



NEWS LETTER

1st ISSUE (July 2007)

Resettlement

MINISTRY OF
RESETTLEMENT
& DISASTER
RELIEF
SERVICES



*"I shall implement my development plans which would include special programmes for the North and East as well." "I wish to have all villages of the country emerging as micro centers of growth on modern lines." – Mahinda Chinthanaya
(H.E. the President, Mahinda Rajapakse)*



*"Resettlement of IDPs is voluntary" "No forcible resettlement"
(Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, M.P., Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services.)*



**Message by Hon. M.S.S.
Ameer Ali, M.P., Minister
of Disaster Relief
Services**

**Message by Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, M.P.
Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services**

It is with great pride that I convey this message on the eve of publishing this Newsletter depicting a comprehensive account of events on resettlement of IDPs in Batticaloa District.

On the guidance of H.E., the President Mahinda Rajapakse this Ministry spared no effort to peacefully resettle the IDPs in their original villages. Immense support given by the Senior Advisor to H.E. the President, Mr. Basil Rajapakse, to make this a success, is commendable. The cooperation extended by H.E. the President, Ministry of Nation Building, other Ministries, G.A., Government officials, Security forces and the Police are praise worthy.

Most of the villages have achieved normalcy. Despite various constraints, infrastructure development work, provision of basic needs and livelihood assistance are gathering momentum in the villages.

I am confident that the ongoing resettlement process would become an integral component of the total effort to bring about peace in Sri Lanka.

**Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen M.P.,
Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services.**



Message by Secretary

I take pleasure in giving this message to the first issue of this Newsletter released by the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services. The contents of this Newsletter are very informative and thought provoking. The description and photographs illustrated in the Newsletter have vividly thrown light on the resettlement of IDPs in the Batticaloa District.

I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to H.E. the President and Hon. Minister Rishad Bathiudeen for their invaluable guidance in the implementation of resettlement programme of IDPs.

**A.C.M Razik,
Secretary, Ministry of Resettlement & Disaster Relief Services**

I am delighted to send a message to the first edition of this Newsletter portraying the process of resettlement.

It is a sigh of relief to see the IDPs voluntarily getting back to their original villages in Batticaloa District under arrangements made by Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Nation Building, other Ministries, G.A. Batticaloa, government officials, Security Forces and the Police.

It is the intention of the Government to make the returnees secure and comfortable in their villages. In an effort to uplift the living standards, whilst providing basic needs to the returnees, many projects are in the pipeline to develop the infrastructure facilities and to provide livelihood assistance.

I wish all returnees a bright and a prosperous future!

**Hon. M.S.S. Ameer Ali, M.P.,
Minister of Disaster Relief Services.**

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“Where there is a will, there is a way”

Despite tight schedules, Senior Advisor to the President, Mr. Basil Rajapakse has been keen and instrumental from the very inception in getting the resettlement programme on track. His untiring effort in visiting the IDP welfare centers, guiding and providing support in coordination with various Ministries is highly commendable. He is genuinely concerned with the problems faced by the IDPs. Among other things, he has a knack for these activities and is a prominent personality behind the resettlement activities. Several welfare measures are being initiated by him under the Jathika saviya programme to provide support and assistance to the returnees.



H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapakse visits Vaakarai in Batticaloa District



Senior Advisor to H.E. the President Mr. Basil Rajapakse (center) conducting a meeting on Resettlement of IDPs

Resettlement of IDPs in Batticaloa District a success

Resettlement of thousands of persons displaced due to conflict and natural disasters is a Herculean task involving humanitarian concerns, safety and security of returnees and provision of basic needs for their survival and livelihood. The Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services is in the front lines taking all measures to peacefully resettle the displaced persons in stages in the District of Batticaloa and Trincomalee according to a meticulous plan.



