with the (ethno-political) North-South conflict

"The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka contains both political and territorial dimensions. Both are closely intertwined with the 'party political' conflicts in the South as well as conflicts within the Tamil polity and the Tamil-Muslim relationship in the North-East. The essence of the political contention between representatives of the numerical majority and the numerical minorities has been about equal individual and group rights of Tamils and Sinhalese and the right to co-constitute the political system of the country. Initially, the essence of the territorial conflict concerned the legitimacy of ethno-political claims to the North-East. After the tensions escalated to a military struggle, which led to the de-facto division of the country, the territorial dimension now includes issues about the legitimacy of the political-administrative structures established by the LTTE.

The conflict between the political groupings of the UNP/UNF and the SLFP/PA has been continuously connected with the (ethno-political) North-South conflict. Both sides have used the ethnic dimension in the service of their power struggles. A repeated use of majoritarian democracy has derailed all initiatives for resolving the conflict in the last fifty years.

The conflicts within the Tamil polity and the Tamil-Muslim relationship in the North-East have also been closely connected with the main ethno-political conflict and have placed an additional burden on the peace process." (Ferdinands, Rupesinghe, Saravanamuttu, Uyangoda, Ropers, January 2004, p.1)

Displacement is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka (September 2003)

"Displacement due to ethnic tensions is not a recent phenomenon. It occurred during the Sinhalese-Muslim ethnic violence of 1915. The ethnic killings of 1958 also led to displacement of Tamils living in predominantly Sinhalese areas. This also caused the displacement of Sinhalese people living in predominantly Tamil areas. Displacement occurred during major ethnic violence in 1977 and 1981. The volume of displacement radically changed during the post-1980 period, when ethnic tensions became more acute. The major violence against the Tamil community in July 1983 was the beginning of large-scale displacement. Tamils living in the southern provinces, including the Hill Country, were victims and more than 100,000 sought refuge in India and in the north-east parts of Sri Lanka."

Causes of displacement

Fighting between the army and the LTTE has been the main cause of displacement

- Main cause of displacement is war between the Government and the LTTE, forced recruitment by the LTTE, inter-communal violence (in the east) and human rights abuses
- The demands of the Tamils for power sharing arrangements were met by the successive governments with brutal violence and suppression
- The Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict escalated in the early 1980s after anti-Tamil riots in 1983
- The three areas of conflict zones are the Vanni (controlled by the LTTE), Jaffna and the border areas south of Vanni ('cleared' areas) and the contested areas of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara in the east.
- The Sri Lankan government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1979 and introduced Emergency Regulations in 1996, banning or restricting essential goods into the North-East, which also led to large-scale displacement
- During the conflict, forced recruitment of child soldiers and intercommunal violence also became major causes of displacement

"The Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict escalated in the early 1980s after anti-Tamil riots in 1983. The riots saw Sri Lanka descend into a spiral of violence that has wrecked the economy and torn apart its social fabric. As in all internal conflicts, the heaviest casualties were civilians and since 1980 thousands upon thousands of Sri Lankans have been uprooted and forced to flee their homes. An estimated 200,000 have fled overseas while the majority has remained displaced within the country's borders. Many of the IDPs have been displaced several times." (Gomez, Mario July 2002, pp. 8-11)

"Since the mid 1970s, Tamil youth have resorted to an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state to create a separate Tamil state in the north-east region of the country. The demands of the Tamils for power sharing arrangements were met by the successive governments with brutal violence and suppression. This has caused a civil war-like situation in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The armed conflict became more ferocious over the years, resulting in immense suffering. The war between the armed forces of the Sri Lanka government and powerfully armed guerrilla forces of the Tamil community, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was the main cause of suffering for the people in the conflict areas. Indiscriminate aerial bombing, shelling, massacres, rape, search operations, arbitrary arrest, illegal detention and disappearances by the armed forces in predominantly Tamil areas created panic among the Tamils and led to large-scale displacement. The Sri Lankan government, in addition, passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1979 and introduced Emergency Regulations in 1996, banning or restricting essential goods such as food, medicines, fertilisers, agricultural implements and fuel, into the north-east, resulting in deprivation and large-scale displacement and escalated mortality rate amongst the population, particularly children." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 16)

"The main cause of displacement after 1983 is the armed conflict involving the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE. The immediate causes may be categorized broadly as follows:

1. North-east Tamils fleeing in fear of advancing government security forces during battles.
2. Arrest, detention, torture and disappearance of civilians carried out by security forces.
3. Establishment of army camps in or close to populated areas.
4. Take over of land and houses by armed forces for military camps.
5. People living near army camps fleeing to avoid being caught in crossfire.
6. Need to escape from sea and air attacks by the security forces.
7. Sinhalese people moving out of areas under LTTE control.
8. Reluctance of many Tamil people to be subject to LTTE control.
9. Forcible expulsion of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims by the LTTE.
10. Conflict between Muslims and Tamils leading to displacement of both communities.
11. Violence by Sinhalese against Tamils/Muslims in predominantly Sinhalese areas.
12. Shortage of food and other essential items in the war zone.
13. Economic blockade imposed on the north-east by the Sri Lankan government." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, pp. 18-21)

"Forced recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE is another major cause of displacement, with families fleeing to protect their children. Inter-communal violence ignited by the wider war has also forced families from their homes. The conflict zone in Sri Lanka is customarily divided into the three areas: the Vanni – a belt of forest and agricultural land south of Jaffna mostly controlled by the LTTE; Jaffna, and the border areas south of Vanni – areas which the Government has regained and which it calls 'cleared' areas; and the contested areas of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara in the east.

[...]

In the east, the problem of inter-communal violence is also a cause of displacement. The community is split equally between Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese. Following the intensified violence of the second phase of the war, factions from the three ethnic groups engaged in sporadic fighting, with many civilian casualties. This violence has been compounded by high levels of human rights abuse committed by government and LTTE forces. As a result, many families have fled the area." (SCF-UK 8 May 2000 pp. 116-117)

Large-scale displacement since 1990 (September 2003)

- After war resumed in 1990 and spread to several areas in the north-east, thousands of people fled homes and villages seeking safety
- Fighting and intense bombing of the north-east by the Sri Lankan Airforce resulted in the displacement of a million people in a short period of time
- The majority of the displaced people in the north-east were Tamils, but approximately 75,000 Muslims of the Northern Province were expelled in October the same year
- Following the collapse of the peace talks between the People's Alliance government and the LTTE, fighting broke out again on 19 April 1995
- Subsequent battles displaced thousands of people in the Vanni area
- The war displaced more than 500,000 people from the Jaffna peninsula, and among them about 350,000 were forced to move to remote and distance places like Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya.
- In April 2000, capture of the strategic Elephant Pass by the LTTE caused the displacement of more than 160,000 people within the Jaffna peninsula
- More than 65,000 people fled Army operations in the Jaffna Peninsula in September 2000 and April 2001
-

"The major violence against the Tamil community in July 1983 was the beginning of large-scale displacement. Tamils living in the southern provinces, including the Hill Country, were victims and more than 100,000 sought refuge in India and in the north-east parts of Sri Lanka.
[...]

Large-scale displacement: Eelam War II

After a period of peace negotiations between the government and the LTTE, which lasted for nearly 13 months, war resumed on 11 June 1990. The fighting began in Batticaloa District and quickly spread to the other districts of the north-east. The struggle was to fill the military power vacuum created by withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), which had been in occupation of the north-east since July 1987 under an Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. The Sri Lankan armed forces, the LTTE and other small Tamil and Muslim armed groups attempted to gain dominance and in the process destabilized the normal life of the civilian population. Thousands of people fled homes and villages seeking safety. The situation also caused ethnic tensions, especially between Tamils and Muslims in the eastern region. The fighting and intense bombing of the north-east by the Sri Lankan Airforce resulted in the displacement of a million people in a short period of time.

[...]
The majority of the displaced people in the above districts were Tamils, but in late October 1990, approximately 75,000 Muslims of the Northern Province were driven out of the province by the LTTE." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, pp. 17-21)

The U.S. State Department says 46,000 Muslim inhabitants were forced to leave:

"The LTTE has discriminated against Muslims and, in 1990, expelled some 46,000 Muslim inhabitants--virtually the entire Muslim population--from their homes in areas under LTTE control in the northern part of the island. Most of these persons remained displaced and lived in or near welfare centers. There were credible reports that the LTTE warned thousands of Muslims displaced from the Mannar area not to return to their homes until the conflict is over. However, it appeared that these attacks by the LTTE were not targeted against persons due to their religious beliefs; rather, it appeared that they were part of an overall strategy to clear the north and east of persons not sympathetic to the cause of an independent Tamil state." (US DoS, 25 February 2004)

[... Eelam War III:]

"Following the collapse of the peace talks between the People's Alliance government and the LTTE, fighting broke out again on 19 April 1995 when the Tigers broke the ceasefire by sinking two naval vessels in the Trincomalee harbour. The government commenced military operations, declaring it as a strategy of 'war for peace'. On 13 May 1997, the Sri Lankan Army launched a military assault called *Operation Jayasikuru* (Certain Victory) to reopen a land supply route to the Jaffna peninsula from Vavuniya through territory in the Vanni controlled by the LTTE. This operation lasted until December 1998. The Army also launched a number of other operations to capture territory under LTTE control in the Vanni and the LTTE launched its own operations to regain territory, the main offensive being named *Oyatha Alaigal III* (Unceasing Waves) in November 1999. These battles displaced thousands of people living in the Vanni area.

The war displaced more than 500,000 people from the Jaffna peninsula, and among them about 350,000 were forced to move to remote and distance places like Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya.

[...]
The LTTE attacked Vavunativu Army camp in Batticaloa on 6 March 1997 and during this operation 5,200 people were displaced. Over 12,000 civilians fled their homes when the Army launched *Operation Rivi*

Bala (Sun Power) on 4 December 1998 to capture Mullaitivu and in *Operation Rana Gosha* (Battle Cry), began on 4 March 1999 in Vavuniya and Mannar, more than 20,000 were displaced.

In another phase of *Operation Oyatha Alaigal III* by the LTTE in April 2000, capturing parts of Vanni and parts of Jaffna, and in Army operation *Rivi Kirana* (Sun Beam) launched on 3 September 2000, to recapture territory, more than 160,000 were displaced. Over 65,000 people fled their homes in Army's *Operation Kiniheera* (Anvil) in September 2000 and *Operation Agni Khiela* (Rod of Fire) on 25 April 2001 to capture Chavakachcheri and other areas in the Jaffna peninsula." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, pp. 17-21)

Main problems faced by internally displaced (September 2003)

- Many displaced are affected by problems such as disability, loss of income and livelihood, damage to/loss of production and personal assets and lack of social status
- Many also suffer from psychological and psychiatric problems

" Many IDPs have been displaced several times, and are affected by various problems such as disability, loss of income and livelihood, damage to/loss of production and personal assets and lack of social status or in extreme cases loss of life. A large number have been living in welfare centres Refugee camps run by the government and international agencies are officially known as 'welfare centres'. for several years without basic facilities, in spite of enjoying a reasonable standard of living before displacement.

It is recognized that displaced people suffer from psychological and psychiatric problems. The sudden separation from their traditional neighbourhood and their way of life has a traumatic effect on the victims of displacement. The normal daily routine of life and economic activities are disrupted, leaving people in a state of physical and psychological limbo.

The main problems faced by the displaced people are summarised as follows:

- The inability to satisfy basic needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation, privacy, family life and medical treatment.
- The lack of educational facilities for children and the burden placed on the existing schools in areas where there are welfare centres.
- Harassment and intimidation by the security forces.
- Moral and cultural problems created in welfare centre areas where a lowering of moral and ethical standards is discernible.
- Tension between welfare centre dwellers and local inhabitants, in areas where welfare centres are located.
- Psychological and psychiatric problems as a result of displacement and the sudden separation from traditional neighbourhoods and the new way of life having traumatic effects.
- The normal daily routine of life and economic activities coming to a standstill.
- The lack of information on events and the situation in home areas and other information affecting their lives, due to lack of communication facilities.
- Inability to obtain gainful employment competing with local residents.
- Forced child labour and abuse of women and children. " (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 21)

The war has taken a heavy toll on all segments of the Sri Lankan society (December 2002)

- The Central Bank reports that the conflict is likely to have reduced Sri Lanka's GDP growth by about 2-3 percentage points a year
- The indirect costs of the war are at least as high; income lost as a result of foregone domestic investment; reduced tourism, decline in foreign direct investment; human capital loss associated with death, injury and displacement

"When a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on 22 February 2002, around 800,000 IDPs were receiving assistance from the government although some agencies estimated the total number of IDPs at one million [*Note: UNHCR estimates the number of internally displaced to have been 730,000*]. According to an UNHCR estimate, a further 917,000 Sri Lankans had sought asylum in 50 countries. This included 115,000 people in India (65,000 in Tamil Nadu refugee camps and another 50,000 living on their own without Indian government assistance)." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 9)

"The human and economic costs of the war are felt most directly by populations in the North and East. According to Government estimates, the size of the overall economy of the Northern Province shrank from US\$ 350 to US\$ 250 million between 1990 and 1995, corresponding to a negative annual average GDP growth of 6.2 percent per annum. The Central Bank reports that the conflict is likely to have reduced Sri Lanka's GDP growth by about 2-3 percentage points a year.

The indirect costs of the war are at least as high. These costs represent the income lost as a result of foregone domestic investment, reduced tourism, the decline in foreign direct investment, and the human capital loss associated with death, injury and displacement. The conflict has prompted the out-migration of large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled persons, depriving the economy of trained professionals, entrepreneurs and highly skilled civil servants that the nation so badly needs.

[...]

Two decades of conflict have taken a heavy toll on all segments of Sri Lankan society. The war-affected areas and nearby villages in the North and East are the most disadvantaged in terms of households' ability to obtain a secure livelihood because of loss of life, assets, or displacement, or as a result of the deterioration of infrastructure, irrigation systems, and roads. Among the more severely affected groups are the displaced, who have lost productive assets and land, as well as social capital. The impact of the war goes beyond the war-torn areas to affect the rural poor in particular. Poor rural youth on both sides of the conflict are faced with fewer opportunities to better their lives; they make up a substantial share of the soldiers fighting the war. Ethnic minorities face discrimination, both real and perceived, making conflict resolution and ethnic reconciliation central to poverty reduction in the decade to come." (GoSL December 2002, PRSP, pp. 29,47)

Peace efforts

Overview of the peace process (July 2003) ,

- There were 2 previous attempts at a ceasefire between LTTE and Government during the 20 year long war, in 1989 and 1994
- Change of Government at the General Election in December 2001 allowed for a new attempt.
- Unofficial ceasefire at the end of 2001 was followed by a Permanent Ceasefire Agreement signed on 22nd February, 2002.
- Commitments included vacating of schools, places of worship and public buildings by the armed forces of Sri Lanka

- Formal peace talks between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE began on September 16, 2002 in Thailand and subsequent sessions have taken place on an approximately monthly basis in Asia and Europe
- Peace talks in Thailand resulted in the creation of a Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities (JTF) which should focus on mine action and IDP needs
- Also a Joint Committee was established to address the return of IDPs to High Security Zone

"With a change of Government at the General Election in December 2001, [...] By 25th December 2001, the LTTE declared a unilateral ceasefire which was followed up by the Government. The unofficial ceasefire was then followed by a Permanent Ceasefire Agreement signed on 22nd February, 2002. Within the cease-fire agreement there were a number of commitments made by both sides. This included the vacating of schools, places of worship and public buildings by the armed forces of Sri Lanka." (CPA July 2003, pp. 1-4)

"The peace talks which were held in Thailand between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were notable for many reasons, including the high emphasis placed on issues pertaining to the internally displaced in Sri Lanka. Both sides have agreed to create a Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities (JTF). The JT will primarily focus on mine action and IDP needs and will seek international funding for priority humanitarian and reconstruction projects. The JTF will be comprised of members from the Government, Muslim community and LTTE.

The delegates at the talks also agreed to establish a Joint Committee to address the return of IDPs to High Security Zones." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group 17 October 2002, p. 1)

[Click here to see the full text of the agreement on a ceasefire between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, (BBC, 22 February 2002)]

Date	Event
22 Feb. 2002	A ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE is signed committing the two sides to maintain a separation of forces, refrain from offensive manoeuvres, and allow for the unimpeded flow of most items between areas under their respective control.
March 2002	The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), staffed by representatives of Scandinavian countries, begins operations. Travel restrictions between government- and LTTE- controlled areas are lifted.
April 2002	The A9 highway that links the Jaffna Peninsula to the South is reopened, allowing for relatively free movement of people and goods, with both sides maintaining checkpoints at officially designated border points.
June/July 2002	Representatives of the two sides hold several meetings to discuss, among other things, arrangements for direct negotiations.
August 2002	Dates for the first round of talks are set and arrangements made for lifting the proscription of the LTTE in Sri Lanka ahead of talks.
16-8 Sep. 2002	The first session of direct talks, held in Thailand, is considered a resounding success. The parties agree to set up a Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities (JTF) and schedule three more meetings.
31 Oct. – 3 Nov. 2002	At a second session of talks, also held in Thailand, the two sides decide to set up three subcommittees (Subcommittee on Immediate Human and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East (SIHRN); Subcommittee on De-escalation and Normalisation (SDN); and Subcommittee on Political Matters) in place of the JTF.
Mid-Nov. 2002	The first meetings of the SDN and the SIHRN are held in the Northeast.
25 Nov. 2002	The Norwegian Government hosts a one-day Peace Support meeting at which donors discuss and pledge support for supplementary reconstruction needs in the Northeast. Around US\$70 million is allocated, primarily to a Northeast Reconstruction Fund (NERF).
2-5 Dec. 2002	At a third session of negotiations, held this time in Norway, both sides agree to examine federal structures in their search for a political framework. A fourth subcommittee, on Gender Issues, is also announced.
Mid-Dec. 2002	The second meetings of the SDN and the SIHRN are held in the Northeast.
6-9 Jan. 2003	At a fourth session of talks, held again in Thailand, the LTTE refuses to participate in further meetings of the SDN. Despite this and other sticking points emerging, the two sides agree on further sessions in February, March, and May. The two parties agree to request the World Bank to administer NERF funds in trust for the SIHRN to disburse. There is also agreement to implement an Action Plan for an Accelerated Resettlement Programme for the Jaffna District.
15-6 Jan. 2003	A two-day meeting of the SIHRN is held at the subcommittee's new secretariat in Killinochchi to select projects to be funded by the NERF. Further dates for SIHRN meetings are set for February and March.
8-9 Feb. 2003	A fifth and shortened session of talks is held in Berlin. Human rights matters are discussed at length.

