

Assessment of Resettlement at Kurumbasiddy East - J/243 GN Division in Vali North DS Division in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka

1. Executive Summary



The people of Kurumbasiddy have gone back to their traditional lands that adjoin the largest military installation in the peninsula. They were mobilized throughout the process by CORE. They received guidance and facilitation from the office of the Divisional Secretariat, Tellipalai. When they were given the positive signal for resettlement during 2011 they could not make it for nearly a year due to lack of appropriate motivation and backing. The funding of FORUT was a motivation to commence the jungle clearance and proceed in the right direction.

70 transitional shelters, 70 permanent toilets and the rehabilitation of 08 common wells were completed within the end of 2012 funded by FORUT-International through RAHAMA and implemented by CORE.

Most of the families have been identified as beneficiaries for the construction of permanent houses with the support of the Government of India. It motivates and boosts the energy levels of the individual families to get extended floor space in own lands. One advantage is the concession granted to make use of the toilet construction money for other work like digging tube well etc.

The resettled families are happy and content in most aspects but have some unfulfilled aspects too. The water problem is too acute where the 8 community wells pose unwarranted tension daily for the children and adults. About 5 to 6 families have already commenced the construction of tube wells individually.

The preschool is posing difficulties for the parents with no qualified teacher so far for the teaching of the toddlers. The parents are generally content with the facilities available for other children at schools.

The elders want to do own farming than being just farm labourers. The adjoining cultivable land area is still to be released by the Security Forces. The community believes that when the land is available they could be obtained on lease as in the past. At the moment the income earned is not adequate for managing the families comfortably. Thus, enhancing the income earning opportunities should decide the sustainability of the resettlement project.

2. Introduction

This report is an outcome of the request made by **RAHAMA (Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency)** the local counterpart of **FORUT-International** assigned to carry out the resettlement work in newly resettled areas.

RAHAMA is a new agency and is taking forward project activities with the collaboration of local agencies that have adequate experience in social work. The operational area is the Northern region of the country and the projects are approved by the Presidential Task Force (PTF).

One such project was implemented in Tellipalai DS division in Jaffna district which was released by the Government for resettlement in 2011. This assessment is carried out based on the request made by **RAHAMA** and the views expressed are mostly of the primary stake holders.

3. A Brief Analysis

The end of war in May 2009 created new hopes for the displaced families to return to own homes. Unlike in the Wanni, most of the individual lands of the people in Jaffna District fell within the military controlled areas. However, in some areas the military agreed to release lands for resettlement after clearing mines and UXOs.

Of the total IDPs recorded in the Jaffna District 40,039 families with 125,705 persons were resettled in their homes or newly allocated areas. 61 Welfare Centres were active within the District during the same period with 2,405 families and 8,854 persons. Among them are a large number of Female Headed Households (FHHs) and orphans. Jaffna District featured 29,742 female headed households and 10% of them are in the age group of 31 to 40 years. The number of orphans in the District totalled 7026. (*Source: District Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Secretariat, Jaffna, 2012 Report*).

Replanting and rebuilding the living conditions of the IDPs are not easy but the agencies such as **RAHAMA** are proving their efforts that are noteworthy.

3.1 Population Statistics of Kurumbasiddy

Year	Families	Persons	Females	Males
1990	170	698	370	328
2011	55	233	132	101
2012	125	517	268	249

Source: Divisional Secretary's office, Vali North, Tellipalai

3.2 Objective of the Study

To find out the effects of resettlement of IDPs and the immediate impact to improve conditions for the future.

4. Assessment of Resettlement

4.1. Background

Jaffna is one of the main cities in the North of Sri Lanka, which is around 400 km from the capital Colombo. There are 25 Administrative Districts in Sri Lanka and Jaffna District is one. The district is a peninsula and has sea borders on three sides. There are seven small islands towards the Western part. The District is further divided in to 15 Administrative Divisional Secretariat Divisions that are delegated with specific responsibilities.

