



Humanitarian Crisis in the Vanni Need for Action by the International Community

TRO Headquarters
Kilinochchi
1 September 2008

District	Families	Individuals
Mullaitivu	30,701	128,562
Kilinochchi	28,777	113,363
Vadamarachchi East	1,957	7,687
Total IDPs in the Vanni	61,435	249,612

Source: Government Agents, District Secretariats, Gamma Sevekas, & TRO IDP Camp Staff

Displacement Due to War

There are currently 249,612 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Vanni¹ out of a total population of approximately 500,000 persons (See Table 1 above). Of these 249,612 IDPs, approximately 135,000 have been displaced, some numerous times over, since early June due to the aerial bombardment and artillery shelling being conducted by the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) Security Forces.

The majority of these IDPs have chosen to move away from the battle lines to safer areas around Kilinochchi rather than move into government held territory and be confined in de facto detention centres run by the GoSL TRO, as a national humanitarian organization based in the Vanni whose staff and their families live in the communities that they assist, seeks only to protect and assist the IDPs and provide them with every possible means of support possible.

Currently, TRO mobile teams have registered over 10,000 families living in the open air and under trees. Thirty-one (31) schools in the Kilinochchi District are being used to house thousands more IDPs, as are other public buildings, churches, and temples. This is due to shortages of tents, tarpaulins, and the materials required to build temporary shelters caused by the restrictions and embargoes on these items by the GoSL. The IDPs have limited access to water and sanitation facilities and there are also shortages of food, medicine and fuel due to the restrictions and embargoes that have been imposed on humanitarian aid and other essential items by the GoSL since early 2006.

The GoSL has also severely limited the access of international NGOs (iNGOs) and UN Agencies to the Vanni. Those iNGOs and UN Agencies that are able to access the Vanni are constrained in their ability to provided



¹ The Vanni consists of the parts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, and Vavuniya Districts controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)



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humanitarian assistance due to their limited capacity (lack of adequate staff and resources) and inability to access the most affected populations due to their own self-imposed, internal security protocols which restrict the areas in which their expatriate and national staff can operate. TRO, a national NGO, works in all of the affected areas where civilians are at risk and are in need of assistance.

In addition to the restrictions on humanitarian relief, the GoSL has denied all access to the Vanni to the local and international media to report on the humanitarian conditions in the Vanni. As a result the current levels of human suffering in the Vanni have not received adequate coverage in the international media.

The current displacement has created numerous other problems:

- Malnutrition is increasing – in 2006 UNICEF reported 40% of children in the Vanni were suffering from malnourishment or a lack of proper nutrition
- Lack of high nutrition food or food supplements for pregnant women & lactating mothers
- Premature births and miscarriages due to the stress of displacement
- 90% of families have lost their livelihoods and livelihood equipment – which has created high levels of stress and depression in the heads of households as they are unable to provide for their families and have no hope for the future;
- The yearly monsoon rains will be starting in a few weeks which will lead to serious health issues due to the lack of adequate water & sanitation facilities

Table 2: Mullaitivu District IDP Information – 20 August 2008

	Displaced from within Mullaitivu District	Displaced From Outside Mullaitivu the District	Total
AGA Division	Families	Families	Individuals
Kataithuraipattu	1,361	4,201	23,783
Puthukuddirruppu	682	15,054	65,980
Oddisuddan	3,799	5,227	37,267
Thunukkai	207	-	836
Manthai East	-	170	696
Total	6,049	24,652	128,562

Table 3: Kilinochchi District IDP Information – 12 August 2008

<i>Displaced to Kilinochchi from Outside the District</i>		
District	Families	Individuals
Jaffna	9,044	34,134
Mullaitivu	5,612	20,186
Mannar	4,383	17,173
Vavuniya	463	2,303
Trincomalee	250	888
Batticaloa	231	833
<i>Displaced Within Kilinochchi District</i>		
Kilinochchi	9,794	37,846
<i>Total Displaced residing in the District</i>		
Told IDPs currently in Kilinochchi District	29,777	113,363