Source: CPA July 2003, pp. 5-6)

For more details on the peace process, see:

Session 1: September 16-18, 2002 [Internet]
Session 2: October 31-November 3, 2002 [Internet]
Session 3: December 2-5, 2002 [Internet]
Session 4: January 6-9, 2003 [Internet]
Session 5: February 7-8, 2003 [Internet]
Session 6: March 18-21, 2003 [Internet]

Human rights not included in the peace talks (July 2003)

- Some provisions of the cease-fire agreement are aimed at protecting civilians, however, it is doubtful that LTTE or the Government are willing to have strong human rights standards enforced as part of the peace settlement accompanied by HR monitoring as both were implicated in HR violations during war.
- Peace process is very much a bi-lateral one between the two major actors, the government and the LTTE, with the civil society at large and other political parties excluded from the discussions. This limitation has been in the interests of both parties to the process

"The cease-fire agreement signed in February 2002 does contain some provisions that seek to protect civilians from abuse. Article 2.1 is the most clearly aimed at civilian protection. It states: "Parties shall in accordance with international law abstain from hostile acts against the civilian population, including such as acts as torture, intimidation, abduction, extortion and harassment. Article 2.5 requires the Parties to "review the security measures and the set-up of checkpoints, particularly in densely populated cities and towns, in order to introduce systems that will prevent harassment of the civilian population." Article 2.12 prohibits search operations and arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the following article (2.13) guarantees family members of detainees access to the detainees within thirty days of the signing of the agreement.

However, there is little reason to believe that either the government - members of which were implicated in the massive human rights violations of the previous UNP regime in the 1980's and early 90's - or the LTTE have any genuine desire to see strong human rights standards enforced as part of any peace settlement. A robust practice of human rights monitoring and enforcement would be a threat to the traditional sources of power of both organizations.

Still, to the extent that the enforcement of effective human rights standards and democratic norms can be shown to be necessary to maintaining the peace process itself - by stemming worries that the LTTE is simply consolidating its power before further attacks, and by acting as a further confidence builder that the Sri Lankan state has learned to treat its Tamil citizens fairly - both the government and the LTTE would seem to have an interest in limiting their own anti-democratic tendencies." (CPA July 2003, pp. 10-11)

Sri Lanka's peace process stalled during 2003

- Political configuration in Sri Lanka with President and the Parliament belong to rival political parties have undermined the stability of the peace process.

- Peace talks were suspended by the LTTE in April 2003.
- Attempting to bring the LTTE back to the negotiating table, Government has proposed to offer the LTTE a Provincial Administrative Council with majority membership and full powers to make policy.
- LTTE says that the main reason for withdrawing from the peace talks is the slow progresses made in alleviating the hardships of people affected by the war.
- Observers believe LTTE's decision was also motivated by disappointment at being excluded from the Washington aid conference held on 14 and 15 April.
- Three types of broken promises invoked by LTTE: 1) Resettlement of displaced persons and the constraints that the army's presence in inhabited areas posed to such resettlement. 2) Lack of financial support for resettlement and reconstruction. 3) Undermining of the partnership between the government and LTTE due to the one-sided participation at the Washington aid conference.

"Sri Lanka's peace process stalled in late 2003. After President Chandrika Kumaratunga changed the principal portfolios of three Ministers - Defense, Interior and Media in early November, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe indicated that his government could not lead the peace process as long as it did not have control over key portfolios, in particular defense.

Following separate meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Velupillai Prabakharan, the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vidar Helgesen, announced that Norway would temporarily suspend its involvement as mediator of the peace talks. "Peace talks could have started tomorrow, provided there were clarity about who is holding political authority and responsibility on behalf of the Government to ensure the continuation of the ceasefire agreement and the resumption of peace negotiations," Mr Helgesen said. "Until last week there was such clarity. Today there is no such clarity."

Negotiations between representatives of the President and the Prime Minister commenced in an attempt to resolve the impasse, but to no avail. On 20 January, Sri Lanka's two main opposition parties, the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP) and the People's Liberation Front (JVP) formed an alliance. Three weeks later, the President dissolved Parliament and announced that elections would take place on 2 April.

It is not yet clear what effect this political turmoil might have had on durable solutions for the displaced. There are indications that donor assistance has been affected. During a visit to Sri Lanka in late January, Japanese special envoy Mr. Yasushi Akashi said some donors were "reviewing the situation" and "there may be significant modifications in the speed of the delivery of the assistance." However, Mr. Akashi said no donor has indicated they would revert from the commitments made at the 2003 Tokyo donor conference, at which \$4.5 billion in assistance was pledged." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)

"On 20 January 2004 President Kumaratunga signed an agreement of cooperation between the main constituent of the People's Alliance (PA), the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP; People's Liberation Front) to form the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA). Four more parties have since joined the UPFA including the Muslim National Unity Alliance (NUA), the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP; People's United Front), the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPLS) and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP; Lanka Equal Society Party).

The JVP is opposed to the devolution of power to the LTTE and strongly supports a unitary state. It is said to be opposed to the terms of the cease-fire agreement and third party facilitation in the peace process.

On 7 February the President dissolved parliament and called parliamentary elections, four years ahead of schedule. This was followed on 11 February, by the dismissal by the President of all 27 non-cabinet ministers and 12 deputy ministers, from the government. Two new ministers of Information and Mass Communication have since been appointed." (AI 27 February 2004)

"Elsewhere on the island, skepticism about the benefits of peace remains high, particularly among the majority Sinhalese in the south. A lack of balanced information about the peace process, particularly in the vernacular press, has contributed to this negative point of view. The JVP, a neo-Marxist nationalist movement that almost overthrew the government in a bloody 1987-1989 uprising, has sharply criticized the government's approach to the talks and successfully played to the grievances of disaffected youth throughout the South. Signs are now emerging that they are making similar inroads into communities of Sinhalese settlers in the border villages of the North and East." (USAID 31 Jan 2004)

Split within LTTE creates further insecurity about the viability of the peace process (March 2004)

"A situation that potentially threatens the peace process has developed in the north east with the unexpected and sudden split in the LTTE caused by the break away of its former eastern commander, Colonel Karuna Amman. The LTTE leadership has relieved its former eastern commander of his post. While the LTTE has claimed that this is the action of a lone individual and that nearly all top eastern leaders are loyal to it, the rebel leader has claimed he has 6,000 eastern cadres who are loyal to him." (National Peace Council, Media Release 8 March 2004)

Achievements and shortcomings of the peace process (January 2004)

"Achievements:

- The no-war situation has saved lives and helped to improve living conditions throughout the island.
- The majority of the people support the ceasefire and are in favour of moving towards a positive and stable peace.
- The suspension of the violent conflict has prevented a severe crisis of the existing political and social system in the South, which re-emerged in the second half of 2001.
- The peace process has helped to revitalise the overall economy, which has been in a state of severe crisis.
- There have been improvements in relief and the delivery of some rehabilitation and reconstruction services in the North-East.
- The peace process has offered an opportunity to de-link the ethnic conflict from war and violence.
- The effective mobilization of women's efforts for peace has culminated in the recognition by parties at the Track One level of the importance of gender concerns in the peace process. The establishment of the Sub-committee on Gender Issues (SGI) is particularly significant in this regard.
- The peace process has attracted the International Community to take an active interest in Sri Lanka and to mobilise additional resources for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.
- The peace process has generated significant common ground on which a political settlement can be founded, as embodied in the *Oslo Communiqué* which enunciated the framework of internal self-determination within a united federal Sri Lanka.
- The peace talks demonstrated that the interlocutors of the parties managed to develop a good working relationship with each other and that it was possible to find solutions to some difficult issues.

Shortcomings:

- There was no common, consistent and transparent strategic framework guiding the peace negotiations.

- The benefits arising from the no-war situation have been distributed in a highly imbalanced way. The people of the North-East are still waiting for: a substantial peace dividend, the normalisation of their living conditions, the return of refugees and IDPs to their homes, and a comprehensive rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in the war-affected areas.
 - Human rights violations have continued to take place.
 - There has been a lack of women's representation at all levels of the peace process.
 - The disputes in the South concerning the approaches to the peace process have been largely linked to partisan agendas of political parties.
 - The parties that were excluded from peace negotiations have expressed concerns and reservations while questioning the legitimacy of the entire peace process.
 - The overall mobilisation towards pro-peace goals has been and remains relatively low.
 - The negotiating parties failed to create joint institutions to nurture and foster the peace process.
- The two peace secretariats worked completely independent from each other and contributed little to the substance of the talks.
- The parties did not initiate a constructive public discussion on how to reconstruct the Sri Lankan state through the implementation of the *Oslo Communiqué*." (Ferdinands, Rupesinghe, Saravanamuttu, Uyangoda, Ropers, January 2004, p.1)

Displacement after the breakdown of peace-talks

Displacement after the ceasefire agreement: civil unrest and riots displaced more than 40,000 people in Mutur, Trincomalee district (May 2003)

- Civil unrest, rioting and ethnic conflict in Mutur, Trincomalee district on 17 April, left 35,000 people displaced, 2,500 people homeless, 5 people dead and 20 people wounded.
- ZOA Refugee Care initiated a major Emergency Response Programme targeting the displaced with food and household support distributions, water & sanitation facilities, reconciliation and peace building initiatives.
- Parts of Mutur town have been ruined, including 500 houses that were completely or partly destroyed, and more than half of the population has fled to welfare centers, churches, schools and mosques in search of protection and basic services.
- Following the signing of an agreement by the leaders of the LTTE and Muttur Majlis Al Shura Council to resolve differences existing between the two communities people started returning home one month after the outbreak of violence.

"[...] the ethnically volatile Trincomalee district [...] boasts an equal number of people from all the three communities – Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

The predominantly Muslim area of Mutur in Trincomalee is also famed for its ethnic volatility and is the starting point of all major clashes between Muslims and Tamils in the East." (OneWorld.net, 14 October 2003)

"The ceasefire agreement in February 2002 was expected to bring normalcy to the conflict areas. It stopped major fighting between the Army and the LTTE thereby putting an end to the heavy toll of human lives. But the agreement has failed to end the displacement of people. In spite of the ceasefire agreement, tension between Tamils and Muslims has increased, particularly in the Eastern Province, because of alleged violations committed by the LTTE against members of the Muslim community. In mid-April 2003, ethnic violence between Tamils and Muslims at Muthur in Trincomalee District led to the displacement of more than 40,000 people, majority of them Muslims." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, pp. 18-21)

"The civil unrest, rioting and ethnic conflict, which started in Mutur, Trincomalee district on 17 April, left 35,000 people displaced, 2,500 people homeless, 5 people dead and 20 people wounded, according to local sources.

[...]

Mutur town and surroundings are located south of Trincomalee town, on the other side of the natural harbour, and is the habitat to 60,000 people (appr. 15,000 families) of which according to the latest statistics 54% is of Muslim and 46% is of Tamil descent (source: government statistics). Even though tensions, hartals, riots and protests have come and gone in Mutur town, nothing like the recent outbreak of violence has happened since the signing of the cease-fire agreement beginning last year.

Parts of Mutur town have been ruined, including 500 houses that were completely or partly destroyed, and more than half of the population has fled to welfare centers, churches, schools and mosques in search of protection and basic services. " (ZOA Refugee Care 23 April 2003)

"Tamil and Muslim residents of Muttur division, south of Trincomalee town who sought refuge in schools, churches and mosques where their security was ensured following the outbreak of violence between the two communities last month, started to return to their own homes this Saturday after one and a half months in the temporary shelters, sources said.

Tamil families living among majority Muslim areas fled to the LTTE held Muttur east villages and stayed in schools there since April 14.

About one hundred and fifty Tamil families staying at Chenaiyoor Central College as refugees returned to their homes at Aalimsenai, Palanagar and Muttur hospital area in three buses escorted by Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and Police, Muttur sources said.

This follows the signing of a four point agreement by the leaders of the LTTE and Muttur Majlis Al Shura Council to resolve differences existing between the two communities through a eight member committee appointed by the both parties, sources said." (TamilNet 24 May 2003)

New episodes of displacement reported after upsurge of violence in the Kinniya division – Trincomalee district (January 2004)

- In November and December 2003, the Trincomalee district witnessed an upsurge of violence
- During the violence in November, about three thousand families were displaced from the Tamil and Muslim communities

"In November and December Trincomalee district witnessed an upsurge in violence. Most incidents occurred in Kinniya, where Muslims and Tamils live in close proximity. There were related incidents in Trinco town aimed at Muslims celebrating the end of the holy month of Ramadan, apparently in retaliation for similar attacks on Tamils during this year's Hindu Deepavali festival." (USAID/OTI, 31 January 2004)

"Hundreds of Tamil families displaced from villages Alankerni, Eechantivu and Upparu in Kinniya division are still languishing in refugee centres without enough essential food items as they are unable to go to Kinniya town to buy their provisions. The co-operative outlet in Alankerni has been closed down due to threat by Muslim groups in the Kinniya area, non-governmental sources said.

About thirty Tamils families displaced from Alankerni have come to Trincomalee town and staying at Kalaimagal Vidiyalayam and are being looked after by local NGOs, sources said.

A consignment of essential food items collected by non-governmental organizations in Trincomalee town had been sent to Tamil refugees staying in welfare centres in Alankerni and Eachchantivu villages by sea Sunday afternoon.

The provisions were taken to the villages by the volunteers of the Trincomalee district branch of the Sri Lanka Red Cross located in Trincomalee with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Navy.

Earlier on Friday a consignment of food items supplied by Trincomalee co-operative society was taken to these two Tamil villages by the Sri Lanka Army in its trucks when a group of Muslims prevented the Kinniya co-operative society from supplying relief food items to displaced Tamil families, sources said.

Meanwhile, a conference was held Sunday morning at Grand Mosque of Kinniya town. All three Muslim parliamentarians of the district, the Government Agent, army officials, religious and community leaders and other civilian officials attended the conference, where matters related to bringing normalcy to the area were discussed, sources said.

Kinniya Divisional Secretary said at the conference that about three thousand families from both communities have been displaced due to the present tense situation following the killing of three Muslim farmers on Friday. Of the displaced about eight hundred families are from Tamil community, sources said.

He requested the Government Agent to order dry ration relief to all displaced families." (TamilNet, 30 November 2003)

Displacement reported from the eastern town of Batticaloa (31 March 2004)

- The situation in the town of Batticaloa, eastern Sri Lanka, was very tense during the weeks preceeding the elections in April 2004 due to the split within the LTTE
- Tamils originating from Jaffna have received threats and have been ordered to leave the town
- Several hundred Tamils are reported to have left and have headed back to Jaffna or to the capital, Colombo

"A number of Tamil residents have fled the eastern town of Batticaloa, saying they were forced out by supporters of renegade Tamil Tiger Colonel Karuna.

The Tamils, from the northern Jaffna area, have returned home or gone to the capital, Colombo. The town has been tense since the killing of a politician linked to Colonel Karuna on Tuesday. The colonel broke from the northern Tigers faction this month, saying it was failing to represent the east. Catholic Bishop Kingsley Swampillai, who has tried to mediate between opposing factions, said businessmen, students and officials had left Batticaloa under duress. Reports of the numbers leaving vary, but media sources in the east suggest they could be in the hundreds. A spokesman for Colonel Karuna denied the Jaffna Tamils had been under any pressure to leave.

[...]

More than 1,000 soldiers have been deployed in the town since the killing of Radian Sathiyamoorthy, a Tamil National Alliance candidate in Friday's general election." (BBC 31 March 2004)

"Tamil residents began fleeing this eastern Sri Lankan town Wednesday as hundreds of troops poured in amid arson attacks and fears of a factional war between Tamil Tiger rebels, residents and police said.

[...]

"Several shops have been torched here," a local police official told AFP. "Tamils who trace their origins to the island's north have begun fleeing after Mr Sathyamoorthy was killed."

[...]

Leaflets distributed among residents had warned Jaffna Tamils, or those from the northern region of the island, to leave the district of Batticaloa within 24 hours.

The victim of Tuesday's shooting, Sathyamoorthy, a Tamil National Alliance (TNA) election candidate, had been a supporter of breakaway Tamil Tiger leader V. Muralitharan, better known as Karuna, who holds sway in this eastern area. Karuna broke away from the group's main northern leadership earlier this month.

[...]

A spokesman for the renegade commander, V. Muralitharan, denied they were responsible for the forced eviction.

More than 1,000 Sri Lankan soldiers patrolled the city in trucks and motorbikes and policemen checked vehicles entering the tense town." (AFP, 31 March 2004)

"United Nations agencies [...] expressed concern for the safety of thousands of ethnic Tamils forced to leave their homes in eastern Sri Lanka following the slaying of a local politician.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a statement it and three other UN agencies working in Sri Lanka were highly worried about the plight of civilians in the troubled district of Batticaloa." (AFP 1 April 2004)

Obstacles to solutions for people remaining internally displaced (December 2003 - February 2004)

- The major obstacles to solutions for the remaining IDPs are: the presence of landmines, fear for children's safety and ongoing human rights violations
- insufficient investment in basic infrastructure and lack of economic opportunities in wartorn areas
- the presence of High Security Zones - large areas created by the government and controlled by the army
- the need for restitution of property
- landlessness, including those who did not own land prior to their displacement and those whose homes are located within High Security Zones.
- the inadequate efforts to integrate those IDPs, who, in 2002, elected to remain where they were living

"The major obstacles to solutions for the remaining IDPs are: the presence of landmines; insufficient investment in basic infrastructure in wartorn areas; the need for restitution of property; and the inadequate efforts to integrate those IDPs, who, in 2002, elected to remain where they were living. IDPs often return to communities which have suffered extensive physical destruction. Agricultural land or alternative income generation opportunities have to be identified and created for a large number of landless IDPs. The return of a sizeable number of those still displaced will depend on tangible progress at the peace talks, as their home areas form part of the strategic High Security Zones (HSZ). These are areas occupied by the Sri Lankan army and remain off-limits to civilians." (UNHCR Global Appeal 2004)

"Why, 22 months after the commencement of the ceasefire agreement, do 386,104 people remain displaced? It should first be noted that many remaining IDPs do not intend to return to their places of

origin. When UNHCR and the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees conducted a survey of IDPs in mid-2002, 25 per cent of all registered IDPs said they intended to remain in their place of displacement.

Nevertheless, it is clear that many remaining IDPs would like to return to their homes. In recent months, UNHCR has been conducting surveys of the residents of welfare centres to ascertain, among other things, what factors are discouraging them from returning home. According to the surveys, the main factors preventing IDPs from returning to their homes are:

- Concerns about security in return areas, including the threat of landmines, fear for children's safety and ongoing human rights violations
- The lack of education facilities in return areas
- The lack of economic opportunities in return areas
- Landlessness, including those who did not own land prior to their displacement and those whose homes are located within High Security Zones." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)

"Nearly two years since a cease-fire was called in the long-running civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan army, as many as 400,000 people remain displaced within the country.