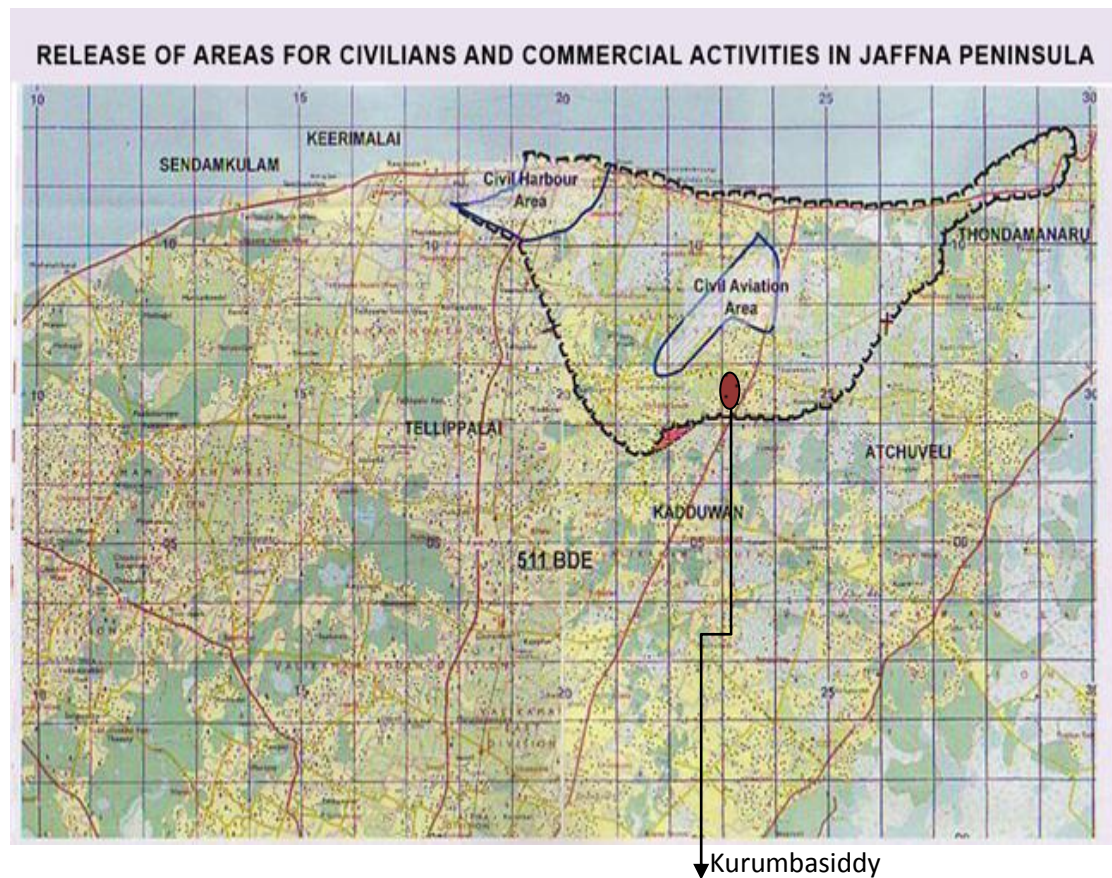
Around 50% of the people are traditional farmers and 20% fisher folks. A separatist war commenced gradually after the General Elections in 1977 that continued unsuccessfully until May 2009. The more than 3 decades of conflict made the people to flee own homes and find safer shelters. The income earning pattern changed quite fast for most of the families. Farmers lost the potential cultivable lands while the fishermen faced fishing restrictions. With the end of war majority of the

families could come back to own homes. However, there are a few hundred families that could not get resettled due to their lands falling within the High Security Zones (HSZs). It is a political as well as military issue to release the HSZ lands that are very near the military installations. However, at a very slow pace some HSZ areas are being released and one such place is Kurumbasiddy East Grama Niladhari Division in Tellippalai Divisional Secretariat Division.



Total HSZ areas in Jaffna District shown in thick green patches in the above map – 2009

Stage IV: On 06th October, 2011- Army released following GN Divs to civilians- Kurumbasiddy & Kurumbasiddy East



Tellipalai Divisional Secretariat Division is unique in the District as the only Airport (at Palaly) and the Harbour (at Kankesanthurai) are found here. Tellipalai is around 16 km from the main Jaffna town towards North. The abandoned KKS Cement factory is situated near the harbour.