Table 4: Jaffna - Vadamarachchi East District IDP information - 8 August 2008

	Families	Individuals
Vadamarachchi East	1957	7687



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Embargo & Restrictions

The current actions of the GoSL - the ongoing **denial of humanitarian aid and the usage of food and medicine as a weapon of war** - are violations of the International Humanitarian Law as set out in the Geneva Conventions.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) controls all access to and transportation of all items to and from the Vanni. The GoSL and the UN have made claims, to differing degrees, that there are no bans in place and that adequate supplies of humanitarian assistance are reaching the civilian population. According to reports from the ground - humanitarian groups, NGOs, community leaders, church officials and GoSL local government officials - this is far from the truth. While there is no "published ban" the military commanders at the Omanthai checkpoint, the only point of access to the LTTE controlled Vanni, are given orders directing them to not allow the transportation of some essential items and/or delay or arbitrarily reduce the quantities allowed through the checkpoints. This is accomplished through restrictive procedures and excessive and unnecessary searches and checking and limiting the amount of personnel who are assigned to do these searches. As a result the number of lorries that actually cross the de facto border at Omanthai falls far short of the number required to sustain the population.

Several items are banned from being transported and all items have restrictions placed on the quantities that are allowed. The restricted items include: food, medicine, fuel, and educational items. Construction materials, such as concrete and iron bars have been banned since late 2006. This has caused sharp increases in the prices of goods and materials.

Only the UN, international NGOs and government departments are allowed to transport petrol and diesel fuel to the Vanni. These organizations regularly have their requested fuel allotments slashed – the UN regularly has its requests reduced by up to 50% and government Departments such as the RDHS (Regional Directorate of Health Services) have at times only received 19% of the amount requested (2,600 of its requested 14,000 litres for the month of July). This severely impacts the ability of these organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance, to access and transport IDPs, and to provide medical assistance to the over 500,000 persons residing in the Vanni. In the case of the RDHS, reduced fuel availability impacts the operation of generators (the only source of electricity in the Vanni) and ambulance services for hospitals. The lack of electricity also disrupts the "cold chain", which is essential for the preservation of certain vaccines and medicines, operation of medical equipment such as those in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the operating theatre.

Name	Colombo (SL Rupees)	Vanni (SL Rupees)
Petrol*	165.00	800.00
Diesel*	120.00	360.00
Kerosene	84.00	175.00
<i>*Petrol and Diesel are rarely available on the open market</i>		

The table below shows the price differences between Colombo and Vanni on essential items. The only items that are cheaper in the Vanni are the Brown and Samba rice due to the fact that they are produced in the Vanni, but as noted below the current displacement will severely affected the yields when the next harvest is due in January 2009.

Name	Unit	Colombo (SL Rupees)	Vanni (SL Rupees)
Cement	Per bag	700.00	18,500.00
Gas Cylinder	12.5 kg	1,800.00	4,500.00
Chillies	Kilo	203.00	290.00
B-Onions	Kilo	61.00	160.00
Potatoes	Kilo	86.00	160.00
Rice Samba	Kilo	85.00	50.00
Bread	450 g	37.00	40.00
Rice Brown	Kilo	70.00	40.00



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The following items have been completely banned by the commander of the security forces in Vavuniya:

1. Fabrics: Poplin Cloth (all colours), Trouser Cloth (all colours), Polyester, Shirt Cloth, all denim material
2. Clothing: T-Shirts, Skirts Fabrics, Cotton and Synthetic Trousers
3. All types of caps and hats
4. Sewing machines
5. Transportation: Bicycles, Motorcycles and all vehicles, spare parts for motors, motorcycles, vehicles, and bicycles

Food

The availability of food in the Vanni has been limited by the GoSL's restrictive unwritten policy of limiting the free flow of food to the area. Prior to the current displacement that began in April/May 2008 food stocks in the Vanni were already low due to these restrictions. As a result the prices for food in the marketplace are beyond the reach of the average person in the Vanni. In the case of the IDPs, the situation is much worse – they do not have any purchasing power, have lost everything, most importantly their livelihoods and do not have any savings; thus, they are not able to supplement the dry rations with other food. TRO and other local NGOs fill the gap in the IDP's diet by providing cooked food to supplement the dry rations and ensure that any gaps, due to irregular supply, are filled.



Examples of the restrictions/shortfalls of food supply to IDPs:

- In July 22,837 families (84,366 individuals) registered with Grama Sevaka (GS) for dry food distribution by the World Food Program (WFP)/GS. Due to the limited amounts of dry food available 16,418 families received only 14 days worth of dry rations (rice and dahl only). At the same time 6,219 families only received rice (no dahl) for the same 14-day period.
- In August 31,713 families TRO and GS staff on the ground reported did not receive any rations at all despite the GoSL & other organizations incorrect statements that sufficient food was available and was being distributed.