The peace established in February 2002 has brought many positive results to a country that had suffered 19 years of conflict, with greater freedom of movement for citizens, as well as increasing levels of economic growth. However, the reluctance or inability of so many displaced people to return to their homes remains a serious cause for concern.

"During the peace talks that have so far taken place, several issues with regard to the resettlement of displaced civilians have been discussed in detail", reports JRS Sri Lanka. "But agreements have not been implemented to the expectations of the people in the north and east of the country". One of the main reasons for this is the presence of High Security Zones [HSZ], large areas created by the government and controlled by the army. Civilians are forbidden to reside in these zones and the security forces have been adamant that they are not willing to compromising on the question of dismantling these zones.

During the conflict, the government evicted civilians from the Jaffna peninsula and declared High Security Zones in the area. Nearly 21,000 families or 68,000 individuals were displaced from here and have been forbidden from returning to their land and homes. Security zones have also created similar problems in Vavunya, Mannar, Trinco and Batticaloa.

Another reason for the reluctance of people currently residing in government-run welfare centres to return home, according to JRS Sri Lanka, is the vexed issue of government compensation or assistance. Each displaced family has been promised financial assistance to help them return home and to re-build or construct their houses." (JRS, 8 January 2004)

"The Jaffna District Humanitarian Agencies Consortium (JDHAC) Sunday handed over a memorandum to the head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in Jaffna stating that normalcy has not returned to the lives of several thousand Tamil people including internally displaced in the peninsula even after two years of ceasefire, civil society sources said.

The memorandum said that during the last two years Sri Lanka government troops have been constructing new camps in residential areas in addition to the existing high security zones creating additional hardships to civilians and refugees, sources said.

About 87, 722 internally displaced Tamil civilians are still languishing in refugee camps and welfare centres unable to resettle in their lands and houses, which are located in the high security zones.

Government troops have failed to respect the ceasefire agreement, the memorandum added." (TamilNet, 22 February 2004)

Muslim and Sinhalese internally displaced (September 2003)

"About 14% of the IDPs today are Muslims and Sinhalese. They are from the north, east or the border areas of the two provinces. The majority of Muslim and Sinhalese IDPs live outside the north-east and need guarantees of safety and security for returns, as they would be returning to areas of the north-east which may fall under the proposed interim administration which will be controlled by the LTTE. Under the July 2003 proposals of the Sri Lankan government, a joint administrative council (composed of members of government, LTTE and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress) will have power over most current government functions in the north-east. The LTTE will have a majority in the council. In view of past violations by the Tigers against these categories of people, in addition to guarantees from the LTTE, procedures and independent institutions must be in place for effective protection." (The Refugee Council, pp. 31-32)

UNHCR says elections could slow efforts to resettle displaced people (February 2004)

- The head of the executive committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says uncertainty linked to elections could slow down resettlement of remaining displaced people

"The UN agency for refugees said Friday Sri Lanka's snap parliamentary elections could seriously slow efforts to resettle hundreds of thousands of refugees in the island's embattled regions.

The head of the executive committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Jean-Marc Boulgaris, said here they were worried about the fall-out of the political crisis on internally displaced people (IDPs).

"My concern is that the uncertainty that comes with the elections will dilute the international community's commitment to invest in Sri Lanka and that will have an adverse impact on the IDPs," Boulgaris said.

He told reporters that the immediate needs of 380,000 IDPs in the island's embattled regions should not be neglected with focus shifting to the political arena following the dissolution of parliament last weekend." (AFP 13 February 2004)

POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

General

Internal displacement at the time of the cease-fire (January 2002)

- As of January 2002, there were approximately 174,250 persons in 346 welfare centers in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Polonnaruwa, Colombo and Matale.
- A further 509,036 displaced persons were staying with friends and relatives. These statistics do not capture the total number of displaced people.
- 100,000 Muslims were evicted from Jaffna and Mannar by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 1990 and 12 years later they are still living the lives of displaced people in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Kurunegala.
- Tamils have been most affected by displacement numerically. The exact ethnic breakdown is not available, but it is estimated that 78% of the displaced are Tamils, 13% Muslims and 8% Sinhalese.
- In the LTTE-controlled Vanni, it is estimated that 80% of the population was displaced as of January 2002

"According to statistics provided by the Commissioner General of Essential Services (CGES), as of January 2, 2002, there were approximately 174,250 persons in 346 welfare centers in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Polonnaruwa, Colombo and Matale. A further 509,036 displaced persons were staying with friends and relatives. The IDPs outside the camps are also eligible to receive rations from the state. According to the CGES statistics, there were a total of 683,286 persons displaced as of January 2, 2002, both within and outside camps. However, these statistics do not capture the total number of displaced people who either are not eligible to receive dry rations due to economic reasons or have not registered with the government and who are living in other areas, including the city of Colombo.

Numbers Displaced (estimated)

December 1994 525,000

October 1995 649,049

December 1995 1,017,181

May 1996 839,161

October 1996 770,837

December 1996 768,356

March 2001 707,215

January 2002 683,286

Source: Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction/ Commissioner General of Essential Services (CGES)

By virtue of their geographical concentration in conflict-affected areas, Tamils have been most affected by displacement numerically. The exact ethnic breakdown is not available, but it is estimated that 78% of the displaced are Tamils, 13% Muslims and 8% Sinhalese.

In the LTTE-controlled Vanni, it is estimated that 80% of the population is displaced; 91.75% in Kilinochchi District, according to the Kilinochchi Government Agent. In Government controlled Northern areas, a substantial number of persons remain displaced in Vavuniya, the Jaffna peninsula and Mannar. In 1990, approximately 90,000 Muslim residents were evicted en masse by the LTTE from the North and continue to live in precarious conditions in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Kurunegala [...]. In the multi-ethnic Eastern Province, Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese residents have all been displaced, often as a result of attacks on their villages. Most have settled in their District of origin." (CPA February 2003, pp. 24-25)^

For information on population and displacement profile per district as of August 2002, consult World Health Organisation (WHO), August 2002, Health System and Health Needs of the North-East Sri Lanka

Number of internally displaced as of the end of 2003 (December 2003)

- The precise number of internally displaced at the time of the ceasefire is unclear. The total number of internally displaced when a cease-fire was signed is now estimated at 730,000
- The greatest displacement has been within and from the Jaffna peninsular, accounting for some 350,000 of the total displaced population
- The remaining displaced population is relatively evenly distributed among Districts. Jaffna and Mullaitivu have the highest number, each with around 60,000 internally displaced
- Of the 400,000 remaining IDPs in Sri Lanka, it is estimated that 34% are children (136,000 children)

Out of the estimated total of 730,000 internally displaced estimated in February 2002, some 345,000 have "moved" as of December 2003. Given the current obstacles in the areas of return or resettlement, one cannot consider all of these 345,000 people to have returned or resettled in safety and dignity. It is possible that many of the returnees could still be considered as internally displaced :

"[...] the precise size of the IDP population that existed at the time of the ceasefire is unclear. The Government's estimate was 800,000. When UNHCR and the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees conducted an IDP census in mid-2002 - after some people had already begun to move - 613,220 voluntarily registered as IDPs.

However, using figures on (a) the number of known returnees and (b) the number of IDPs known to be remaining, UNHCR now estimates there were approximately 730,000 IDPs at the time of the ceasefire. This figure suggests that around 45% of all IDPs had moved since the beginning of the ceasefire. It is assumed the vast majority of these people have returned to their places of origin. That leaves approximately 430,000 people still displaced.." (UN IDP Working Group, 10 November 2003)

"Of the estimated 730,000 people displaced at the signing of the ceasefire agreement in February 2002, 386,104 individuals, or 53 per cent, were still displaced at the end of 2003. Around one quarter of these remaining IDPs, or 92,062 people, were living in welfare centres." UNHCR Statistical Overview 31 December 2003

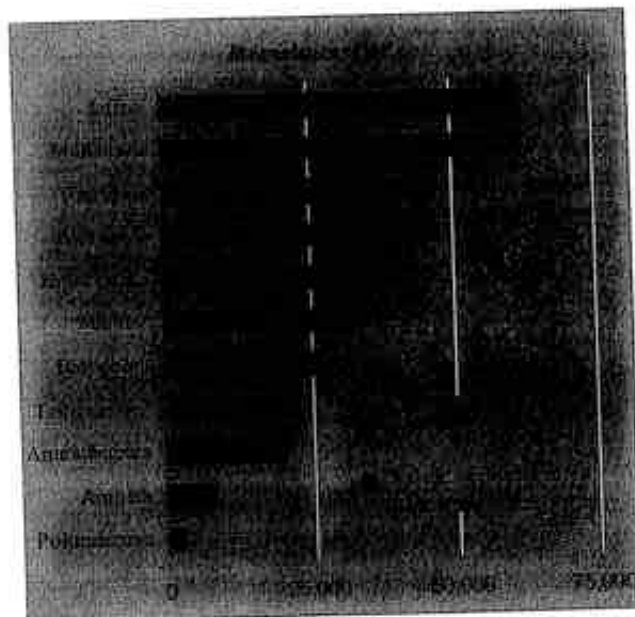
"Compared to the Northern Province, the number of IDPs in the Eastern Province is small and their number is concentrated in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts. During the ceasefire period, a significant number of IDPs returned to Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Most of the returnees in Batticaloa were within the district while significant returnees to Trincomalee were from the Mullaitivu district. But the Eastern Province is now facing a serious problem of a fresh flow of displaced people due to the escalation of ethnic tensions between Muslims and Tamils in the region." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 31)

"Of the 400,000 remaining IDPs in Sri Lanka, it is estimated that 34% are children (136,000 children)." (UNICEF, January 2004)

Geographical distribution and disaggregated figures

Disaggregated figures of the remaining displaced population per district (31 December 2003)

"Compared to returns, remaining IDPs are relatively evenly distributed among Districts. Jaffna and Mullaitivu have the highest number, each with around 60,000 IDPs. Puttalam District is notable for the high proportion of IDPs living in welfare centres – almost three-quarters of Puttalam's 47,049 IDPs live in welfare centres." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)



UNHCR Statistical Overview 31 December 2003

INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION

District	In Welfare Centres			Outside WC		Total	
	No of WCs	Families	Persons	Families	Persons	Families	Persons
Jaffna	88	2,554	10,276	14,793	51,718	17,347	61,994
Kilinochchi	35	2,414	10,298	8,012	33,059	10,426	43,357
Mullaitivu	26	2,087	8,595	12,711	52,082	14,778	60,657
Mannar	6	1,419	5,314	6,907	27,779	8,326	33,093
Vavuniya	13	2,621	10,182	8,828	34,149	11,447	44,331
Trincomalee	11	916	3,724	3,201	16,847	4,117	20,571
Batticaloa				6,526	27,576	6,526	27,576
Ampara				1,704	8,527	1,704	8,527
Puttalam	81	9342	34878	2,669	12,171	12,011	47,049
Anuradhapura	39	1905	6975	4,914	13,589	6,819	20,564
Polonnaruwa	5	168	508	1,342	2,671	1,510	3,179
Kurunegala	10	211	858	510	2,336	721	3,194
Colombo	1	92	454	794	3,019	886	3,473
Gampaha				556	2,389	556	2,389
Kandy				26	126	26	126
Matale				700	2,773	700	2,773
Kalutara				376	863	376	863
Ratnapura				32	149	32	149
Badulla				50	255	50	255
Kegalle				13	44	13	44
Matara				358	1,251	358	1,251
Galle				128	581	128	581
Hambantota				28	108	28	108
Total	315	23,709	92,062	75,174	294,042	98,883	386,104

UNHCR Statistical Overview 31 December 2003

Internally displaced in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (May 2003)

- Some 66,200 IDPs (almost 10% of the total population of the District) were registered in Puttalam in 2002. Most of them are from Mannar's Muslim community.
- Some 17,900 IDPs (just under 2% of the District population) are scattered in Anuradhapura with varied ethnic and geographical origin.
- There are some 4,100 IDPs (a little over 1% of the population) in Polonnaruwa District.

"8. Three of these four Districts host significant numbers of IDPs. In the case of Puttalam some 66,200 IDPs (almost 10% of the total population of the District) were registered in 2002. They were overwhelmingly from the Muslim community (91%) and mainly from Mannar, with smaller but significant numbers from Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu (these were the main areas from which they were evicted in 1990). The IDPs are concentrated in the four Divisions of Kalpitiya (over half of the total), Puttalam (over a third) and smaller numbers in Mundel and Vanathavilluwa.

9. In the case of Anuradhapura, some 17,900 IDPs (just under 2% of the District population) are scattered. Significant concentrations of IDPs (above 1500) are found in the five divisions of Kekirawa, Padaviya, Rambewa, Kebithigollewa and Horowpathana. The places of origin and the ethnic composition of the IDPs are more varied (55 % Sinhala, 33% Moslem and 11 % Tamil).

10. In the case of Polonnaruwa, the 4,100 IDPs (a little over 1% of the population) are concentrated in 4 of the 7 Divisions, with only one (Welikanda) hosting more than 1,500. The ethnic breakdown is similar to that of Anuradhapura." (ADB, UN & WB, 9 May 2003, p. 4)

Vulnerable groups

Internally displaced women and children are particularly vulnerable (December 2002-March 2004)

- Returning children are especially vulnerable- many have dropped out of school and return to towns and villages that lack basic infrastructure, such as shelter, water and sanitation, education and health facilities
- Internally displaced women face loss of family members and male spouses, increased responsibility to provide for and protect children and family members, threats to physical safety, psychological insecurity, and more general issues of social marginalisation and lack of power.
- In Vavuniya District, a NGO indicated that 60 percent of IDP families were female-headed households (FHH)
- There are numerous Land and Property issues facing women both in 'Welfare Centres' and upon return

"Returning children are especially vulnerable. UNICEF estimates that in the LTTE-controlled areas of the north, one third of school-aged children have dropped out or have never attended school. The IDPs and refugees are moving back to areas that are contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordinance. The physical destruction of these areas means that they are returning to towns and villages that lack basic infrastructure, such as shelter, water and sanitation, education and health facilities.

In terms of health, the North and the East suffer from a lack of health professionals and medical supplies. Communicable and infectious diseases are expected to increase with the return of the IDPs, as is the risk of HIV/AIDS with the return of refugees from India. Chronic malnutrition among women and children is high in parts of Sri Lanka, but is worse among returning IDPs." (UNICEF Sri Lanka, webpage as of 14 March 2004)

"Poor women are especially vulnerable to the vicious cycle of poverty, addiction, malnutrition, poor environmental health, low education and poor health status. Two new vulnerable groups of women have emerged in recent years: elderly women in low-income families and women coping with displacement and lack of services and livelihood in conflict areas." (GoSL December 2002, PRSP, p.121)

"Although women comprise a majority of the IDP population in Sri Lanka, the specific issues facing women IDPs are rarely highlighted or adequately addressed. Women face the loss of family members and male spouses, increased responsibility to provide for and protect children and family members, threats to physical safety, including rape and sexual violence, psychological insecurity, and more general issues of social marginalisation and lack of power. Land and property issues affecting women are intimately intertwined with women's human rights issues, living conditions, and questions regarding livelihood.

In one interview, members of the NGO Consortium in Vavuniya District stated that 60 percent of IDP families were female-headed households (FHH). Those interviewed expressed concern about discrimination against FHH, as well as economic, legal and family issues. Another person interviewed highlighted the fact that there were 21,400 widows in 1995, raising today's figure to more than 25,000. The Trincomalee District counts 8,757 widows heading households in its IDP population, out of a total of 56,745 families displaced between 1983-2001. These figures only further emphasise the need to better

understand and begin to address issues affecting women IDPs as part of the transition toward an end to the conflict.

Land and property issues facing women both in 'Welfare Centres' and upon return are numerous, ranging from inequitable policies for distributing assistance and compensation, to possible obstacles to women gaining legal title to land and property, to practical challenges of clearing land and rebuilding houses, to burdens of livelihood resulting from women becoming the sole providers for their families." (CPA February 2003)

Action plan for children affected by war (February 2004)

- In January 2004, UNICEF released a progress report on the Action Plan for Children Affected by War
- The report estimated that 50,000 children in the North and East remain out of school, around 140,000 have been displaced, and that in 2003 alone 20 were killed and 17 maimed by landmines
- Recruitment of children into the LTTE remains a major concern. According to UNICEF records, 709 children were recruited by the LTTE in 2003

"In January, UNICEF released a progress report on the Action Plan for Children Affected by War. The Action Plan is an outcome of the fifth round of peace talks in Berlin, at which UNICEF was asked to take a leading role in establishing shared programs to address the needs of up to 50,000 children affected by war.

In its report, UNICEF estimated that 50,000 children in the North and East remain out of school, around 140,000 have been displaced, and that in 2003 alone 20 were killed and 17 maimed by landmines. The North and East also faces a serious deficit of education and health staff, with a need for more than 5,800 additional Tamil medium and 200 Sinhala medium teachers.

Recruitment of children into the LTTE remains a major concern. According to UNICEF records, 709 children were recruited by the LTTE in 2003. Recruitment increased noticeably during August, September and October, with reports of 304 children taken into the organisation, before dropping off during November and December, when 31 cases were reported. The LTTE released 202 children during 2003. A quarter of these releases were made through a transit centre opened in Kilinochchi in October; the remainder were released straight to their families. From reports submitted by families, UNICEF said it knew of at least 1,301 children who remain in the LTTE.

But the report also outlined the improvements in children's lives that have been achieved during 2003. "Catch up" education programmes reached 23,500 children, 244 school buildings were refurbished and the recruitment of teachers to address the deficit has begun. Meanwhile, ILO has established vocational training capacity, UNDP has systems in place for micro-credit schemes, the Ministry of Social Welfare has expanded its capacity on probation and child care, Save the Children is providing social work support and follow-up reporting on former child soldiers, and TRO is working on specific categories of vulnerable children such as street children.

Looking into 2004, UNICEF said the following key developments must take place if the Action Plan is to be a success and is to address the rights of children affected by war:

- The LTTE must cease all recruitment of children.
- The LTTE must release all child soldiers.
- The GOSL must continue its efforts to ensure that the significant shortages in education, health and social welfare staff are urgently addressed and that the basic infrastructure is rehabilitated.

The UN agencies and NGOs must accelerate implementation of their programmes to support all components of the Action Plan and reach all children affected by war and increase advocacy on child rights.