Kurumbasiddy village is just bordering the entry point to the Security Forces Head Quarters, Palaly. The red soil found in the area is highly fertile which shows why all the families have chosen farming traditionally. Mine clearance was done systematically by the army and other organizations before the GN division was officially allowed for resettlement in 2011.

4.2. Stakeholders

4.2.1 RAHAMA

RAHAMA (Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency) is a National level Non Governmental Organization with its Head Office at Vavuniya, which is mid way to Colombo from Jaffna. The organization was formed when FORUT-Sri Lanka decided to wind up its activities in the Country. The Management Board of RAHAMA consists of eminent NGO professionals, academics and experienced workers. The staff members are mostly with FORUT experience.

RAHAMA is covering North of Sri Lanka and works at the moment in Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts. The assistance is shared among all communities irrespective of race, religion and language spoken.

4.2.2 CORE

Consortium of Organizations for Rural Empowerment (CORE) was formed as a Community Based Organization and registered with DS/Tellipalai under Social Services Act as a social service organization. CORE is a parent organization incorporating many village organizations in Tellipalai DS Division. CORE has its own capital to operate micro credit for the benefit of its member organizations. It implements projects for International/National NGOs and UN Agencies in Jaffna district.

4.2.3 FORUT

FORUT was operating in Sri Lanka since 1986 until its closure in 2011. FORUT-International is active from its global Head Office in Norway. It is funding many local organizations in the country based on projects that meet the strategic requirements of the organization. RAHAMA is being funded by FORUT.

4.2.4 Divisional Secretariat

The District Administration is made easy with the support of the 15 Divisional Secretariats in the peninsula. Grass root level planning and coordination are important tasks taken forward by the Divisional Secretariats. Identification of project locations, needs of the target group and the finalization of the beneficiaries are done together with the Divisional Secretariat. Thus, projects active in a location are with the total knowledge and approval of the Divisional Secretary.

4.2.5 Indian Housing

With the end of the war in June 2009 and the gradual resettlement of the people the need for permanent shelters was large. Although many International NGOs and UN Agencies provided assistance to rebuild houses the gap was still great. Thus, the Government of India proposed to support 50,000 permanent houses (costing Rs 550,000 each) with permanent toilets in the North and East of the country. The construction is an 'owner driven' modality and payment is given at the completion of each stage. The project is being executed by the Government of Sri Lanka through its

District Secretaries / Divisional Secretaries in the project area. Kurumbasiddy village is one of the locations where the Indian Housing project is in progress.

4.2.6 PTF

In the past when the war was still on-going, all NGOs / UN Agencies were requested to get project approvals at the District Review Boards (DRBs) chaired by the District Secretary / Government Agent together with the Heads of appropriate technical departments. This facilitated the NGO/UN to have better interaction with the field including the appropriate Government officers during the planning stage.

However, after June 2009 the Government established a Presidential Task Force (PTF) especially for the North and made it mandatory that all NGOs / UN projects are approved by PTF. Thus, projects that are not approved by the PTF cannot be implemented.

4.3 Significance of the Project

When Kurumbasiddy East was officially allowed for resettlement most families went to the area to get a true picture of the environment. Over grown bushes and mini jungles could be found all over. No trace of civilian buildings could be noticed. Most were in remnants with marks of shells and bullets. Pathways were difficult to trace. It made very difficult to identify one's own land. The wells were abandoned. The first opinion one got after the visit was that the return would be imaginary unless some extra assistance came in.



However, there were a few families who wanted to make use of the opportunity taking immense risk to get resettled. They got some support financially from the near and dear ones living abroad. Also when they started their work some assistance came from Agencies so that they could continue the task. Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) is one of those organizations that provided assistance for those who have already commenced to live at the locations. Around 40 to 50 such families were lucky to receive the inputs. For the others it was a very difficult work and they could not move out of the existing environment.