The dry ration packages distributed by the WFP/GS consist of rice, dahl cooking oil and kerosene only. These packages are designed to prevent starvation and do not provide the necessary nutrition that women, children and young adults require.



Thus far the number of reported cases of severe malnutrition is low, but over the past two years the GoSL has restricted the amount of food allowed into the Vanni, which has resulted in widespread stunting and wasting of children and young adults. This leaves children more vulnerable to severe malnutrition and disease.



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Table 7: Amount of Food Transported and Distributed in Kilinochchi District				
Food items	Essential Food items needed (kg)	Food received & distributed (kg)	Food Needed	Food needed for August & not distributed
				KILINOCHCHI ONLY Families: – 31713 Individuals- 120965
Rice	506,136	472,393.60	33,742.40	725,790
Flour	506,136	0	506,136	725,790
Dhal	151,840.80	49,764.96	102,075.84	217,737
Sugar	50,613.60	0	50,613.60	72,579
Kerosene	50,613.60	16,588.32	34,025.28	72,579
Total	1,265,340	538,746.88	726,593.12	1,814,475

Agricultural Production

The current displacement has also resulted in farmers having to abandon their crops. This will have a severe affect on the quantities of food available in the Vanni beginning in January 2009 when the harvest is due. Sixty percent (60%) of the agricultural production has been stopped in the Vanni as a result of displacement. Farmers have been forced to abandon their paddy (rice) fields when they displace and the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) has occupied the areas. 24,500 hectares have been abandoned in the following districts:

- 9,500 hectares in Mannar District
- 4,000 hectares in Mullaitivu District
- 5,000 hectares in Vavuniya North
- 6,000 hectares Kilinochchi District

The SLA have taken control of some irrigation reservoirs and could restrict the water flow from reaching farmlands in some of the LTTE controlled areas reducing even further the area under cultivation and the yield in January 2009. In Mannar 3 tanks (manmade lakes), including Giants Tank are under the SLA control as are two of the largest tanks, Thunnimurippu and Vavunikulam, in the Mullaitivu District.



Medicine & Hospitals

Since 2006, the MoD has limited the amount of medicine that the Government Hospitals received. The Ministry of Health (MoH) sends medicines to the hospitals quarterly – the Vanni hospitals' quarterly shipments are regularly delayed and the quantities reduced by the MoD. This has led to shortages at all hospitals and dispensaries. Additionally, none of the health facilities in the Vanni had the required number of medical staff or medical equipment prior to the return to war in 2006.

The Tamil Eelam Health Services, Centre for Health Care, and RDHS staff are filling the gaps created by the lack of government appointed staff. These groups are assisting in the provision of health care and medical service to the IDP camps.

Currently, 3 Government Hospitals, 8 Central Dispensaries, 3 Rural Hospitals, and 21 Primary Health Care Centres have been displaced. While some have been re-established in the areas into which they have displaced most have not, due to the lack of infrastructure in the new areas. Most of the medical equipment, beds, and other supplies could not be transported and were left behind.



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Table 8: Displaced Medical Facilities

District	Hospitals	Dispensaries	Rural Hospitals	Primary Health Care Centres
Mannar	01 Adampan	03	-	05
Mullaitivu	01 Mallavi	02	-	05
Kilinochchi	01 Akkarayan	01	01 Mulankavil	04
Vavuniya	-	01	01 Nedunkerni	05
Jaffna	-	01	01 Maruthankerni	02
Total	03	08	03	21

Due to the GoSL's fuel restrictions health facilities are unable to run the generators and ambulance service for the civilian population. The only source of electricity in the Vanni is from generators as the GoSL has cut the Vanni off from the National Grid. This lack of electricity leads to interruptions of the cold chain for vaccines and an inability to sustain the ICU & operating room.

The RDHS (Mullaitivu) reported that it only received 2,600 of the requested 14,000 litres of fuel for July and the Government Agent (GA) for Kilinochchi reported on 12 August that the diesel quota for the Kilinochchi Health Department was reduced to 2,250 litters for August, compared to 6,250 litres in July. The monthly fuel request for the regular activities of health institutions in Kilinochchi prior to the government offensive into the Vanni was 15,000 litres.