Donors support needs to continue and expand, both in terms of advocacy with the GOSL and LTTE and with financial contributions to the implementing partners." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)

Men and women affected differently by displacement (May 2000)

- Men are more likely to be suspected of belonging to one of the warring parties and this influences negatively the authorities' response to the needs of the displaced family
- Displacement often affects gender roles.
- Widows are particularly at risk of being socially stigmatized and economically deprived

"Women and men are affected differently by displacement and play different roles in the resettlement process. During conflict men, more than women are generally at risk of being suspected of belonging to one of the warring fractions or of being forcefully included in an armed group. This often reduces their mobility. And according to many of the displaced families in Vavuniya and Mannar districts, suspicion of a husband or a son being associated with the LTTE influences their security and the authorities' response to their situation. When a household is displaced and loses access to its main productive assets (e.g. land or business) this not only affects their economic situation, but also the gender roles and relationships among its members. In many cases men face serious identity problems as they can no longer provide the daily meals and income for the family and become increasingly dependent on the female members of the household. Accordingly, women often have to resume extra responsibilities for their family, including taking up areas of activities that have so far been considered "male domains". This has for instance been the case with some of the displaced Muslim families in Puttalam, where women have found it easier to find employment in onion production, because they demand lower salary, and where men suddenly found themselves idle and with added responsibilities for home and children. And in the case of Sri Lanka, where some of the IDPs settle in areas dominated by a different ethnic group with differing social and cultural values and practices, there may be an additional "attack" on gender identities.

Some women come out stronger with new skills, ideas and a strong self-esteem. But many also find it difficult to deal with their new role in society. Especially widows are facing many problems. Not only have they lost the economic and social support of their husband and have to take overall responsibility for the household, but in many cases they simultaneously have to come to terms with a socially stigmatised position. This has for example been clearly illustrated in a relocation project for widows in Vavuniya, where the some people in the vicinity have referred to the widows as 'prostitutes' and also intruded the community." (DRC May 2000, p. 20)

Around 100,000 Muslims have been displaced for 13 years (February 2003)

- 100,000 Muslims displaced by the LTTE in 1990 continue to live in camps in Puttalam and Anuradhapura districts, where dry food ration distribution stopped in December 2001 and did not resume at least until May 2002.
- Following an agreement in April 2002, LTTE promised that Muslims would not be harassed and that they could start returning.
- After an absence of more than eleven years, Muslims seem to prefer group returns rather than individual returns, for reasons of safety and integrity of the community and on guarantees of social and economic sustainability.

- Land and buildings, such as houses and shops, owned by Muslims in several areas of the north are occupied by internally displaced Tamils, who after ten years of occupation have acquired titles to land and buildings.

"An estimated 100,000 Muslim people were displaced from the north, after an LTTE ultimatum in October 1990, ordering them to leave the region. Most of them now reside in refugee camps in Puttalam and Anuradhapura districts. In December 2001, dry food rations issued to these refugees were stopped. Following a meeting chaired by Rehabilitation minister Jayalath Jayawardena at the Puttalam *Kachcheri* (Government administration office), assurance was given that dry rations for the months of January and February will be issued in April. Refugees say that no dry rations had been issued by the end of May 2002.

Under an agreement between the LTTE chief V Prabhakaran and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader Rauf Hakeem on 15 April 2002, Muslims will be encouraged to return. The LTTE have assured that the Muslim people will not be harassed. Earlier attempts of Muslims to return to their home areas were not successful, because of continuing fears for safety. Muslim IDPs have welcomed the agreement, but many remain sceptical, pointing to an agreement between the LTTE and Muslim leaders in 1988 regarding safety of the Muslim community, which was not implemented. Seventy two Muslim families which returned to Jaffna after the ceasefire agreement this year, faced severe restrictions from the LTTE in carrying on their trades. As a result, 55 families have gone back to Puttalam.

After an absence of more than eleven years, Muslims seem to prefer group returns rather than individual returns, for reasons of safety and integrity of the community and on guarantees of social and economic sustainability. The living and economic environment in the original settlements of Muslim IDPs have suffered a state of natural destruction. Muslims are waiting for the root causes of displacement to be addressed: to allow them to begin a fresh life in an atmosphere of peace and stability without the uncertainty over the peace process.

Land and buildings, such as houses and shops, owned by Muslims in several areas of the north are occupied by internally displaced Tamils. Some people are in occupation for more than ten years and may have acquired title to land and buildings under the laws of prescription. It has been suggested that prescription laws should be amended so that the Muslims and other IDPs have title to their property when they return to their home areas." (BRC July 2002, pp. 17-18)

No information available on the situation of Sinhalese displaced from Jaffna (December 2003)

- No information is available about the estimated 25,000 Sinhalese who fled mainly to Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Amparai districts at the onset of the war. They have been displaced by LTTE attacks on Sinhalese villages on the border of the north-east region.
- It is hard to envisage the return of Sinhalese IDPs to their home areas, particularly those which lie within the north-east and may come under the control of the LTTE in an interim administration

"No information was available about the Sinhalese who were displaced from Jaffna at the onset of the war. However, the Buddhist high priest [...] explained that of approximate 100,000 of Buddhists who lived in the District prior to 1983, only about 10,000 remain." (CHA, 12 December 2003)

"According to the Rehabilitation Ministry, there are some 25,000 Sinhalese IDPs mainly living in Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Amparai districts. In December 2001, dry food rations to Sinhalese IDPs were also stopped, but restored later for a period of six months. The displacement of the Sinhalese took place after the LTTE carried out many attacks on Sinhalese villages on the border of the north-east region.

There has been no official statement by the LTTE similar to that relating to Muslim refugees, encouraging return to their home areas and guaranteeing their safety, although press reports say that the Tiger leader V Prabhakaran has welcomed the Sinhalese refugees. Without a successful peace agreement between the government and the LTTE on substantive political issues, which incorporates safety elements for all communities, it is hard to envisage the return of Sinhalese IDPs to their home areas, particularly those which lie within the north-east and may come under the control of the LTTE in an interim administration." (BRC July 2002, p. 18)

PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General

Duration and multiple displacements characterize displacement in Sri Lanka (February 2003)

- Most IDPs have found shelter with friends and relatives or have settled on unoccupied land; others are living in 'Welfare Centres' provided by the Government.
- Two features characteristic of displacement in Sri Lanka are duration and the pattern of multiple displacement.
- In the LTTE controlled area of Madhu show that 22% of displaced families have been displaced more than five times and 31% have been displaced three times
- Constantly changing military situation and fear of fighting cause pattern of repeated displacement.
- Three types of displacement: inter district, in-district and day and night displacement

"Displaced families are in government and other welfare centres, or they have found accommodation by themselves with friends or relatives. Some have settled and built houses on unoccupied lands, often without government assistance. A large number of IDPs have lived in welfare centres for more than nine years and some for more than 15 years." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p.26)

"Some displaced persons, such as "day and night IDPs" in border villages, mostly in the Eastern Province, live within the district of their former residence and may have access to their property during the day.

Two features characteristic of displacement in Sri Lanka are duration and the pattern of multiple displacement. Some IDPs, such as Northern Muslim displaced families, have been unable to return to their former area of residence for more than 10 years, while some Sinhalese IDPs in Trincomalee District were displaced as far back as 1985. Many IDPs in camps have been displaced for 5 years or more. Statistics gathered by UNHCR in 2000 in the LTTE controlled area of Madhu show that 22% of displaced families have been displaced more than five times and 31% have been displaced three times." (CPA February 2003, pp. 24-25)

"IDPs in Sri Lanka present three distinct trends:

Those in and around Vanni, who are constantly on the move. As the theatre of the war changes, battle lines are redrawn and the displaced people keep moving in the fluid situation.
Those who have been living in welfare centers for years like in Puttalam.
The returnees from India who are still waiting to go back but are unable to do so because of the war in their village. Mostly located in Trincomalee.

In terms of the pattern of displacement, they belong to four categories:

Those displaced from another district.
Those displaced within the same district
Returnees from India
Persons of concern, i.e. the economically affected non-displaced people." (Ahmad 19 February 2001)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

General

Almost 70 percent of the internally displaced are concerned about the security and shelter situation in return areas (September 2003)

- A large number are concerned about safety and security in their home areas and believe that they are safer in their current places of residence

"The IDP Survey conducted by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and UNHCR indicates that almost 70% of the IDPs surveyed expressed concern about security and shelter in places of return. The largest number (37%) are concerned about safety and security in their home areas and seem to believe that they are safer in their current places of residence and would not be returning unless these issues are resolved.

According to UNHCR, security issues include lack of differentiation in police and military roles, lack of control by government of large sections of the country and lack of accountability of conduct by armed groups. UNHCR's programme for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka – Report of a joint appraisal mission by the UK Department for International Development and UNHCR, May 2002." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 32)

Violence against displaced women not addressed by Government (July 2002, September 2003)

- Displaced children in Welfare Centers vulnerable to abuse.
- Displaced women subject to sexual harassment.
- Government has done nothing to address the very serious issue of violence against displaced women.
- Conditions of existence of most of those resident in camps has resulted in particularly severe invasions of privacy, especially for women.

"Around 58% of the displaced population are women. In welfare centres, women have been subject to sexual harassment, abuse and rape by the security forces and paramilitary groups as well as by other men. Women are also affected by domestic violence. These issues are not adequately addressed during or after displacement." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p.26)

"In addition to the problems shared by other internally displaced persons, women also face gender-based discrimination and are exposed to gender-specific violence and exploitation. In 1993, the Representative of the Secretary-General reported that some women had been raped prior to being displaced. Incidents of rape in the conflict areas continue to increase. A recent Amnesty International report notes a 'marked rise' in allegations of rape by police, army and navy personnel in 2001 and observes that among the victims of rape by security forces are 'many internally displaced women.' The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) in its recent Concluding Comments on Sri Lanka noted with alarm 'the high and severe incidences of rape and other forms of violence targeted against Tamil women by the police and security forces in the conflict areas.'

The USCR team which visited Jaffna in November 1996 quoted an 'international organization official' who observed that *'rape in Jaffna is widespread'* and also a 'woman in Jaffna' who pointed out that women are *'scared to come out of their homes because of the fear of rape.'* The report went on to note that many instances have not been reported because of the fear of retribution and the social stigma attached to rape.

The collapse of community and family structures, including the support provided by the extended family, has made displaced women even more vulnerable. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women observed that lack of access to health care and food has been one of the main problems faced by refugee and internally displaced women generally. Women have also been forced to assume many of the responsibilities of family life after displacement. In some cases women have lost their husbands and thus the burden of carrying on with family life has fallen exclusively on them. In other cases their husbands have been otherwise preoccupied and it is the wife who has had to shoulder the responsibility. The Sri Lankan experience shows that displaced women are more likely to seek work or engage in economic activity than men. There has also been a large increase in the number of female-headed households in the country. The UN CEDAW Committee noted with concern the high percentage of households headed by women, *'half of whom are elderly, many illiterate and have meager means of income.'* International human rights law recognizes the family as the basic unit of society and in need of protection and support." (Gomez, Mario July 2002, pp. 11-12)

Noticeable improvement in the human right situation since the ceasefire but still a lot to be done (April 2002, February - March 2004)

- Improvements in the area of Human Rights have been observed since the cease-fire, although no measures have been taken to redress past human rights abuses.
- There are concerns that efforts being made by the GSL, including the SLA, to prevent further violations of human rights, are not necessarily replicated by the LTTE.
- Freedom of movement remains restricted in the LTTE-controlled Vanni.
- Recurring acts of intimidation and repression of the civilian population, the extortion of 'war taxes', forced recruitment and abductions for ransom, are still being reported.
- There have been reports of further child recruitment, particularly by the LTTE.
- Issues related to domestic and/or sexual violence, principally in the welfare centers, also needs to be addressed.
- There is limited programming to establish national protection and conflict resolution mechanisms

"Since the cease-fire, there has been a noticeable improvement to the human rights situation throughout the country, albeit no measures have yet been taken to redress past violations. In addition to reducing further displacement, these improvements also benefit IDP populations in their current locations by increasing their prospects for durable solutions, especially their return to areas of origin.

Article 2.1 of the cease-fire MOU provides that *'the parties shall in accordance with international law abstain from hostile acts against the civilian population, including such acts as torture, intimidation, abduction, extortion and harassment'*. Although the list of 'protected' rights is not exhaustive, both sides tend to interpret that other rights, such as the freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom from unlawful detention, are not covered by the MOU. Thus, they are not incorporated into the monitoring arrangements put in place to verify the fulfilment of the agreement. It has further been suggested that the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission may be hesitant to include monitoring of human rights violations as part of its regular functions, as this might jeopardize the peace process." (IDP Unit April 2002, pp. 6-8)

"At the conclusion of the March [2003] Sessions of the Peace Talks, the Government and the LTTE requested their International Human Rights Advisor to develop three aspects of a proposed road map on Human Rights for adoption at the 7th Session due in April 2003 [*delayed to June and inconclusive*]. These aspects included:

1. The drafting of a Declaration of Human Rights and Humanitarian Principles to ensure respect for until an eventual Constitutional arrangement provides for Federal and local law;
2. The planning of Human Rights Training Programs for LTTE cadre, Government Officials, Police and Prison officials as well as Human Rights Education and Awareness for other sections of the population and
3. A Proposal for the strengthening of the Human Rights Commission to develop their capacity for effective monitoring.

[...]

Despite the developments of the Peace Talks and the resultant rehabilitation, reconstruction and relief efforts undertaken by various authorities of the Government, Donor as well as the humanitarian community ie. Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement & Refugees, Ministry Assisting Vanni Rehabilitation, Ministry of Eastern Development & Muslim Religious Affairs, North East Provincial Council, Ministry of Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Bank, ADB, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Mine Awareness Trust (MAT), Halo Trust etc, incidents of human rights violations which amounts to *fears* of the peoples in terms of human security continued to be reported." (CHA 4 March 2004, pp. 2-3)

"[During 2003] The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. There were no reports of security forces committing politically motivated killings and no reports of disappearances; however, the military and police reportedly tortured, killed and raped detainees. Prison conditions remained poor. There were reports of arbitrary arrest during the year. During 2002, the Government released more than 750 Tamils held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Only 65 Tamils held under the PTA remained in custody. The PTA, like the Emergency Regulations (ER) repealed in 2001, permitted warrantless arrests and nonaccountable detentions. Unlike in the recent past, there were few reports that security forces harassed journalists during the year. Violence and discrimination against women, child prostitution, child labor, limitations of worker rights, especially in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs), and discrimination against persons with disabilities continued to be problems. Violence against religious minorities increased, and institutionalized ethnic discrimination against Tamils remained a problem. Trafficking in women and children for the purpose of forced labor occurred, and there was some trafficking of women and children for the commercial sex industry.

[...]

The LTTE continued to commit serious human rights abuses. The LTTE was responsible for arbitrary arrest, torture, harassment, disappearances, extortion, and detention. Through a campaign of intimidation, the LTTE continued to undermine the work of elected local government bodies in Jaffna and the east. On occasion, the LTTE prevented political and governmental activities from occurring in the north and east. There was overwhelming evidence that the LTTE killed more than 36 members of anti-LTTE Tamil political groups and alleged informants during the year. There were also instances of intimidation of Muslims by the LTTE, and there was fighting between LTTE personnel in the east and Muslims that left several Muslims dead. The LTTE continued to control large sections of the north and east. The LTTE permitted journalists some access to the areas of the country it controlled. Some LTTE-imposed restrictions remained on freedom of movement of citizens. The LTTE denied those under its control the right to change their government, did not provide for fair trials, infringed on privacy rights, used child soldiers, and discriminated against ethnic and religious minorities." (US DoS, 25 February 2004)

Resettlement and protection needs in Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala (May 2003)

- In Puttalam there are urban problems (tensions and clashes) due to competition for resources between the displaced and host community.
- IDPs face problems of sexual and gender-based violence, child labour, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and inconsistent provision of basic services.
- There is also a socio-religious dimension to the situation as many IDPs are Muslim and have indicated their preference to integrate rather than return.
- Half of the 22,000 IDPs in Anuradhapura are expected to integrate.
- Heavy military presence has created a number of social problems including sexual and gender based violence and female abandonment.
- There are security concern for the Sinhalese IDP minority.
- In Polonnaruwa, reports of abductions from border Divisions have made physical security a key issue

"30. Each of the four Districts has different needs in relation to protection and resettlement:

In Puttalam the effects of the conflict are most evident due to the large displaced population. There are an estimated 66,200 displaced persons in Puttalam of whom approximately 12,900 have indicated a preference to remain, while many have indicated that they are undecided about whether to return home or integrate locally. Here there are several urban problems including tension and in some cases violent clashes due to competition for resources between the displaced and host community. Problems of sexual and gender-based violence, child labour, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and inconsistent provision of basic services for the displaced population also exist. As the majority of the displaced in this district are Muslim, there is also a socio-religious dimension to the situation. Many displaced Muslims in the district have indicated that they would prefer to "integrate" (resettle) in Puttalam, rather than return home to the North East. Addressing the needs of this population requires targeted attention to guarantee their rights, including the right to resettle in the place of displacement. In this context, reconciliation initiatives to strengthen peaceful co-existence will also be important.

In Anuradhapura the effects of the conflict are particularly evident in the northern Divisions. There are approximately 22,700 displaced persons in this district, of which 11,700 are expected to remain. A heavy military presence has created a number of social problems including sexual and gender based violence and female abandonment. There is also a security concern for minority displaced populations (in particular Sinhalese). Psychosocial problems are an issue for some IDPs, concentrated amongst the vulnerable groups.

In Polonnaruwa the effects of the conflict are less pronounced than in Puttalam or Anuradhapura, though they still exist. Approximately 4,100 persons were displaced in this District. Of these half have expressed an interest to remain. Polonnaruwa District is traditionally agricultural, and depends upon major and minor irrigation works for the water supply for paddy crops. Fighting from the conflict has damaged many of the irrigation systems, thus affecting the livelihoods of the population. Reports of abductions from border Divisions have made physical security a key issue. Assistance for local integration or relocation within the District are recommended solutions for IDPs in this area.

Of the four Districts, the effects of war are least pronounced in Moneragala. This district is one of the poorest in the country. Most people are engaged in agriculture and the greatest needs are in relation to agriculture and poverty alleviation. It is noted that programmes for integrated local economic development

in this area should be envisaged as part of the country strategy as outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy." (ADB, UN & WB 9 May 2003, pp. 7-8)

National Commission on Human Rights examined the status of internally displaced (July 2002)

- Human Rights Commission established in 1997 has until 2000 only had a marginal impact on the advancement of human rights in the country.
- In 2000, the Commission identified IDPs as a particularly vulnerable group and a segment of the population that required its attention and decided to initiate a study into the status of the displaced.
- The study was intended to advise the Commission on the activities it could initiate, both in the short term and medium term, prioritize areas of intervention and identify possible areas of collaboration between the Commission and other organizations working in the IDP area. Also it sought to ascertain the potential to apply the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- The results of the study contained a number of recommendations for strengthening the capacity of the Human Rights Commission in the area of internal displacement

"In response to both international and domestic pressures, the Sri Lankan Parliament passed legislation in 1996 establishing a permanent Human Rights Commission (HRC)..

[...]