At this stage CORE with DS / Tellipalai encouraged and mobilized most of the under privileged families to try and move to the resettlement area. The idea was good but the people did not have much financial resources. The alternate option was to support one another to clear the jungle and land area. This was continuously pushed to motivate the vulnerable families. And it worked well. The mobilization process was remarkable. Thus, the people could actually move from the internally displaced status to their own lands after so many years supported by RAHAMA and funded by FORUT-International.

4.4 Needs and Expectations

4.4.1 Shelter

FORUT-International provided assistance through RAHAMA for the resettlement initiatives at Kurumbasiddy for 70 vulnerable families. 70 Transitional shelters have been constructed newly.



The implementing partner was CORE-Tellipalai, which was formed by FORUT-Sri Lanka as an umbrella organization at the end of its 5 year long term programme from 2003 to 2007. The transitional shelters have cemented floor with tin sheet roofing and cadjan wall covering. The tentative size of a shelter is 22'x 15' which has a room with a kitchen.

“When we were asked to clear the land area it became a herculean task for almost a month but we jointly managed as otherwise we would have lost the timely support” was the memory of Ms.Suthanthirarani (30) who is also an active Volunteer working for the betterment of the villagers.

In parallel, a visitor to the village could see completed foundations for larger houses in almost all the newly resettled plots. The completed transitional shelters remain on one side of the land while the new foundation covers most of the balance land area. It indicates that the families are really going to enjoy extended accommodation areas when the new permanent housing with the support of the Indian Government is completed in 6 more months' time. The requirement of the owner driven Indian Housing is that with the Rs 550,000 provided each beneficiary should complete the house with a permanent toilet. Since the families at Kurumbasiddy already have permanent toilets the initial information was that the money planned for the toilet would be deducted. However, Kalaimagal Community Centre which was reactivated by CORE during the intervention period made representations to the Indian Housing Administrators and obtained concessions to cement the walls of the already constructed toilets and utilize the balance money to construct tube wells.

4.4.2 Water

Eight common wells for 70 families have been rehabilitated through this project. However, the community members face difficulties with short supply of water. It is a problem with only one bucket available at each well to draw water. During school days it is really very tense at the wells in the mornings and at the evenings when the men and women return from work. Thus, the need of many families is the drilling of additional and individual tube wells, which already around 5 to 6 have started after necessary technical approvals. Drinking water is available at Annamma Kovilady which is around 1 Km and all the families have to make it from there.

4.4.3 Sanitation

70 permanent toilets have been constructed for individual families at Kurumbasiddy. The Regional Director of Health Services (RDHS) is the Government authority to set and maintain minimum standards for the construction of toilets. With the increase in ground water pollution the RDHS has introduced the three tier toilet pit construction mode. It contains a septic tank, anaerobic filter and a soakage pit. The permanent toilets constructed at Kurumbasiddy through this project meet the basic minimum standards and are approved by the authorities.

4.4.4 Health Services

The Government is providing free health services to all residents in the country through the various health institutions. Thus, health facilities are becoming more easy and accessible with the setting up of a rehabilitated government dispensary at Punnalaikadduvan, which is about 2 km from Kurumbasiddy. There are other rural government hospitals in Tellipalai and the vicinity and the villagers are not much worried about the services rendered by the Government health sector. Ambulance service is available on call from the St John Ambulance which may be useful during

emergencies. Palaly – Jaffna Road has been widened and upgraded by Road Development Authority (RDA) that links Jaffna quite fast and the Jaffna Teaching Hospital (JTH) is within 30 minutes for any urgent situation.

4.4.5 Education

The children in the village are able to go to nearby schools and a school bus is plying daily to pick them up in the mornings and bring them back in the afternoons. There isn't any school dropout and the parents seem very anxious to educate the children.

There are around 10 pre-schoolers and classes are being organized by Kalaimagal Community Centre with a local teacher, who is not trained. This creates difficulties and the parents require assistance to find a trained preschool teacher.

4.4.6 Employment Opportunities

The men and women of Kurumbasiddy are traditional farmers with very good experience and expertise in the field. Through the many years of war and displacement they lost access to cultivable lands. Now they work as agricultural labourers in the adjoining farms. Women get paid half that of the men. The work is seasonal and there are days when the income is zero. The resettled community could prosper only if there are more opportunities to enhance the income. One way is to get the lost cultivable lands lying still within the uncleared part.