The RDHS Kilinochchi on 28 July reported shortages of the following drugs: Crystalline Penicillin injections, Metformin, Astrovastatin, Folic acid tablets, surgical spirit, W.O.W Bandage, Gauze Rolls, Salbutamol D.P Cap and Salbutamol inhalers.

RDHS Mullaitivu on 05 August reported shortages of the following drugs: Buvacaine injection, Beclate MDI, Asthalin MDI Syringe, Cloxacillin Syringe, Panadol capsules, Cephalexin capsules, Omeprazole tablets, Mebendazole, lint injection, penicillin injection, Ranitidine, Urine bag, and IVs.

Shelter

Approximately 10,000 families (45,000 - 50,000 persons) are currently living under trees while the remainder of the IDPs are in public buildings (31 schools are functioning as Welfare Centres) or in makeshift shelters made of tarpaulin sheets.

The lack of construction materials allowed into the Vanni has hindered the humanitarian communities' ability to provide adequate shelter. The GoSL has not given permission to the UN and GA to bring the required quantity of tents, tarpaulin sheets and other shelter material into the Vanni.

As a result TRO and local NGOs, with the support of the international humanitarian community in the Vanni, are providing the IDPs with locally available materials – cadjan roofing and timber – so that they may build their own temporary shelters.

In the past the temporary shelters built by TRO and other local NGOs adhered to the Planning & Development Secretariat's (PDS) and the international SPHERE standards of 400 sq. ft. per





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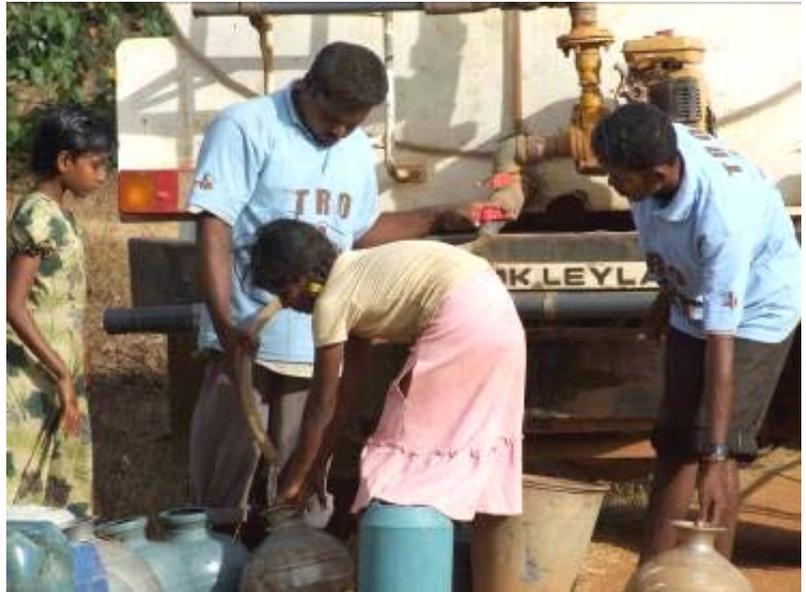
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shelter. But as a result of the shortage of materials and the large number of IDPs displaced within a short period coupled with the foot dragging of the GoSL and the international organizations and the GoSL's restrictions the size of the shelters has been reduced.

Water, Sanitation & Health (WASH)

The WASH sector has also been negatively impacted by the GoSL restrictions on fuel and construction materials. Of primary importance is the access to potable water, which is difficult due to the environment and the distances the IDPs must travel on foot. TRO and the Pradeshiya Saba (PS) are distributing drinking water via water bowser vehicles and installing large water tanks in the Welfare Camps for easier access.

7,000 liters of diesel are needed per month to run the bowser vehicles & water pumps but no organization is able to provide this fuel & the GoSL will not allow the fuel through the checkpoint. As a result fuel must be purchased on the "open market" which is very expensive and not readily available.



The lack of construction materials, especially cement, is also impacting the ability of TRO to build temporary toilets to the PDS/SPHERE standards for emergencies, 1 toilet for every 5 families, but the current realities prohibit adherence to this standard due to the limited resources available and the lack of cement. The fact that the IDPs have been displaced numerous times has also limited the ability to build the required amount of toilets because as the toilets are finished shellings and bombings force the IDPs to displace once again. However, TRO aims to build a minimum of 2,500 temporary toilets in the short term to meet the needs of the IDPs but this will depend heavily on access to materials.