The new group of Human Rights Commissioners who took office in 2000 and who for the first time included a woman, envisaged a broader role for the Human Rights Commission. Apart from investigating and mediating individual complaints, the new Commission decided at an early stage to engage in and promote human rights education, investigate systemic and group violations of human rights and to examine law and policy for their compatibility with international human rights norms. The Commission also decided to work in partnership with NGOs and other civil society organizations in implementing its mandate.

One of the Commission's early decisions was to examine the status of vulnerable groups and to consider the role that the Commission could play with regard to these groups. At least three groups were identified: women, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced persons. The Commission saw IDPs as a particularly vulnerable group and a segment of the population that required its attention. Until that time the Sri Lankan Commission had not examined human rights violations pertaining to IDPs although Sri Lanka had a fluctuating population of between 500,000 to one million IDPs for more than twenty years and the conditions under which they lived were harsh.

The new Commission decided to initiate a study into the status of the displaced. It should be noted that under the Human Rights Commission Act of 1996, the Commission was given the power to undertake research with regard to human rights and to disseminate and distribute the results of such research. It also was authorized to advise and assist the government in formulating legislation and administrative directives and procedures with a view to promote and protect fundamental rights.

[...]

Overall, the study contained a number of recommendations for strengthening the capacity of the Human Rights Commission in the area of internal displacement." (Gomez, Mario July 2002, pp. 4-8)

Joint UN-Government proposed response to the protection needs (August 2002)

- Objective of the proposed intervention: to promote and protect the rights of IDPs and returnees, with special emphasis on the freedom of movement, liberty and security, and property rights of women, children, and other groups at risk.

- Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mannar, and Batticaloa will be prioritized
- UNHCR, UNICEF and their partners will work collaboratively to ensure implementation of the protection interventions.
- UNHCR will be the lead agency in addressing issues relating to the rights of IDPs and returnees, with a special emphasis on 'groups at risk'
- UNICEF will be the lead agency addressing protection issues relating to women and children.

"[Objective:]

To promote and protect the rights of IDPs and returnees, with special emphasis on the freedom of movement, liberty and security, and property rights of women, children, and other groups at risk.

Priority Areas: Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Mannar, and Batticaloa.

Proposed intervention

Protection is a vital crosscutting theme throughout the phases of displacement and return. Thus, changes in the current situation such as an acceleration of returns or the resumption of hostilities will continue to require interventions of a similar nature. Protection interventions aim at ensuring access by vulnerable people to both national and international means of protecting their rights.

UNHCR, UNICEF and their partners will work collaboratively to ensure implementation of the protection interventions. In accordance with the Guiding Principles on IDPs, UNHCR will be the lead agency in addressing issues relating to the rights of IDPs and returnees, with a special emphasis on 'groups at risk'. In accordance with the CRC and CEDAW, UNICEF will be the lead agency addressing protection issues relating to women and children. Interventions include ongoing monitoring, investigation of abuses, rights based advocacy and capacity building of local legal and human rights institutions. The main activities are as follows:

- Protection and assistance to IDPs and returnees with a focus on durable solutions;
- Provision of protection to IDPs, including 'protection through presence', as a means of early warning, confidence building, and early response capability to protection problems;
- Provision of protection by monitoring the return process, well-being and treatment of IDPs and refugees;
- Intervention as necessary to prevent human rights violations, including forced relocation and involuntary return;
- Investigate cases of discriminatory treatment and alert the Government and the public to abuses of rights;
- Establishment of mechanisms to provide current and updated information on IDP and refugee return to support interventions in this area;
- Policy and public advocacy activities on issues relating to internal displacement and voluntary repatriation;
- Facilitation of voluntary repatriation of refugees from India;
- Capacity building of governmental and non-governmental institutions and community based organisations to establish and strengthen national mechanisms to deal with IDP and refugee related protection issues such as sexual and gender-based violence and child labour;
- Advocacy at all levels with communities, schools, the Government, the civil administration in the North and East, and armed forces to prevent recruitment of child combatants;
- Rehabilitation and re-integration of ex-child combatants by working with the community to ensure that every child is in school;
- Addressing children's immediate psychosocial needs through the establishment of safe play centres and the resumption of regular schooling;

- Addressing immediate psychosocial needs through community-based training in order to enable IDPs to better cope with repeated displacement and issues such as sexual and gender-based violence and child labour;
- Working with the Government to ensure that every child has a birth certificate." (Government of Sri Lanka & UN 23 August 2002, pp. 24-25)

Freedom of movement

Government policy does not always respect the right to freedom of movement of internally displaced (February 2003)

- Commitment to freedom of movement and to voluntary and dignified return is not always applied in policy terms and at the local level.
- A Government policy detrimental to the freedom of movement of landless IDPs states that IDPs cannot be relocated on State land in any District other than that of their origin.
- This relocation policy will compel these landless IDPs to remain in camps, become homeless or return to an area against their will.
- Strategies used at the local level to force people to return include: threats of stopping dry food rations or closure of camps and camp facilities, such as schools.

"UNHCR continues to advise against the organised return of IDPs and to monitor the voluntary nature of return. While the Central Government and the LTTE appear to be committed to respecting freedom of movement of IDPs, in practice, however, this commitment to freedom of movement and to voluntary and dignified return is not always applied in policy terms and at the local level.

For instance, a Government policy detrimental to the freedom of movement of landless IDPs states that IDPs cannot be relocated on State land in any District other than that of their origin. However, many landless IDPs expressed the wish to be granted land in the area where they are currently residing, in particular in Mannar island and Vavuniya town. As such, this relocation policy will compel these landless IDPs to remain in camps, become homeless or return to an area against their will. Landless IDPs include Upcountry Tamils who settled in the North and worked as tenant farmers prior to displacement; the new generation of displaced persons who reached adulthood during displacement and are propertyless; illegally or temporarily relocated landless persons; settlers without documentation and so-called "encroachers."

Interviews with IDPs reveal that a number of strategies have been used at local level to compel, or strongly encourage, IDPs to return to their areas of origin. These have included threats of stopping dry food rations or closure of camps and camp facilities, such as schools. At the end of September, the authorities closed the Madhu Church Welfare Centre, compelling 1,600 families to return to their areas of former origin." (CPA February 2003, pp. 7-8)

Most travel restrictions lifted by the Government towards the end of 2001 (February 2004)

- Pass system in force in Vavuniya ended with the ceasefire
- Commitment to freedom of movement and to voluntary and dignified return is not always applied in policy terms and at the local level
- LTTE reportedly occasionally disrupted the flow of persons exiting the Vanni region during 2003

- In September 2002 the Supreme Court declared that the military pass violated the freedom of movement

"Tamil IDPs seeking safety from the northern districts during the 1990s were held by the security forces in Vavuniya welfare centres, some for more than five years, and prevented from proceeding to southern Sri Lanka. In February 2000, there were more than 22,000 people in six welfare centres in Vavuniya.[...] They were denied the freedom of movement by a strict pass system, treated almost like prisoners and were subject to harassment. The Sri Lankan Supreme Court declared in September 2002 that the military pass system in Vavuniya was illegal." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p.26)

"The Constitution grants every citizen 'freedom of movement and of choosing his residence' and 'freedom to return to [the country]', and the Government generally respected the right in practice. However, in the past, the war with the LTTE prompted the Government to impose more stringent checks on travelers from the north and the east and on movement in Colombo, particularly after dark. Tamils had to obtain police passes to move freely in the north and east, and frequently they were harassed at checkpoints throughout the country. These security measures had the effect of restricting the movement of Tamils.

Starting in 2001, most travel restrictions were lifted by the Government. Areas with limited access continued to be near military bases and high security zones, defined as areas near military emplacements, camps, barracks, or checkpoints where civilians could not enter. Some observers claimed the high security zones were excessive and unfairly claimed Tamil agricultural lands, particularly in Jaffna. The LTTE limited travel on the road connecting Jaffna in the north to the rest of the country; however, in April 2002, the Government lifted all its restrictions on travel to Jaffna.

[...]

The LTTE occasionally disrupted the flow of persons exiting the Vanni region through the two established checkpoints. In particular, the LTTE taxed civilians traveling through areas it controlled. In the past, the LTTE disrupted the movement of IDPs from Trincomalee to Jaffna by hijacking or attacking civilian shipping, although there were no such reports during the year." (US DoS, 25 February 2004)

The army pass system is still reality for people living in the Jaffna district (January 2004)

- Fishery representatives in Jaffna say the Sri Lanka Army has refused to stop the implementation of the security pass system
- They appealed to the Sri Lanka Army to replace the existing army pass system by recognizing the fisheries identity cards issued by the Department of Fisheries

"Vadamarachchi North fisheries societies in Jaffna district appealed to the Sri Lanka Army to replace the existing army pass system by recognizing the fisheries identity cards issued by the Department of Fisheries. The appeal was made at a conference held last week at the 52-4 brigade headquarters of the SLA in Point Pedro, security sources said.

The conference was attended by fisheries societies' representatives, fisheries department officials and army officials led by Jaffna district area commander Major General Susil Chandrapala, sources said.

Major General Susil Chandrapala gave assurances to the fisheries representatives that he would take necessary action to find amicable solutions to problems and difficulties confronted by Vadamarachchi north fisher folk in carrying out their profession, fisheries sources said.

Fisheries representatives said that although more than two years have passed since the signing of the ceasefire agreement by the government and the LTTE, the SLA has refused to stop the implementation of their security pass system. They said the new Jaffna area commander of the SLA also has not taken any favourable steps regarding their request for eliminating existing army pass system and recognizing the fisheries identity cards, sources said.

Major General Susil Chandrapala is reported to have rejected another request made by the fisheries societies representatives that internally displaced fisher families from Myliddy village should be allowed to resettle in their own lands, which come under the high security zone of Palaly." (TamilNet, 13 January 2004)

Physical security

Landmines and UXO's are the main safety threats to IDPs and returnees (November 2003)

- During 2003 most of the accidents caused by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) occurred in Jaffna
- During 2003, there were four to seven mine/UXO incidents each month, compared to 15 to 20 a month in 2002.
- Demining plays a key role to clear land in the North and East for resettlement and cultivation
- There also appears to be a lack of mine risk education for IDPs and returnees in these areas.
- Three demining groups are currently active in the region
- No mine risk education is provided in IDP camps or settlements prior to return
- Sri Lanka's Defense Secretary has estimated that there are some 700,000 mines in the ground.

"The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Colombo said [...] that most of the accidents caused by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) occurred in Jaffna this year. UNDP supported de-mining began in Jaffna seven years ago. Today there are three international demining groups active in the peninsula, including one from the US army. The UNDP continues support. A year ago, the region controlled by the Liberation Tigers in the north had much larger and extensive concentrations of mines, minefields and UXOs than Jaffna.

The UN Inter-Agency Working Group said in its report (Durable Solutions Progress Report No. 13 of 10 November 2003): "Mine Action has played a key role in efforts to clear land in the North and East for resettlement and cultivation. In doing so, it supports the redevelopment of infrastructure and improves access to services like electricity, water, hospitals and schools. The success of this work is illustrated by the declining rate of accidents involving mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs)".

"This year, four to seven mine/UXO incidents have typically occurred each month, compared to 15 to 20 a month in 2002. Most of these incidents are occurring in Jaffna District".

The most heavily mined areas of the island lay south of the line of control in Jaffna, in territory controlled by the Liberation Tigers, when the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement in February 2001.

The towns of Pallai, Paranthan, Kilinochchi, Mankulam, Mullaithivu, Nedunkerni, Puliyankulam, Kanakarayanikulam and large regions such as Elephant Pass and Pooneryn were heavily garrisoned and extensively mined by the Sri Lanka army for years until the Liberation Tigers overran these in 1996, 1998 and 1999/ 2000.

The Humanitarian De-mining Unit of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) began work in these towns and regions from the latter part of 2000 to help resettle tens of thousands of families pushed out by the SLA garrisons. LTTE's sapper units were also engaged in the task in the initial phase.

Jaffna has few mined areas where the army allowed people to resettle. HALO Trust, Danish De-mining Group, and the US army's RONCO de-mining group are actively engaged in removing land mines and UXOs in the peninsula, north of the Line Of Control.

The UNDP has a mine action program office in Jaffna to support the ongoing work." (TamilNet, 11 November 2003)

"Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) remain the main safety issue affecting returnees and IDPs in the North East. Landmines are concentrated in areas where military operations took place, lines of control demarcated by the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army and military camps. The presence of landmines and UXOs is a security threat to spontaneous returnees and prevents the return of thousands of displaced families. In addition, landmines render large expanses of land unusable for agriculture and cattle grazing. Mine Action activities by the LTTE, the SLA and INGOs, including surveying, marking, education and demining, have started in conflict affected areas. There appears, however, to be regional discrepancies in the focus of demining efforts. In certain areas, such as the LTTE controlled Vanni, surveying, marking, Mines Risk Education and de-mining are underway, and local personnel have been trained in demining to international standards. However, in Government-controlled areas and the Eastern Province, with the exception of the Jaffna peninsula, only *ad hoc* Mine Action work is being undertaken, mostly by the Sri Lankan Army.

The lack of demining in Government-controlled areas is compounded by a dearth of Mine Risk Education for potential returnees. Thus, it appears that only when IDPs actually return are the areas surveyed and education provided. As far as could be ascertained, no Mine Risk Education is provided in IDP camps or settlements prior to return." (CPA February 2003, p.7)

For more details on Landmines and UXOs, see:

Land and Property Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, CPA, February 2003, "Landmines and UXOs", pp. 28-31 [Internet]

Vavuniya: demining paves the way for the return of internally displaced (January 2004)

Vavuniya:

"De-mining Activities; Mine Action Achievement - A ceremony to notify that an area of 55,000sq feet in Omantai was cleared of landmines, was held on December 12th. The GA Vavuniya received the certificate of Successful Mine Clearance of the above area and it is proposed that IDPs will soon be settled in the area." (CHA, Sit. Rep, January 2004)

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

Documentation Needs

Many internally displaced have lost property documents during displacement (2003 - 2004)

- Many find it difficult to prove ownership as they have lost property documents during displacement.
- In addition, many government institutions have lost volumes and records in the North-East, making it difficult to obtain copies of their documents.
- Also Land Registries and Divisional Secretaries face a sharp increase in the volume of demand for certified copies and do not have the capacity to respond.
- Also, many have lost proof of identity such as National Identity Cards or Birth Certificates, which are necessary to obtain copies of property documents.

"One immediate measure that can help foster ethnic reconciliation is to ensure that all citizens have ready access to identity cards. Delays in issuing identity cards for large numbers of internally displaced persons, as well as other members of the minority community, have hindered movement and access to public services. Government will mount a special effort aimed at expediting the provision of identity cards, particularly to conflict-displaced persons and Estate workers. Over the next few years, Government will introduce a computerized system to issue trilingual identity cards for ensuring equivalent identification procedures for all citizens." (GoSL, PRSP, p. 52)

"Because of the tumultuous ordeal of displacement, IDPs regularly find basic documents such as birth, death and marriage certificates, land title deeds and identity cards have been left behind, destroyed or lost. These documents provide a legal basis for people to enforce a whole range of rights and entitlements. Without a birth certificate, for instance, children are unable to enrol for school. Without an identity card, it is not possible to vote. Without title deeds, it can be extremely difficult to prove ownership of land or property.

UNHCR therefore supports mobile registration clinics, where IDPs and returnees can seek assistance from a range of government and non-government organisations to obtain basic documentation. In November 2003, for example, over 2,000 people sought assistance at a clinic in Vavuniya for refugees who had returned from India." (UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)

"Obtaining copies of property documents is complicated by the fact that in the North East, Government institutions, such as the Land Registries and Divisional Secretariats, which keep copies of such documents, have lost volumes and records as a consequence of the conflict or of natural disasters. Copies of private deeds as well as State Permits and Grants are not kept centrally. Residents of the North are all the more affected as public buildings of Northern Districts were severely damaged during the conflict. On the other hand, most property documents of the Eastern Province are intact.

Even when duplicates of documents are available, it is unclear whether Land Registries or Divisional Secretaries have the capacity to respond to the number of demands for certified copies. The volume of demands has sharply increased since the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement in February 2002 and the subsequent return of IDPs to their property. These demands are likely to increase further.

Compounding the matter, many IDPs have lost proof of identity such as National Identity Cards or Birth Certificates, which are necessary to obtain copies of property documents. Property inheritance may also be impeded by the loss of Marriage or Death Certificates.

Some IDPs were in the process of regularising their occupation of State land when they were displaced. They have therefore no documentary proof that they were in occupation of the land in question prior to displacement. Current procedures for proving occupation need to be revised to assist these people in resuming their applications." (CPA February 2003, p. 11)

Vavuniya:

"There are number of IDPs who have no birth certificates in the welfare centres. The SEED, WDC and RDF took action to provide birth certificate to them with the collaboration of the Asst. District Registrar. However, there are still inadequacies in the process." (CHA, January 2004)"While the law protects property rights, proving ownership may be problematic, as many IDPs have lost property documents during displacement." (CHA 2 February 2004)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

UNHCR does not promote the resettlement of internally displaced - says it is premature (November 2003)

"So far even UNHCR has refrained from encouraging IDPs to return, holding it was premature.

Declares a spokesman for the UNHCR Colombo office, "We never promoted the resettlement of IDPs, but assisted those who sought our assistance to return." (OneWorld South Asia, 13 November 2003)

Local integration, relocation and return: the challenges ahead (April 2002)

- Many of the ethnic Sinhalese IDPs are believed to have integrated locally of which many are unlikely to return in the foreseeable future.
- Given the limited funds of the Government it is unlikely that much, if any assistance will materialize for IDPs opting for local integration.
- The option of relocation is primarily directed at the 175,000 IDPs in the government welfare centres.
- The MRRR is aiming at relocating a total of 27,110 families, which will empty most of the welfare centres. Some 8,000 are to be targeted this year.
- The IDPs relocated from welfare centers will transfer a high dependency syndrome with them from which it will be difficult to wean away.
- Most IDPs will want to return when they perceive that conditions are conducive for return.
- The LTTE are permitting IDPs to return to the eastern districts, but not to other areas.
- Return and successful reintegration is very much predicated by the prospects for economic recovery and availability of basic social services.
- The MRRR estimates that there are some 30,000 young widows among the IDPs, of which 19,000 are in Jaffna District alone. Their full reintegration through access to sustainable livelihoods presents a special challenge.

"As the peace process gathers momentum, the focus on IDPs will shift from care and maintenance to durable solutions - local integration, relocation and return. In the latter case, the MRRR's planning framework, and the UN system's support of it, should simultaneously address the needs of returning refugees from India.

Local integration:

It is unclear how many of the IDPs have already integrated within their host communities. However, the fact that 85,000 of the estimated 800,000 IDP caseload do not receive any food assistance suggests that significant levels of local integration already exist. Many of the ethnic Sinhalese IDPs are believed to

have integrated locally of which many are unlikely to return in the foreseeable future. This may also be the case among many Muslim IDPs, especially those that have significant assets and have re-established sustainable livelihoods in areas of displacement.