The fertile red soil of the village bears reputed mark in the peninsula for cultivation. Being traditional farmers it is no wonder to see home gardening flourishing in all the resettled sites. Though the families face acute water problem the washed water is properly supported for the banana and other vegetable crops in and around the dwellings.

4.4.7 Safety and Security.

Samurthi Officer of the Divisional Secretariat has started to collect information of all the resettled families and soon there is hope that they would be enrolled under the scheme and get various support. CORE has also mobilized community savings through the formation of small groups. The people have good experience in savings which they maintained even during the period of displacement. However, the women say that they have to part with the total savings and the valued jewellery to keep fire burning at homes during rainy days.

“We are very happy that we got a place to live in our own land with individual toilet facilities. It is great especially for the women to maintain safety at a place closer to the military camp” was the open feeling of Ms.A.Smitha (25) a housewife with 2 children.

5. Conclusions

The displacement trend which lasted many decades prompted many families to seek greener pastures in foreign soil. The others who could not go lived in and around the district and some have become stable at the new locations. One interesting phenomenon noticed while persuading the families for resettlement was their concern of losing many facilities and services in the areas where they are used to live for so long. The Government too stopped its free dry ration provision when the title 'displaced' was no more. The younger generation opted for modern facilities than wishing for their traditional home land in remote villages. Services and facilities such as the electricity, TV and Information and Communication Technology attracted the youths whereas the elderly were concerned in resettlement and ensuring that the lands are secure. One interesting phenomenon in the resettlement is that more than 50% of the families are represented by the second generation

members. Some were just born at the time of displacement in 1990, and thus the entire place may look quite new to them. The families did not face land ownership issues since the transfers have taken place properly.

The reclaiming of more lands for cultivation that fall within the HSZ has many challenges. One fact remains for certain is that the Government would have no intention of totally removing its security command from Palaly. The prolonged war and the connected challenges it faced cannot make the Government to make the area a free civilian zone. Thus, the situation is going to be a balanced presence of the military with the civilians. Thus, hoping for more than what is already available may be imaginary. The needs of the resettled communities to indulge in own farming are to be supported through other modes than looking at the occupied land area. A stable resettlement is achieved when the people are self supported financially. Thus, alternate income generating opportunities are to be coupled to the women, men and youth in the village.

Education is development. The children have to compete at public and competitive examinations. Attending schools regularly is taking place at the moment. But, it may not be sufficient when it comes to open competitions. Thus, they have to be coached outside normal school hours in subjects that may be difficult to grasp. Evening classes and tuition classes are very common in town areas while the interior villages find it hard to cooperate with. The resettled children should be provided extra support to build their knowledge through such classes. It is the financial resources over a period to meet the teacher's payments. The same situation prevails with the preschool children. The parents find it an embarrassing environment with an untrained teacher.

Electricity supply to the village is many months away and the people have to manage their day to day affairs in a humble manner. The youth would find it difficult without TV, Computer facilities and mobile phones. The requirements would be varying and there can be more problems within families if they are not fulfilled.

Outweighing all the challenges, the resettlement has taken place supported by RAHAMA. There may be more threats in the future. Thus, steps are necessary in the future to find potential openings on enhanced livelihood, micro enterprises, vocational education and access to modern technology including computer.

Assessed and Reported by: N.Kohuladas

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Abbreviations

CORE	Consortium of Organizations for Rural Empowerment
DRB	District Review Board
DS	Divisional Secretary
GN	Grama Niladhari (<i>The Govt officer working with the people at the field level</i>)
GA	Government Agent
HSZ	High Security Zone
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JTH	Jaffna Teaching Hospital
KKS	Kankesanthurai (<i>a part of Jaffna where the cement factory and a civilian port are found</i>)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Red Cross
PTF	Presidential Task Force
RAHAMA	Recovery and Humanitarian Action Management Agency
RDA	Road Development Authority
RDHS	Regional Director of Health Services
TV	Television
UN	United Nations