Preventive medicine – TRO is maintaining/managing the camps with local and international agencies support. TRO has 1,200 trained volunteers in the Vanni who are ensuring that health and safety standards are maintained but this will become more difficult when the monsoon rains arrive in the next few weeks. This will result in open and standing water, which will lead to the spread of disease.

Transportation

There is no public transportation available in the Vanni due to the lack of fuel. TRO is the only organization that is providing free transportation for IDPs to go to areas of their choice with, when possible, their belongings – at times the displacement is sudden and there is no time to gather the belongings.

TRO has calculated that it requires 7-12 liters of diesel fuel to relocate a family and their belongings. But the GA only allocates 2-3 liters of diesel to local NGOs for this purpose. The international NGOs and the UN do not transport people due to a lack of capacity and their refusal to go





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to areas that are of high risk due to their own internal security protocols, this despite the fact that civilians are at risk and without humanitarian assistance.

TRO is the only organization willing to work in these areas because, in most cases, TRO staff are from or are living in the affected community. These TRO staff members and volunteers work in these areas despite the GoSL shelling and bombing and the Claymore Mine attacks by Deep Penetration Units of the SL Army.

Education

In the Vanni 60% of educational activity has been stopped due to the displacement of the children and the displacement of the schools (114 schools have been displaced) and the fact that schools are being used as Welfare Centres for IDPs. In Kilinochchi District 31 schools are being used as Welfare Centres to house 8,206 families (11,223 persons) and 33 schools have been displaced along with their 10,000 children. Schools that do not have IDPs on their grounds or in their classrooms do not classrooms and teacher capacity to receive the new students or to even serve the existing population.

Nationwide exams which were due to be held in the Vanni have been delayed and the ability of the students to study for these exams, when they are finally rescheduled, has been greatly compromised due to displacement, constant selling and bombing, and the GoSL restrictions on the transportation of school supplies (books, pencils, etc), desks, chairs and the destruction of the educational infrastructure in the Vanni.

Primary and pre-school students don't go to school regularly due to shelling & air attacks and the fear that these attacks create in the children and in their parents.

The Education Department, international organizations, and local NGOs don't have the resources to build or establish temporary schools in the short term and thus TRO has attempted to fill the gap by arranging outdoor classes run by volunteer teachers who are "A" Level students and have been displaced themselves.

Table 9: Status of Schools in the Vanni <i>(Does not include schools that are hosting IDP Children & are continuing to function)</i>			
District	Displaced / Closed Schools	Affected Classrooms	Students affected
Mannar	39	390	18,700
Kilinochchi	33	272	8,500
Vadamarachchi East	12	73	1,600
Mullaitivu	14	99	4,500
Vavuniya North	16	90	1,472
Total	114	924	36,272

Communication

On 23 July Sri Lanka Telecom cut all telephone lines to the Vanni on the orders of the GoSL. Postal Services to the Vanni were also suspended in July. The people in the Vanni are now completely isolated and can not contact their friends and relatives outside the Vanni or overseas and friends, relatives, and most importantly the local and international media cannot get information about the humanitarian conditions.

Attacks on Civilians

The GoSL Security Forces bomb and shell civilian areas in order to get them moving out of the area resulting in civilian casualties, one of which was the Mullaitivu Government Agent (GA) Imelda Sukumar who was injured in a shelling of the Mullaitivu Hospital on 8 August 2008. Another effect of the bombing and shelling is the terrorizing of the civilian population. Many of these attacks occur at times and places, at night and in the early morning and in close proximity to civilian settlements, that cause major disruptions to the sleep patterns and daily lives of the people.



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Recommendations

To the International Community: urge the GoSL and the LTTE to declare **“zones of peace” or “safe havens”** within the Vanni where the IDPs will be safe from shelling and bombing and able to receive much needed humanitarian assistance.

To the GoSL: Remove all restrictions, embargoes and other impediments on the transportation of humanitarian assistance, construction materials for temporary shelters, fuel, food, and medicine.

To the Tamil Diaspora: Support your local country TRO organizations and TRO Kilinochchi and pressure your host country to urge the GoSL to remove all embargoes and restrictions on essential supplies to the Vanni; ensure the safety of the civilian population and to allow an international human rights monitoring presence in Sri Lanka.