Given the probable demands of return and relocations programmes on the GSL's limited resources, it is unlikely that much, if any assistance will materialize for IDPs opting for local integration. Likewise, it is unlikely that the international community will place much priority on such assistance. Indeed, local integration should be seen within the broader context of national medium-term social and economic recovery in war-affected areas.

Relocation:

The option of relocation is primarily directed at the 175,000 IDPs in the government welfare centres. In the absence of any assisted return programme, and given that the majority of the IDPs in the welfare centres have no land or property to return to, the GSL's policy since 2001, under its Unified Assistance Programme, has been to relocate them out of the squalor of the welfare centres to government lands.

According to UNHCR, during 2001, the GSL relocated a total of 974 families in Vavuniya and 235 in Mannar, supported by UNHCR. Currently, the MRRR is aiming at relocating a total of 27,110 families, which will empty most of the welfare centres. Some 8,000 are to be targeted this year.

Under the MRRR programme, relocated IDPs are provided with title to a half-acre plot of land. A Rs.50,000 grant is provided for temporary shelter and a further Rs.15,000 as a settling-in allowance. Neither amount is adequate for the intended purpose.

Because a half-acre plot is only sufficient for a house and for some limited subsistence cropping, the relocation programme must be accompanied by area-based livelihood and social services support programmes, if it is to succeed in lifting the relocated IDPs out of their acute levels of poverty and dependence on food aid. The overall resources required by the ministry for the programme, including medium-term social and economic rehabilitation, greatly exceed the amount available in the MRRR's budget.

Many of the IDPs have been in the welfare centres for over a decade and consequently there is much evidence of resignation to complete dependence on assistance. Only a small percentage are engaged in wage labour and then only on a seasonal basis. There is little or no economic activity within the centres and women appear to be completely excluded from any legitimate sources of income. Hence, in their relocation, it must be recognized that they will transfer a high dependency syndrome with them from which it will be difficult to wean away. Indeed, it was indicated to the Mission that some IDPs would choose to remain in the welfare centres rather than face the uncertainty of being 'independent'.

Return:

Return to areas of origin is the optimal durable solution. Most IDPs will want to return when they perceive that conditions are conducive for return. As in most IDP/refugee situations, levels of spontaneous return are good indicators of the perceptions the displaced have of the changing conditions in their areas of origin. While there are only crude estimates of current rates of spontaneous return, it is clear that the rate is increasing. The LTTE are permitting IDPs to return to the eastern districts, but not to other areas.

While the will to return is widespread, IDPs continue to be constrained by a number of factors, namely:

security - there remains much apprehension about whether the peace-process will succeed and thus fear that it is premature to risk returning;

mines and UXOs - this remains a predominant reason for the inability to return to many areas. Mined agricultural land will likely remain unusable for some time;

the SLA's 'high security areas' occupy many areas of potential return and are thus not accessible to returnees (e.g., one fifth of Jaffna District);

destruction of property means that many IDPs have no shelters to return to nor resources to rebuild their destroyed homes;

occupation of lands/houses by others and risk of not being able to re-occupy land that has been abandoned for ten years;

lack of GSL resources and functioning mechanisms to compensate for losses incurred through the conflict;

farmland that has regenerated to bush due to lengthy abandonment; and

lack of employment and income generating opportunities in areas of return.

Reintegration and recovery:

Aside from the chronic need for comprehensive mine-action, discussed in section 4 above, return and successful reintegration is very much predicated by the prospects for economic recovery and availability of basic social services. This requires inputs that currently extend well beyond the capacity or resources of the MRRR and its international partners. Moreover, once IDPs (and refugees) are returned, assistance for their reintegration and recovery must be delivered through area-based programming that all needy persons have access to. For the UN system, this requires that there be a seamless transition from humanitarian interventions under the leadership of UNHCR to the recovery initiatives driven by the development community under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.

The recovery needs are many and include:

the rehabilitation of basic social services;
skills upgrading and vocational training;
enhanced access to micro-credit for farmers and fishermen;
enhanced access to commercial loans for small business enterprises; and
rehabilitation of transport infrastructure and access to markets.

Essentially, these needs are part of a broader economic and social recovery framework that is the dividend of a successful peace process. These needs are currently being assessed by the HLAM. IDPs are but part of the beneficiary population, as are returning refugees, and eventually the many demobilized combatants, whose special needs must be addressed if peace is to be sustained.

Special attention must be paid to women and especially women-headed households. The MRRR estimates that there are some 30,000 young widows among the IDPs, of which 19,000 are in Jaffna District alone. Their full reintegration through access to sustainable livelihoods presents a special challenge.

As part of the overall programming for reintegration and recovery of IDPs is the need to address the psychosocial needs of many IDPs that have been traumatized by violence, atrocities and other human rights violations, as well as the dehumanizing consequences of being uprooted, homeless and destitute. Reconciliation and peace-building activities are an essential component of this healing process." (IDP Unit April 2002, pp. 9-12)

Local authorities scale down food rations to force people back (February 2003)

- IDPs have been "strongly" encouraged to return to their areas of origin through threats of stopping food rations, closure of camps and other facilities.
- Scaling down of food rations is interpreted as a policy to incite IDPs to return home.

- The Madhu Church Welfare Centre was closed in September 2002 and IDPs told to leave. A UNHCR truck was used by the Government Agent to "drop" the IDPs in Kilinochchi

"A number of strategies have been used at the local level to compel, or strongly encourage, IDPs to return to their areas of origin. These have included threats of stopping dry food rations or closure of camps and camp facilities, such as schools. In November 2002, there appeared to be plans to close Pesalai and T-Madhu 'Welfare Centres'. The Government Agent, Vavuniya, and TRO have been providing transport to spontaneous returnees, while the scaling down in the distribution of dry ration is interpreted by some as a national policy to incite IDPs to return to their areas of origin. In November 2002, in T-Madhu, IDPs complained to CPA that 'foreigners' had asked them to vacate the camp by January.

At the end of September 2002, 1,600 families returned to Manthai West and Kilinochchi from Madhu Church. The Madhu Church Welfare Centre which once hosted some 8,455 persons, was reportedly closed by the Church authorities. The Government Agent used a UNHCR truck to transport IDPs to Kilinochchi where they were left in the District Secretariat grounds. IDPs were told to go as their rations would be stopped and no transport would be arranged for them at a later date if they remained. The Kilinochchi Government Agent was given no notice of the arrival of those families. Following protest by UNHCR, the use of the truck to forcibly resettle IDPs has been stopped. While the Government states that IDPs from Madhu Church ORC wished to return to their areas of former origin, it remains the case that the centre was closed, leaving no choice to the residents but to return. A handful of families remain in the centre as they are unable to return or are employed there. The school is not functioning and their rations have been stopped. They have also been asked to leave." (CPA February 2003, pp. 34-35)

63% of IDPs surveyed in North East wish to return home, but conditions not yet conducive for large-scale return (May 2003)

- Of the 613,220 who voluntarily registered in an IDP survey in 2002 389,844 (63%) wanted to return home, 20,400 (3%) preferred to move to a new place, 156,438 (25%) wanted to remain where they were and 45,089 (7%) were undecided.
- Vast majority of those indicating their preference to move home indicated the North East as their destination.
- Conditions are not yet conducive to large-scale, organised resettlement of IDPs and refugees, mainly because of high security zones, mine contaminated areas, land and property rights issues including landlessness and the lack of infrastructure and basic services.
- There will be a continuing need for humanitarian assistance, particularly among IDPs and communities, in areas where returnees can be expected to integrate or to resettle.
- Difficulties in accessing key documents, such as birth certificates, national identity cards, marriage certificates and death certificates continues to present problems.

54. It is expected that the movement of persons to and within the conflict affected areas will continue throughout 2003. Of the 613,220 who voluntarily registered in an IDP survey in 2002 389,844 (63%) indicated that their preferred solution to displacement would be to return home, 20,400 (3%) indicated they would prefer to move to a new place, 156,438 (25%) indicated that they would prefer to remain where they were and 45,089 (7%) were undecided. The vast majority of those indicating their preference to move home indicated the North East as their destination. While there is no firm evidence pertaining to the wishes of refugees in camps in Tamil Nadu, there is information about the district of origin for all refugees in those camps. The currently available information indicated that an overwhelming majority of refugees in camps in India come from the North East and are likely, though not definitely, to return there.

55. Conditions are not yet conducive to large-scale, organised resettlement of IDPs and refugees, though the situation is evolving rapidly. Security concerns, high security zones and mine contaminated areas, and land and property rights issues including landlessness, are notable impediments, as are the lack of infrastructure and basic services.

56. Progress towards attaining full respect for the rights of the individual, including the right of access to basic necessities, will be reached principally through progress in the peace talks. This, in turn, should permit the authorities and other actors to more effectively undertake work in development sectors. In the interim, however, there will be a continuing need for humanitarian assistance, particularly among IDPs and communities, in areas where returnees can be expected to integrate or to resettle, and attention must be given to immediate protection concerns and near-term integration/ reintegration assistance.

57. Difficulties in accessing key documents, such as birth certificates, national identity cards, marriage certificates and death certificates continues to present problems. The physical destruction of housing and other property is the most visible consequence of the conflict. Problems and disputes are arising out of destruction of boundary lines, loss of ownership and other land related rights as a result of non-occupation/non-use due to displacement, loss of property deeds, secondary occupation, transfers made under duress and landlessness. The special concerns of second-generation IDPs regarding integration or return to their ancestral district, and succession and inheritance related issues, will need to be addressed if sustainable IDP and refugee return is to become a reality. Situations where minority ethnic communities have been collectively displaced and their land subsequently occupied by another ethnic community pose particular challenges, which need to be addressed urgently to ensure that these people can also exercise their right to return in safety and dignity." (ADB, UN & WB May 2003, pp. 11-12)

47% of IDPs from Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam wish to return to their places of origin (May 2003)

- Most IDPs in Puttalam are Muslims evicted from their places of origin in Mannar, Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.
- IDPs in Anuradhapura are divided between Sinhalese and Muslims who came from Vavuniya, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa.
- Polonnaruwa District contains approximately 2,000 IDP families, half of whom are Sinhalese, and the other half Muslim.
- 47% of registered IDPs from Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam Districts indicated their preference to return to their places of origin. 23% of the IDPs registered indicated that they would prefer to remain in their present locations.
- Most of the IDPs who expressed a preference to remain in their current locations are of a younger generation

"22. Most IDPs in Puttalam are Muslim. These men, women and children were evicted from their places of origin in Mannar, Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. IDPs in Anuradhapura are divided between Sinhalese and Muslims who came from Vavuniya, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, as well as some who were displaced within the district itself. Polonnaruwa District contains approximately 2,000 IDP families, half of whom are Sinhalese, and the other half Muslim.

23. Earlier, Moneragala had a very small number of IDPs, but today they are virtually none. Therefore, no programme activities in relation to resettlement or protection is advanced for Moneragala District.

24. According to the IDP survey conducted in 2002,³ 47% of registered IDPs from Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam Districts indicated their preference to return to their places of origin. 23% of the IDPs registered indicated that they would prefer to remain in their present locations. The latter group

comprises mainly Muslim IDPs in Puttalam. Most of the IDPs who expressed a preference to remain in their current locations are of a younger generation and a number of them run small businesses or have other means of livelihood in the places where they are currently living. For them it is less attractive to return to the North East, even after normalcy is restored, than firmly settling into their place of displacement. For those indicating that they would like to return to their places of origin, the guarantee of safety and assistance are pre-requisites. Of the remaining registered IDPs, 26% indicated that they were undecided on whether to move or stay in their current locations, in the future and only 2% expressed an interest to be relocated to another destination." (ADB, UN & WB 9 May 2003, p. 6)

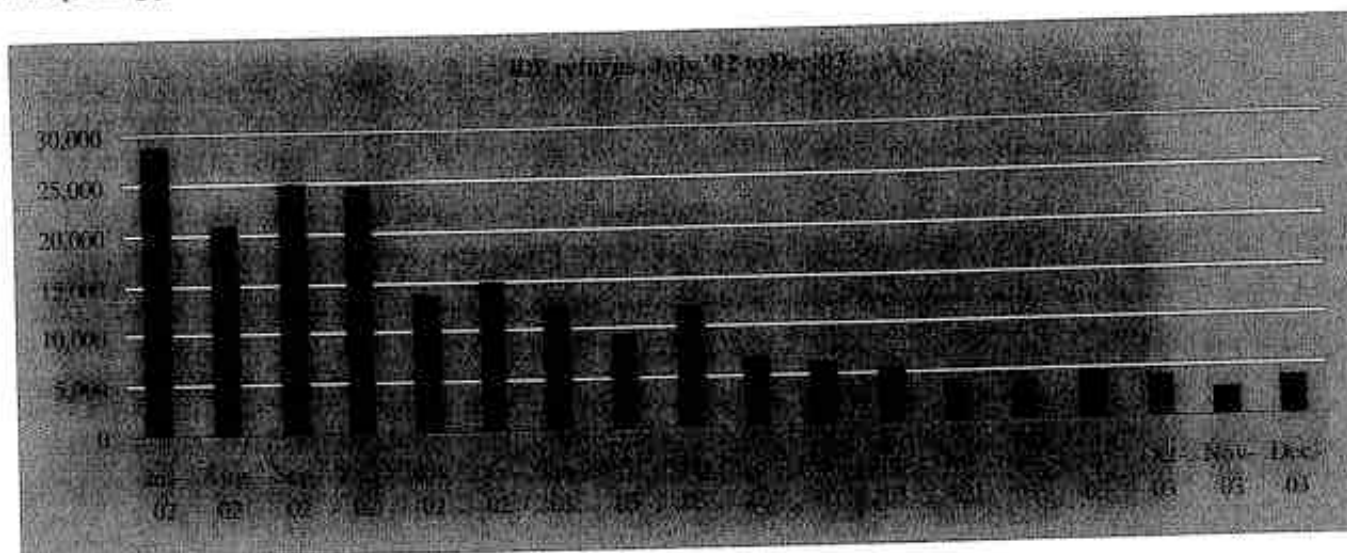
Return

UN Return figures as of the end of 2003

"By the end of 2003, 345,734 displaced persons, or 90,217 families, had returned to their homes since the ceasefire began in early 2002. This represents 47% of the 730,000 people estimated to have been displaced when the ceasefire commenced.

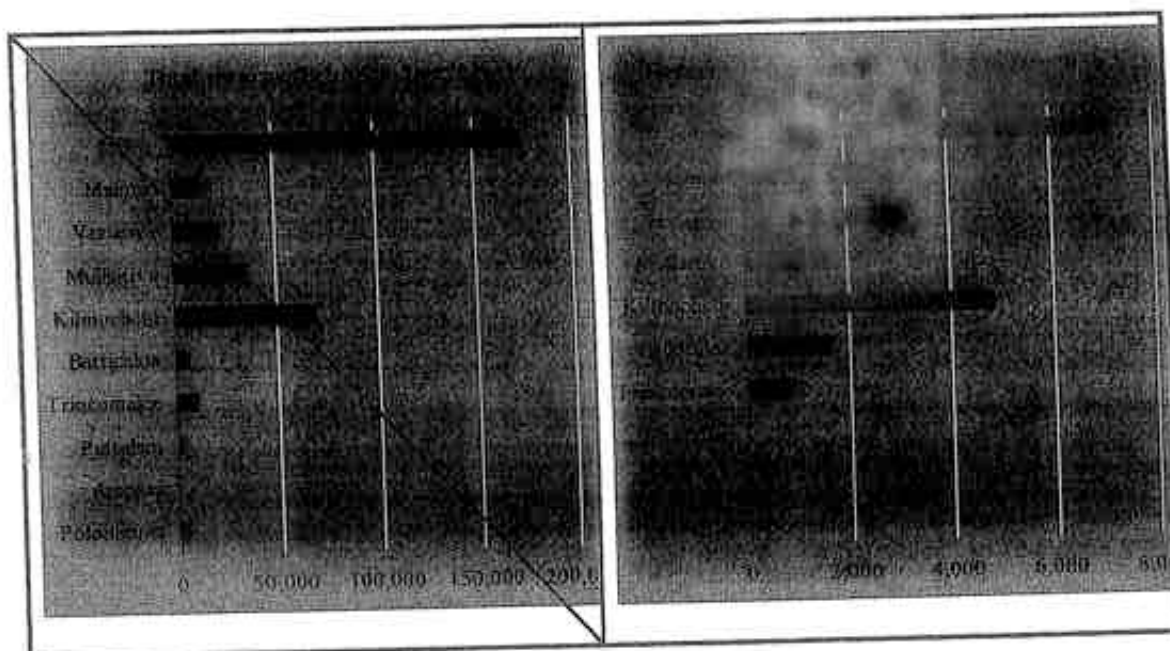
As the chart below illustrates, IDP returns slowed considerably during 2003. Less than 5,000 people returned in each month after July, with just 2,787 people returning in November and 3,777 in December.

While it is tempting to attribute the low November returns to the political turmoil in Colombo, it is likely that other factors were also at play. In particular, this period coincides with the beginning of the monsoon in the North and East of the island; as the chart shows, returns also dropped significantly during the corresponding period in 2002.



Jaffna District has been the principle destination for returning IDPs. By the end of 2003, 176,426 people had returned to places within Jaffna, representing just over half (51 per cent) of all returns.

But as returns have reduced in recent months, so too has Jaffna's dominance as the principal destination. The 7,209 people who returned to Jaffna in the last six months of 2003 represented 34 per cent of all returns in that period. As the chart below illustrates, returns are now more evenly spread among the districts, particularly in Kilinochchi, Vavuniya, Mannar and Mullaitivu."



