

Resettlement of Sampoor (Trinco) Internally Displaced People (IDP)

People from Sampoor in Trincomalee district were displaced in 2006 following the war and have been languishing in four welfare centres (or refugee camps around Sampoor). Nearly 1250 families were displaced and around 900 families have been living in the welfare centres. See photos below for their living conditions. Most of these families were successful farmers and were financially sound. However, following displacement, they have lost their livelihood and have been struggling to find regular employment. As a result, they have been struggling to feed their families.



Living condition of Sampoor IDP in welfare centres

There appeared to be some progress on the resettlement of the IDP of Sampoor. In January 2015, nineteen Sampoor IDP families were returned to their land, cleared the jungle and put up temporary shelters for them to move in. As they couldn't locate the proper boundaries/land, they cleared a piece of land closer to Kaali kovil and built 19 temporary sheds with the help of local people. The forces kept a blind-eye on the movement of the refugees and seven families have now permanently settled there and started farming and other livelihood activities. Some photos are shown below for their living conditions. The remaining 12 families are reluctant to settle due to lack of basic facilities such as toilets, wells, and shelters. It should be noted that these families never received any sort of assistance towards resettlement but were dumped there before the presidential election in January 2015 with the promise that they would be provided with all kind of assistances. If basic facilities are provided the remaining 12 families are willing to settle there permanently.



As the release of lands was getting delayed, other IDP families started agitating. The current President recently approved the release of more land. However, previous government had given the land to BOI, which gave it to a company for development. Current government withdrew the land from BOI and now the land belonging to Government is being released to IDP. The said BOI project Company filed a case against BOI and the Government at the Supreme Court (SC), which made a Stay order. Though SC has now lifted the Stay Order, the case was taken up in June and adjourned.

In the mean time, nearly 250 IDP families started clearing their lands in Sampoor in order that they can return to their land. Some extreme forces have entered the scene and intimidated the people, who were clearing the jungle. In addition, the police also advised IDP to stay away from the land until the case is heard at the SC. As a result, IDP haven't returned to their land and are awaiting the decision of the SC, possibly in July, and most probably after the election in August 2015.

Although we were aiming to assist the new resettling IDP, a recent visit to the area indicated that the nineteen families who were resettled in January 2015 need our support as a matter of urgency. As indicated earlier, only seven families have permanently resettled near Kaali Kovil. Although they do not have the basic facilities such as toilets, drinking water, etc, these families are determined to stay there and working hard to make their end meets.

When we were visiting this area, we were told that a small child fell into a well because of its condition as can be seen from the photo below. The baby was lucky to be alive. There were three wells in similar state, without secure walls above the ground level. Financial assistance was provided immediately and the wells have now been secured as can be seen below.



People who have resettled in this area have been working hard to better their lives by farming, setting up tiny shops, etc. However, they will benefit from financial support to make a proper resettlement and to enhance their livelihood. Photos below show their efforts.



If these seven settled families and the remaining 12 families, who are reluctant to permanently settle due to lack of facilities, are assisted with basic facilities, more and more IDP families are willing to return to their rightful lands and resettle there to make a new start. They desperately need our help to go back to their lands and start new lives. Can we help them?