

Valigamam Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Chunnagam

Assist RR has been assisting innocent victims of the war in the North and East of Sri Lanka since 2012. Although we focussed our efforts in Vanni, and in particular Mullaithivu, we carried out many assistances from Mannar in the North to Amparai in the East. However, we always formed the opinion that there were no major issues in Jaffna except Vadamarachchi East. We now admit that we were wrong to form this opinion and we have neglected thousands of people, who were displaced from Valigamam North and have been living in 22 camps for the past 25 years. It appears that not many of us are aware the plight of these unfortunate people, who have been living in very pathetic condition after losing their livelihoods. Some photos for their condition are attached.





Assist RR representatives visited two camps namely Kanngi and Sabapathi camps in Chunnagam, where 263 families consisting of nearly 1000 people have been living for the past 25 years in a very crowded condition. Basic facilities such as toilets and water are scarce. In Kannagi camp, nearly 600 persons are sharing 23 public toilets and in Sabapathy camp, nearly 400 persons are sharing 14 toilets. Nearly 26-29 persons are sharing one toilet in these camps. Imagine how difficult it would be to use the toilets in the morning. Although we cannot compare this to the situation at the end of the war in Mullivaikkal, these IDP families have been going through these difficult conditions for the past 25 years. We went in to a hut to speak to family and we couldn't stand inside for a few minutes. They have been living there for more than 25 years. Photos of the public toilets are attached below.



We can assist these people by providing more toilets as a matter of urgency and then provide assistance that would improve their livelihoods. We went in to another house around 14:30, where a family live with four girls. The father is suffering from stroke and can't work. The mother goes out to work the farms and bring some money for their food. The father told us that they are still waiting the mother to return home to make their first meal. Although we provided a small assistance immediately, what they need is support to start a livelihood initiative. We asked whether they would be interested in working and earning, they are very keen but can't find any jobs in the area.

We can start some small scale business opportunities such as producing nut and mixture packets, various types of flour, etc and provide employment to the women. This would at least help them to make enough to make their end meets.

Can we help these very unfortunate people? Diaspora Tamils can certainly help, if they wanted...