(UN Inter-Agency IDP Working Group, 9 February 2004)

SUMMARY OF RETURNS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS WITHIN SRI LANKA

District of Return	Year	Month												Total
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Jaffna	2002						61,288	21,633	17,839	18,283	14,888	8,510	8,220	144,869
	2003	5,657	4,661	6,466	4,645	1,438	1,449	1,148	1,352	1,752	1,097	914	946	31,537
	Total	5,657	4,661	6,466	4,645	1,438	127,937	22,781	19,191	19,035	15,985	9,424	9,166	176,406
Kilinochchi	2002						32,943	840	146	8,710	5,494	5,214	3,123	54,470
	2003	4,512	2,721	1,458	851	588	388	783	719	717	1,574	582	533	15,205
	Total	4,512	2,721	1,458	851	588	32,943	1,623	865	9,427	6,068	5,796	3,656	69,675
Mullaitivu	2002						23,966	5,430			1,180	808	818	31,882
	2003	235	233	393	31	821	605	285	362	214	414	166	258	5,795
	Total	235	233	393	31	821	24,571	5,715	362	576	1,594	974	1,076	37,677
Mannar	2002						8,064		2,237	888	532	372	469	10,594
	2003	517	88	106	472	211	839	442	880	913	352	478	203	4,071
	Total	517	88	106	472	211	8,903	442	1,117	1,201	784	650	672	14,665
Vavuniya	2002						12,687			377	1,764	659	528	15,025
	2003	522	330	1,853	428	1,245	524	837	343	489	574	830	398	7,905
	Total	522	330	1,853	428	1,245	13,211	837	343	868	1,338	1,489	926	22,930
Trincomalee	2002						4,142	704	768	881	629	189	623	7,764
	2003	432	981	443	165	343	238	283	129	309			72	3,495
	Total	432	981	443	165	343	4,380	987	897	1,190	629	189	695	11,259
Batticaloa	2002												1,090	1,090
	2003	280	21	1,196	81	1,776	884	100	43		84		1,454	5,901
	Total	280	21	1,196	81	1,776	884	100	43		84		1,454	6,991
Ampara	2002									5	7	22	4	87
	2003	8								5	7	22	4	174
	Total	8								10	14	44	8	261
Puttalam	2002						421							421
	2003													
	Total						421							421
Polonnaruwa	2002													
	2003	232	548	284	381	305	582	437	432	204	134	129		3,843
	Total	232	548	284	381	305	582	437	432	204	134	129		5,685
Total	2002						141,107	28,827	21,010	24,940	24,474	13,778	14,875	269,012
	2003	12,200	8,583	12,355	8,816	6,525	5,812	4,297	3,942	4,702	4,238	2,787	3,777	78,722
	Total	12,200	8,583	12,355	8,816	6,525	146,919	33,124	24,952	29,642	28,712	16,565	18,652	347,734

Note: Figure for June 2002 is cumulative for period from Jan 2002 to June 2002
Polonnaruwa District sent information for entire 2003 in November

Policy

Government relocation policy threatens freedom of movement of landless IDPs (February 2003)

- A Government relocation policy currently threatens the right to freedom of movement of landless IDPs.
- The vast majority of landless IDPs interviewed expressed the wish to be granted land in the area where they are currently residing, in particular in Mannar island and Vavuniya town.
- However, a Government policy stipulates that IDPs cannot be relocated on State land in any District other than that of their origin.
- The majority of IDPs, regardless of how long they have resided in a District, are not considered by the local authorities as permanent residents and therefore are disentitled from benefiting from current "resettlement" programmes.
- Relocation policy will compel landless IDPs to either remain in camps or return to an area against their will.

"A considerable number of IDPs do not own land to which they could return. A Government relocation policy currently threatens the right to freedom of movement of landless IDPs. There are different categories of *de facto* and *de jure* landless persons:

Upcountry Tamils who settled in the North and worked primarily as tenant farmers prior to displacement.

Following independence, migration of Tamils from the Sinhalese-dominated South, in particular the Hill Country, occurred due to periodic anti-Tamil riots. It is estimated that 40% to 45% of the families in 'Welfare Centres' in Vavuniya are of Up Country origin. They fled the Up Country, *inter alia*, in 1971, 1977, 1981 and 1983 and settled in Northern Districts working as tenant farmers or occupying vacant State land, and were subsequently displaced due to the conflict.

The new generation of displaced persons who reached adulthood during displacement and are property-less.

Many IDPs have married following displacement or grown up in their areas of displacement and do not own land. This is particularly true in the case of the Muslims who have been displaced for more than 12 years, but also in the Eastern Province where some IDPs have been displaced since 1985. For instance, the number of Muslim displaced families in Puttalam has increased from 14,000 at the time of displacement to 17,000 at present due to population increase. RDF estimates that 50% of the new generation in Puttalam has no land to return to and no wish to settle in the North.

Illegally or temporarily relocated landless persons.

In some cases, local holders of State Permits or Grants (see section 6.3) have fragmented and sold their land to IDPs for relocation purposes, even though State land cannot be legally sold. Thus in Puttalam, it is estimated that 60% of the land on which IDPs were relocated as part of a State-sponsored programme in 1995 is state land illegally transferred (see section 5.4 on illegal alienation). In Vavuniya, political

parties/paramilitary groups have settled landless IDPs in 8 colonies on land which belonged to others. IDPs from Mannar District who were temporarily relocated, such as those relocated on Church land as part of the 100 Housing Scheme, are also uncertain about their future. Some IDPs have been relocated in various areas in the Vanni by the State or NGOs. Many of the relocation villages appear to be temporary measures and no documents have been handed over to the residents.

Settlers without documentation and so-called "encroachers," some of which were in the process of regularising their situation when they were displaced.

Landless IDPs who were previously occupying State or private land fear to return as they are uncertain of regaining the land they were occupying. Some landless persons had been in the process of applying for Land Development Ordinance Permits for the land they were occupying when they were forced to leave. These people hope that they will be given the opportunity to continue with the application process from where they stopped (see section 5.3) or be given alternative land.

While some landless IDPs wish to return to their area of former residence, the vast majority of those interviewed by CPA expressed the wish to be granted land in the area where they are currently residing, in particular in Mannar island and Vavuniya town. This is confirmed in Vavuniya by UNHCR. According to a Government policy, however, IDPs cannot be relocated on State land in any District other than that of their origin. This policy, which originates from the 13th Amendment³⁰ to the Constitution, appears to be motivated by the wish not to alter the ethnic ratios of Northern and Eastern Districts. In the case of multi-ethnic Vavuniya this would imply not increasing the number of Tamil residents.

In the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, this principle applies to displacement caused by irrigation and development projects and not to conflict induced displacement. While the principle may have been devised to protect communities from politically motivated population settlements, it is discriminatory towards landless persons displaced due to the conflict and inadequate to address the particular situation facing them at present. In Vavuniya, a number of relocation programmes have been carried out for landless IDPs from the District. The latter have been granted between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of State land under the Land Development Ordinance. According to the Vavuniya Project Director for Rehabilitation, however, there are no relocation programmes planned for this year. It appears that the authorities have renamed the process of relocating landless IDPs from the District as "resettlement." Six hundred and four landless families from Vavuniya District have indeed been relocated as part of special "resettlement" programmes within the District.

In Puttalam, since the 1995 relocation programme, it appears the policy has been to not issue state land to IDPs. There are allegations that this policy is applied in a discriminatory manner as 35 Sinhalese displaced families were granted state land to relocate. Furthermore, in Kalpitiya, people from outside the Puttalam District, but not from the North, were issued Permits for State land.

The majority of IDPs, regardless of how long they have resided in a District, are not considered by the local authorities as permanent residents and therefore are disentitled from benefiting from current "resettlement" programmes. Proof of residency in a District is determined by whether or not the name of the person has been included in the electoral register of the said District. Most IDPs, however, have not been included in the voting lists of their District of displacement since they were considered to be only temporary residents.

While the Government remains officially committed to respecting the choices of IDPs, this relocation policy will compel landless IDPs to either remain in camps or return to an area against their will.

A further argument put forward by the authorities to justify this policy is the dearth of State land in Sri Lanka. It is noteworthy, however, that CPA was unable to obtain even estimates of land already alienated by the State, land privately owned and available State land from any department under the Ministry of Lands or any District officials. While there is available State land for relocation purposes in Vavuniya

District, there are no statistics as to the number of people requiring relocation and the extent of available land. In Mannar District, due to the absence of survey maps and statistics, it is similarly unclear how much State land would be available for relocating landless displaced persons. According to one lawyer, the landless in the LTTE-controlled Vanni will be given ¼ acre up to a maximum of 1 acre, depending on the purpose for which the land is to be used." (CPA February 2003, p. 32-34)

Obstacles to return and resettlement

Many factors hinder return of the displaced population (September 2003)

- Many find that houses and surrounding areas are either destroyed or occupied by armed forces or paramilitary groups or by other displaced persons
- Many areas are contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnances
- Lack of humanitarian assistance and continuing human rights violations are other major factors affecting returns
- The breakdown in peace negotiations has engendered uncertainty in the whole peace process and a sense of insecurity discouraging return
- Return also depend upon the restauration of damaged or destroyed infrastructure in war-affected areas

"There are, however, a number of impediments for other IDPs and Sri Lankan refugees outside the country to return home in the near future. Many displaced people are unable to return because their houses and surrounding areas are occupied by armed forces or paramilitary groups or by other displaced persons or because their homes are partially or fully destroyed. Many areas are contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnances. Lack of humanitarian assistance and continuing human rights violations are major factors affecting returns. Some of the prevailing situations affect minorities and vulnerable segments of the displaced population, preventing their early return. In brief, the present situation of the war-affected areas is not yet conducive for large-scale return of IDPs and refugees. [...]

The breakdown in peace negotiations has engendered uncertainty in the whole peace process and a sense of insecurity among the IDPs. The people who have already returned face many serious problems, which range from lack of shelter, as a large number of houses have been completely destroyed, to lack of means to re-establish livelihoods.

It is essential that measures are taken to improve the living conditions of returnees as well as for the existing population of the war-affected areas in the north-east region. There is a pressing need to restore damaged or destroyed infrastructure of these areas.
[...]

- The majority of the remaining IDPs have expressed willingness to return home. But they are unable to do so immediately because their homes and surrounding areas are affected by one or more of the following: They are (a) in the High Security Zones (HSZ) of the Sri Lankan armed forces where civilians are not permitted to enter; (b) occupied by the Sri Lankan armed forces or paramilitary groups or by other displaced persons; (c) contaminated by an estimated 2 million landmines and unexploded ordnances; (d) partially or fully destroyed or overgrown by jungle and populated by wild animals; (e) the main places for the presence and activities of the armed forces or the LTTE or other militant groups, resulting in insecurity.

- Most recent returnees face many problems in re-integrating in the places of origin because a) they have not been assisted financially or otherwise; b) they cannot regain assets and properties; or c) they are unable to resume economic livelihoods.

- The planned immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation work has been terminated because of the suspension of the peace talks and is affecting the returnees and IDPs who wish to return.

- Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, large-scale killings and destruction have stopped. However, killings, abduction, harassment, recruitment of children, illegal taxing, extortion and other forms of human rights violations and violations of fundamental rights have continued. These violations are widespread especially in the north-east in the areas where the displaced have returned.

- Those who have not yet returned face continuing problems of displacement and uncertainty about their future. There is a discernible lack of interest in their situation from the state and other agencies. They also continue to experience hostility from host communities.

- Ethnic violence, which erupted in the Eastern Province during the ceasefire period, resulted in the displacement of nearly 40,000 people belonging to Tamil and Muslim communities and the ethnic tensions continue to affect the normal lives of the people in these areas.

- The Sri Lankan government has declared that its priority is the resettlement of IDPs and then the return of Sri Lankan refugees from India. The government has also stated that once peace is established it expects the economy to boom and that the resultant large-scale development in the infrastructure will lead to the return of Sri Lankan refugees from abroad through voluntary assisted return programmes.

- The present situation and current conditions of the country warrant planned and managed movement of the return of IDPs and refugees to their places of origin. Mass, sudden and unplanned returns will bring great pressure on the available infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, and will in turn affect local communities, particularly in view of the lack of capital, personnel and expertise needed to revitalize local economies. The resulting tensions may have an impact on the peace process itself." (The Refugee Council, September 2003, p. 8)

"The situation of the internally displaced illustrates some of the problems Sri Lankans face. UNHCR estimates there were 730,000 displaced persons in the country at the time of the ceasefire. The government offers financial assistance of about \$250 to eligible families to return home. UNHCR and other organizations also provide assistance. But only 330,000 of them have returned to their homes in the nearly two years since the ceasefire. Of the remaining 400,000, more than 100,000 are living in government-run "welfare centers."

"Displaced persons cited a number of reasons why they have not been able to return to their homes. First, the government has designated large areas of the north, especially around the city of Jaffna, as "high security zones" controlled by the army where civilians are not permitted to reside. Fishermen are especially affected as many of the "high security areas" encompass coastal areas. Second, about a million landmines over broad expanses of former battlefields prevent farmers from returning to their lands, and although various agencies are working to demine these areas, the work will not be completed prior to 2006. Third, new residents often occupy the former homes and lands of the displaced. The problem of determining ownership of lands and houses is not being addressed. And fourth, many of the displaced were landless at the time of their displacement and have no place to return to; they remain in the welfare centers because they have no alternative. The government insists that displaced persons return to their district of origin as a condition of aid, thus discouraging any relocation or local integration of displaced persons who do not wish to return to their district of origin.

Another factor discouraging many displaced persons from returning to their former homes is that many of the displaced are from areas under LTTE control or influence. Living standards and economic opportunities

in LTTE-controlled areas are lower than in the rest of Sri Lanka, and the poor quality of schools in those areas is another factor keeping many families from returning. Spoken of only obliquely is the fear of many families that their sons, including teenagers, will be induced to join or will be impressed into the LTTE's army. The use of child soldiers by the LTTE is well documented and, according to some observers, recruitment has increased since the ceasefire. Many of the displaced may have fled in the first place to keep their sons out of the ranks of the rebel army. UNICEF, which has a program to demobilize child soldiers, is appropriately taking a hard line with the LTTE about the recruitment and use of child soldiers." (RI 6 January 2004)

UNHCR survey in welfare centres concludes that lack of land is a key obstacle to return (November 2003)

"In recent months, UNHCR has been conducting a number of informal surveys of IDPs residing in welfare centres. The aim is to assess the needs of these people and to explore why, at this stage, they have not returned home.

One such survey, completed in Vavuniya District, identified lack of land as a key obstacle to return. There are many causes of landlessness, including lack of documentation and property disputes (see case study later in this Bulletin). In addition, a significant number of the landless people in the welfare centres in Vavuniya are up-country Tamil families who fled to the Vanni in the 1970s. As well as landlessness, commonly cited reasons for not returning included:

- concern about children's safety;
- not wanting to leave behind family and friends;
- lack of education facilities in return areas;
- female head of house;
- old age, health problems and disabilities;
- houses or property occupied by the army or police, or located within high security zones;
- lack of job opportunities in return areas." (UN IDP Working Group, 10 November 2003)

Occupation of land by government forces and LTTE hampers return of the displaced (February 2003)

- Many people in the North remain IDPs because their property has been taken over by the LTTE or government forces.
- In addition, property owners are not allowed to live within the vicinity of areas declared as High Security Zones (HSZ)
- Rent is sometimes paid by the military to the owners.
- In the Jaffna peninsula the HRC regional office mediates between the owners and the SLA, however the HRC regional offices do not have the mandate to mediate in instances where the LTTE is the party occupying
- LTTE pays rent to some owners while some property has been taken over by force.

"[...] a substantial land area is occupied by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and the Police in the North-East, in particular in Mannar and Jaffna Districts. There are also concerns that the Army has been expanding or creating new High Security Zones (HSZ). In addition to HSZs, a high number of Army and Police posts located on people's properties have still not been vacated.

As a consequence of Army and police occupation, many IDPs are unable to return. At the time of writing no solutions had been devised to assist affected IDPs through relocation programmes or compensation

packages. The policy of the Army with regard to the payment of rent for occupation of property appears to be *ad hoc*, with only certain affected IDPs being granted rent.

A Sub Committee on De-Escalation and Normalisation (SDN) was set up following the second session of the first round of the Peace Talks with a mandate to look into the issue of, *inter alia*, High Security Zones. Following the fourth session of the first round of peace talks, the SDN was deactivated, leaving the issue in limbo. The parties agreed, however, on an Action Plan for the Accelerated Resettlement of the Jaffna District, which will look into the vacating of areas in the vicinity of High Security Zones. Disputes over occupation by the Armed Forces is presently resolved at District Level.

LTTE occupation

Most abandoned lands in LTTE-controlled areas have been taken over by the LTTE, in particular the properties of Muslims evicted in 1990, refugees in India and emigrants. The land has been subsequently either rented, given to the families of LTTE cadres or used by the LTTE to host their administrative structures. The LTTE has reportedly allowed IDPs to settle on other people's lands. It is also to be assumed that some LTTE camps are located on the land of IDPs. The LTTE has reportedly instructed occupiers to vacate the lands of returnees.

The return of the property of Muslim IDPs is an issue which has come to the fore. Whilst the LTTE leadership has reiterated its commitment to returning the land of Muslims, Muslim IDPs remain suspicious of their good intent. A number of Muslim lands have been used to build LTTE administrative or other structures and it appears unlikely that the land will be returned to the owners. It is noteworthy that while a handful of Muslims entered into agreements to receive rent from persons occupying their business premises in Kilinochchi town, none are expected by the occupiers to return permanently.

At the time of writing, the LTTE had asked the SLMC to hand over a list detailing the particulars, names, locations and extent of land of Muslims. " (CPA February 2003, pp. 10-11)

Internally displaced women face numerous difficulties upon return (February 2003)

- Upon return, women face many problems including security threats lack of infrastructure, health care, education opportunities for their children.
- Women and femal-headed households returning have to take on tasks that are typically for men, like clearing and rebuilding on the land, farming and maintaining structures.
- Income generation projects provided by NGOs not only serve as a source of income, but also to empower women.
- In Vavuniya District it was mentioned that 65-70 percent of employed women are self-employed in the non-traditional sphere.
- However, major livelihood and employment problems remain for women affected by displacement.
- There are limited options available for wage labour in general and for wage labour for women in particular.
- Salaries given to men and women for the same work is different.

"Beyond these issues relating to property acquisition and ownership, women IDPs face numerous difficulties upon return to their land, with human rights and security questions intertwined with needs relating specifically to property and land.

Security

One element preventing women IDPs and their families from returning to their land is the issue of security. When families send the men to clear the land, the women fear the separation because of the large number of disappearances in the past. Returning to land in LTTE-controlled areas raises fears of child recruitment. When women travel back and forth between their lands and the 'Welfare Centres', they face potential harassment and the threat of sexual violence at checkpoints.

Infrastructure

Another problem facing women is the destruction of infrastructure in the war-torn areas. This often disproportionately affects women, as they generally bear the responsibility for child care and accessing health care. Without schools and medical facilities, women would have to handle these responsibilities at home. Female headed households would be responsible for these duties in addition to financial support. Many IDPs reported that they will not return until infrastructure is developed and facilities have been rebuilt. The lack of influence of women, especially women IDPs, in shaping policy priorities means they are less able to propose how and when infrastructure will be rebuilt.

Landmines, Land Clearance and Rebuilding

Once families resettle on the land, women generally and FHH in particular face the challenge of clearing and rebuilding on the land. Men have traditionally taken responsibility for farming and maintaining structures on the land. Women who have lost spouses and other male family members must decide how they will farm their land and use it to support their family. One person interviewed by the Centre for the Study of Human Rights for its report on displaced women said, "Who is going to clear the land and build for the women? There would be so much gossip if a woman engaged labour from men, even if she could afford it."

Livelihood and Employment

Some positive developments have been made in the areas of employment and livelihood. The non-traditional sphere is expanding, and women are finding employment through various income generation projects and activities. NGOs are training women in jobs tailored for their needs and skills, both in the traditional sphere of women's activities (sewing, weaving, animal raising, cooking) and in jobs not traditionally held by women (mechanical work). Where infrastructure requires development, women are using new skills to help to set up and manage various facilities. In these situations, women often face fewer prejudices and stereotypes because of the overwhelming need. Generally, income generation projects not only serve as a source of income, but also to empower women. One person interviewed mentioned how, before displacement, women did not come out and were afraid to speak, whereas now they have organisations and are involved, working in government factories, NGOs, and shops and going to meetings and seminars. Another person interviewed in the Vavuniya District mentioned that 65-70 percent of employed women are self-employed in the non-traditional sphere.

Despite these positive developments, major livelihood and employment problems remain for women affected by displacement. Where male spouses have been lost, women become the principal income generators in a household, adding to their traditional duties of sustaining and supporting the welfare of children and extended family. One of the main problems is that there are limited options available for wage labour in general and for wage labour for women in particular. For instance, in Vavuniya, men were employed for an average of 5-15 days per month; the figures were lower for women. The Trincomalee District reports declining fish production from 1980 through 1998, a reduction in the cultivation of paddy land, and declining milk production from 1981 through 2001. Where wage labour options are available, they generally go to men. In addition, many people interviewed reported that salaries given to men and women for the same work is different. One NGO in the Puttalam District said that IDPs receive the same as the local salary, but women are paid less for the same work. Thus men receive on average Rs 170 per day and women Rs 90 per day. Women residents of a resettlement village in the Vavuniya District stated that women were paid only Rs 100 per day where men were paid Rs 200 per day." (CPA February 2003, pp. 46-48)

North-East: destruction and overgrowth make identification of land and property difficult upon return (February 2003)

- War and looting has left North-East's properties and infrastructure considerably damaged.
- The destruction and severe shortage of personnel is hampering the return of internally displaced
- Upon return, identifying land boundaries has become a problem for some property owners because of the overgrowth and the destruction. Documents prove to be little assistance in identifying boundaries
- Disputes over land boundaries are likely to rise with the increasing return of internally displaced

"Damage to property and infrastructure in the North East caused by fighting, looting and neglect, is considerable.

In the LTTE-controlled Vanni, cement or brick structures are a rare sight, usually situated in town centres. Most inhabitants live in cadjan huts set up temporarily. Certain towns have been razed to the ground. In Government-controlled areas, more buildings are still standing, though the majority have been damaged and most non-occupied buildings have no roofs.

Building materials, drinking wells, household items and any movable property left behind by IDPs have been looted or have decayed due to neglect. In some instances, even the foundations of buildings have disappeared. Overgrowth has taken over the land.

[...]

Infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, community centres, local administration buildings, power and water supply, telecommunications and roads, has also been devastated and is impeding the return of IDPs. Where infrastructure is intact, the severe shortage of personnel and resources hinders service delivery."

[...]

"Upon return, identifying land boundaries has become a problem for some property owners. The overgrowth, coupled with the destruction of property, means that identifying the land and its exact boundaries is a difficult process. This is especially so for returnees whose property is located in areas where mass destruction occurred as well as for the poorer owners who only had temporary structures which may not be visible any longer. Most IDPs use the trees as landmarks for identifying their land.

Many Muslim houses have been destroyed by shelling and bombing. Building materials were also looted following the sudden eviction of Muslims from their properties in 1990. In certain cases, foundations of houses have been removed. One displaced person explained that while cement foundations were still visible, stone foundations may have been looted because the stone is more valuable.

Unfortunately, documents prove to be little assistance in identifying boundaries, as survey maps or plans have not been automatically included in either private deeds or state Permits and Grants. Furthermore, both deeds and Permits/Grants under the LDO define the boundaries of a property by the ownership of the adjoining North, South, East and West lands. This may prove problematic in cases where the property of a returnee as well as those adjoining are not identifiable due to the overgrowth and the lack of foundations.

Though this is at present a relatively minor issue, disputes over land boundaries are likely to rise with the increasing return of IDPs. Identifying property will be all the more problematic for the second generation of IDPs, where the owner is deceased and the heirs unfamiliar with the land." (CPA February 2003, pp. 38-39)

Muslim and Sinhalese internally displaced: ethnic tensions hampers return (February 2003)

- Ethnic tensions remain high and impedes return and access to land and property.

- Ethnic tension is often articulated as real or perceived discrimination, both past and present, in the allocation of state resources and assistance as well as real or perceived security threats.
- In the East there is a long standing perception that Tamils have been discriminated against in the allocation of land and resources in favour of Sinhalese and Muslims.
- Sinhalese and Muslim IDPs, victims of forced displacement at the hands of the LTTE in the North and East, remain distrustful of the LTTE's commitment to peace.
- Sinhalese IDPs whose land is situated in LTTE-controlled territory expressed fear to return and might need to be relocated elsewhere

"Tension among IDPs and returnees of the three main communities of Sri Lanka remains high and impedes return and access to land and property. All three communities have been displaced as a result of the conflict and human rights violations committed by both parties to the conflict.

Ethnic tension is often articulated as real or perceived discrimination, both past and present, in the allocation of state resources and assistance as well as real or perceived security threats. Such perceptions are numerous and we give instances of only a few concerns voiced to CPA regarding return and the land issue.

In the Eastern Province, there is a long standing perception of discrimination against Tamil residents in the allocation of land and resources by the State, interpreted as an attempt to alter the ethnic ratio of the Province. Thus, Government colonisation schemes in the past mostly benefited Sinhalese landless persons. Furthermore, it is perceived that Sinhalese displaced communities were assisted by the State and the Sri Lankan Army and benefited, for instance, of special relocation programmes. There are also allegations that the Eastern Ministry, traditionally headed by a Muslim politician, has favoured Eastern Muslims over the Tamil population in the allocation of resources and turned a blind eye to occupation of Tamil lands by Muslim persons.

Sinhalese and Muslim IDPs, victims of forced displacement at the hands of the LTTE in the North and East, remain distrustful of the LTTE's commitment to peace, despite repeated assurances by the movement's leadership. The LTTE has reportedly instructed occupiers to hand over land belonging to Muslims. Following complaints that this instruction was not being applied on the ground, the LTTE demanded that the SLMC provide a list of the particulars of Muslim property owners in the North East (see section 5.3). Mistrust is exacerbated by continuing reports of harassment and extortion of Muslims in the Eastern Province.

The majority of displaced or relocated Muslims whom CPA interviewed in Puttalam strongly wished to return to their areas of origin, for the most part in Mannar and Jaffna Districts. However, as of October 2002, except for Mannar Island, where 325 Muslim families have resettled, only a handful of Muslim families have returned to the North.⁴⁴ As of October 2002, 34 families out of 2,837 had returned to Jaffna town; 20 to 30 families to Mullaitivu. The main reason for Northern Muslims' reluctance to return appears to be fear for their security. Most require a permanent solution to the conflict and a security guarantee before considering returning permanently.

CPA did not encounter any Muslim IDPs in Puttalam who were ready to return unconditionally. Since the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement, however, many Muslim IDPs have undertaken visits to check the state of their land and property, in both government and LTTE-controlled areas. In some instances, Muslim men have gone back to their properties on their own leaving their families behind in Puttalam. CPA met Muslim male returnees in Musali Division, Mannar District who were clearing their lands and rebuilding their houses aiming at restarting income generating activities prior to resettling their families.

CPA did not meet any of the Sinhalese IDPs evicted from the Northern province in 1990 though as far as we have ascertained, none of those displaced families had returned in December 2002. In the Eastern

Province, however, Sinhalese IDPs whose land is situated in LTTE-controlled territory expressed fear to return and might need to be relocated elsewhere. Those IDPs who have suffered at the hands of the LTTE are refusing to return until the LTTE lays down their arms permanently. Sinhalese IDPs currently in the Mihindupura camp, Trincomalee District, require security guarantees before they return. Of approximately 300 families in the Thamalagama area only about 125 had returned as of December 2002; others are waiting for the conditions to stabilise." (CPA February 2003, pp. 35-36)

Jaffna: the most important factor hindering return is the existence of the military High Security Zones (September 2003)

- The majority of IDPs now living in refugee camps in Jaffna were originally displaced from High Security Zones (HSZs)
- As of June 2003, a government report said that 94% of those IDPs who were displaced from their homes within the HSZs and currently live in welfare centres, were unable to return to home areas
- The security forces are also occupying many houses belonging to IDPs outside the HSZs
- The existence of landmines is another factor that prevents the return of IDPs within the Jaffna peninsula
- Other factors include damaged and destroyed assets and properties, no access to livelihood and no access to medical and other facilities upon return

The most important reason for the inability of the IDPs to return is the existence of the military HSZs. In fact, the majority of IDPs now living in refugee camps in Jaffna were originally displaced from HSZs. An IDPs information report of the Jaffna Government Agent [...] on 1 June 2003 says that 94% of those IDPs who were displaced from their homes within the HSZs and currently live in welfare centres, are unable to return to home areas (Table 7). In addition, IDPs living within half a kilometre radius of a HSZ, are not permitted to engage in any economic activity within that area. The security forces are also occupying many houses belonging to IDPs outside the HSZs.

Table 7 IDPs in Jaffna welfare centres whose homes are in HSZs

District Secretariat Division	Number of welfare centres	Families in HSZs	Families in other areas	Total families
Nallur	3	30	0	30
Sandilipai	15	197	89	286
Chankanai	19	452	0	452
Uduvil	11	291	27	318
Thellipalai	5	253	0	253
Kopay	5	164	0	164
Karaveddi	1	16	0	16
Point Pedro	15	592	18	610
Maruthankerny	6	91	8	99
Total	80	2,086	142	2,228

Source: Jaffna Government Agent's report of 1 June 2003

The existence of landmines is another factor that prevents the return of IDPs within the Jaffna peninsula, an area formerly largely occupied by the people or used for economic activities. The following areas of the peninsula are contaminated by landmines:

1. Jaffna and Nallur Divisional Secretary's Division (DSD)[...]- most of the Muslim areas of Jaffna Town, Ariyalai and Columbuturai.
2. Uduvil DSD - concentrated around security structures erected during the fighting and mainly found in Erlalai North, Kuppilan North and Punnalaikadduvan North. Around 50% of the total area of this DSD is identified as dangerous.
3. Thellipalai DSD - out of 17 Grama Niladhari (Village Headman) Divisions (GND), 13 are known or suspected to have areas contaminated with mines.
4. Chankanai and Sandilipai DSDs - 15 GNDs of these areas are suspected to have landmines.
5. Kopai, Karaveddy, southern region of Thenmaratchi (Chavakachcheri) and other areas where military bases were established are also known to have mines.
6. In the islands west of the Jaffna peninsula, mines have been placed by both parties.
7. Point Pedro in north-eastern Vadammaratchy.

During the war and in the prevailing period of peace, it is the civilians who have been most affected by mines. While the scale of the problem of landmines is not known, it is estimated that 20 sq km in the Jaffna District are affected by over 500,000 landmines.

Apart from the above-mentioned reasons, there are other factors which prevent the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes in Jaffna. They are the following:

1. Damaged or destroyed assets and properties: In areas of intense fighting, no permanent structure has been spared. Along the A9 road and roads leading to Palaly Airport and to the sea port such as Kankesanthurai and in parts of Jaffna town facing Mandativu Island and large areas of north-eastern Vadammaratchy, most of the permanent structures (houses, schools, hospitals and factories, etc.) have suffered severe damage or destruction. People displaced from these areas cannot return for the reason that they will have no shelter.
2. Access to agricultural areas occupied by armed forces: Large tracts of agricultural land are occupied by the security forces, particularly in north-western Valikamam and southern Thenmaratchy areas.
3. Restrictions on fishing: The armed forces do not allow fishing in areas near HSZs. In March 2003, the perimeter of the Army camp at Ariyalai in Thenmaratchy was extended, affecting some 1,000 fishermen[...]. In almost all the areas, fishermen must obtain permits from the armed forces to go to sea for fishing. Apart from these restrictions, the LTTE have decreed that some types of fish can only be sold through middlemen appointed by them.
4. No access to education, medical and other facilities on return: Because of lack of access to these basic facilities, IDPs continue to live in the areas where they have been displaced.
5. Slow process of resettlement allowance: Due to red tape and lack of funds, many returnees were not able to obtain government assistance on return. This situation has forced some people to go back to the places of displacement and has discouraged those who intend to return home.
6. Discrimination in resettlement allowance: Complaints have been made that current returnees receive a higher resettlement allowance than those who returned before February 2002. [Those who returned before February 2002 were paid the Rs 25,000 housing allowance in instalments and have received only a part of the total allowance and were unable to complete their houses. Returnees after February 2002 are entitled to Rs 75,000 based on current costs]. Further, many returnees have not been provided any assistance and in Jaffna those returnees from the Vanni are given the allowance while some people

displaced within the Jaffna peninsula are denied. Government officers in some areas of the north-east are also not accepting letters proving residence of the IDPs, issued by *Pradeshiya Sabha* (Regional Council) secretaries outside the north-east region. [...] (The Refugee Council, September, p.30)

Vanni: Lack of security and humanitarian assistance discourages return (September 2003)

- Proper relief assistance by the government or NGOs is still not available in potential return districts
- Dangerous diseases including malaria are prevalent in many places
- The infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, as well as private houses and properties
- Many internally displaced are affected by the LTTE undeclared high security zones in territories under their control, as everyone entering the Vanni must obtain LTTE passes
- A large area of the Mannar District in the Vanni region has been demarcated by the security forces as High Security Zones (HSZs) and many places have been identified as containing landmines

"In an interview at a welfare centre in Vavuniya, IDPs who are originally from Kilinochchi and Mullitivu expressed grave concern about returning to their homes. In the Vanni districts, the IDPs continue to live in extremely poor conditions and proper relief assistance by the government or NGOs is still not available, exacerbating serious health and other problems. The infrastructure is damaged or destroyed and relief agencies are unable to reach them, particularly at times of emergency. Homes are destroyed or home areas are covered by jungle, populated with wild animals. Dangerous diseases including malaria are prevalent in many places of potential IDP return.

The field survey identified a number of other problems which prevent or discourage IDP return in Vanni. Similar to the HSZs of the armed forces, the LTTE maintain undeclared high security zones in territories under their control, which affect many IDPs, as everyone entering the Vanni must obtain LTTE passes. This pass system is strictly enforced by the LTTE and affects both Tamil and Muslim returnees. However, in the case of Muslim returnees the LTTE exercise stricter control. Houses and agricultural land belonging to Muslims have not been released to the original owners/occupiers by the LTTE and no reasons have been adduced. This action of LTTE has prevented the return of a large number of Muslim IDPs and has further strengthened the feeling of uncertainty over the whole peace process.

Similar to the Jaffna peninsula, a large area of the Mannar District in the Vanni region has been demarcated by the security forces as HSZs and many places have been identified as containing landmines." (The Refugee Council, p. 31)

Puttalam, Anaradhapura and Polonnaruwa: land and property issues compound return and resettlement for internally displaced (May 2003)

- Land issues need to be addressed in order to find durable solutions for internally displaced in Puttalam, Anaradhapura and Polonnaruwa
- Land and property rights issues for the displaced population include landlessness, availability or non-availability of land to purchase, inadequate documentation of ownership.
- Many actual or potential returning displaced who own land or properties find their properties occupied or destroyed. These problems are most pronounced for internally displaced returning to Jaffna and Mannar.

- In many of the welfare centres and the villages where internally displaced are accommodated, living conditions are very poor. Malnutrition among children is reportedly a serious concern.
- Competition for resources and means of livelihoods between internally displaced and the local population have led to tensions and violence.

"25. In order to find durable solutions for IDPs in the three Districts, various land issues need to be addressed. New approaches to solutions may be required to accommodate IDPs whose land and property disputes cannot be resolved.

26. The range of land and property rights issues for IDPs include landlessness, availability or non-availability of land to purchase, inadequate documentation of ownership (land deeds for temporary occupation of land, or proof of ownership). For second generation IDPs, there is an issue of limited chances of inheritance. Many actual or potential returning IDPs who do own land or properties find their properties occupied. A number of Muslim IDPs from Jaffna, have their houses occupied by Tamil IDPs who are themselves unable to return to their own houses located in the high security zones. In addition many of the properties of returning IDPs are damaged, many beyond habitually. These problems are most pronounced for IDPs returning to Jaffna and Mannar. In addition, nearly all Muslims originating from Mullaitivu have their land occupied by others, and land and property restitution is of serious concern.

27. Other noteworthy situations include the very poor and sub-standard living conditions in many of the welfare centres and the villages where IDPs are accommodated on land provided by the Government or by private landowners. Food security, particularly the problem of malnutrition among children, is also a serious concern.

28. Competition for resources and means of livelihoods, are surfacing as a contentious problem. This has led to incidences of tension and violence, particularly in the district of Puttalam, particularly between the IDPs and the local population. Irregular food distribution, inequitable access to schools including due to lack of birth certificates, and difficulties in obtaining deeds can sometimes be perceived by IDPs as discriminatory. The presence of IDPs in Puttalam and Anuradhapura also had an effect on competition in the labour market, as IDPs would often accept lower wages, and this has had the effect of decreasing the price of labour for other local residents. The poorest people among the IDPs and host communities become the most vulnerable in such situations." (ADB, UN & WB 9 May 2003, p. 7)

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACF	Action contre la Faim
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development
BRC	British Refugee Council
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community Based Organization
CHA	Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies
CFA	Cease Fire Agreement
CGES	Commissioner General of Essential Services
CIUAH	Committee to Inquire into Undue Arrest and Harassment
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ERRP	Emergency Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Plan
ESC	Essential Services Commissioner
FDL	Forward Line Defence
GA	Government Agents
GOSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HSZs	High Security Zones
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPKF	The Indian Peacekeeping Forces
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board
JRRP	Jaffna Resettlement and Rehabilitation Programme
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)
JTH	Jaffna Teaching Hospital
LTTE	Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam
MIRJE	Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MRRR	Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NFRI	Non Food Relief Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIB	National Intelligence Bureau
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
PA	People's Alliance
PLOTE	People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
QIP	Quick Impact Projects
RH	Reproductive Health
RRAN	Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority of the North
RRTG	Relief and Rehabilitation Theme Group

Rs.	Rupees
RSG	Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis Deng
SLRCS	Sri Lanka Red Cross Society
SCF-UK	Save the Children-UK
SIC	Special Identity Cards (military-issued)
SIHRN	Sub-Committee for Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs
SLA	Sri Lankan Army
SLMM	Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission
TNA	Tamil National Army
TRO	Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation
UAS	Unified Assistance Scheme
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNP	United National Party
UXO	Un-Exploded Ordnance
USCR	U.S. Committee for Refugees
WC	Welfare Centers
WFP	World Food Programme

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