Mr. Amin Awad, UNHCR Country Representative Sri Lanka shaking hands

UNHCR in a statement issued on 15th May 2007 noted that “it was fully involved in the return process” and that “staff monitoring the situation on the ground say the majority of people are eager to return home, the returnees are voluntary and in line with international protection standards.” (UNHCR 15th May 2007)

**with Hon. Minister Susantha Punchinilame
in Batticaloa**

THE RIGHT TO VOLUNTARY RETURN IN SAFETY AND DIGNITY

All refugees and displaced persons have the right to return voluntarily to their former homes, lands or places of habitual residence, in safety and dignity. Voluntary return in safety and dignity must be based on a free, informed, individual choice. Refugees and displaced persons should be provided with complete, objective, up-to-date and accurate information, including on physical, material and legal safety issues in countries or places of origin.

States shall allow refugees and displaced persons who wish to return voluntarily to their former homes, lands or places of habitual residence to do so. This right cannot be abridged under conditions of State succession, nor can it be subject to arbitrary or unlawful time limitations.

Refugees and displaced persons shall not be forced, or otherwise coerced, either directly or indirectly, to return to their former homes, lands or places of habitual residence. Refugees and displaced persons should be able to effectively pursue durable solutions to displacement other than return, if they so wish, without prejudicing their right to the restitution of their housing, land and property.

States should, when necessary, request from other States or international organizations the financial and/or technical assistance required to facilitate the effective voluntary return, in safety and dignity, of refugees and displaced persons.



Assistance under the Jathika Saviya Programme gathers momentum

A STUDENT FROM VAAKARAI



I am a Grade 12 student of Vaakarai Maha Vidyalaya. I was in the Welfare center with my family as an IDP. Now I am happy to be in my own village after resettlement. Out of the 18 schools in Vaakarai, my school is a Maha Vidyalaya and I am happy about that. For a short period I was not able to go to school but now I am attending school. I am grateful to the Ministry of Education for providing us new desks, chairs, uniforms, books etc. Now I am determined to pursue higher studies and enter the University. I also thank H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapakse and Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services for enabling us to return to our villages and pursue studies.

Arulananthan Yogeswaran

Age 19 years

Student from Vaakarai Maha Vidyalaya.

A FISHERMAN FROM VAAKARAI



We were not able to continue with our livelihood for a period of time because we were in the Welfare centers away from our villages. We have lost all our fishing gears. As a fisherman involved in inland fishing, before displacement, I used to catch enough fish to sustain my family. After returning to our villages, we were given fishing nets by the Ministry of Fisheries. We fisher folks are happy about this. Now I hope to engage in fishing once again. I am thankful to the Ministry of Fisheries for providing us fishing nets to continue with our livelihood. I must thank H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapakse and Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services and Senior Advisor to H.E. the President, Mr. Basil Rajapakse, for making arrangements to get back to our birth places.

Kanapathy Sasikumar,

Age 28 years

Fisherman from Panichenkerny, Vaakarai.

An IDP from the Welfare center returning to Muttur



I am happy to return home after liberation of our hometown from the clutches of the LTTE. I am thankful to H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapakse for taking the initiative to clear our area and allowing us to get back to our villages.

I am grateful to Mr. Gotabaya Rajapakse and the Security Forces for liberating our ancestral land. Now I hope to restart our day-to-day activities in our village with new vigour. I hope peace will be a reality in the near future.



A tribute to the Security Forces and Police

If not for the brave actions of the Security Forces and the Police, it would not have been possible to liberate and regain the areas occupied by the terrorists for resettlement of IDPs. Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services is grateful to H.E. the President, Defence Secretary Mr. Gotabaya Rajapakse, and the valiant members of the Security Forces and Police for doing a job well done in clearing the areas held by the terrorists. We pay tribute to our gallant members of the Security Forces and Police who in the discharge of their duties were wounded and laid down their lives for the betterment of our fellow men.

Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, M.P. Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, tours Batticaloa District on a fact-finding mission.

Hon. Minister Rishad Bathiudeen visited areas in Batticaloa on 18th June 2007 where resettlement of IDPs is in progress in order to get first hand information. He met IDPs who had gathered in the Weber Stadium to leave for their original places of birth. Resettlement process smoothly taking place in this area drew the attention of the Minister. Government Agent Batticaloa, Mr.S.Arumainayagam, Divisional Secretaries, High Ranking Officers of Security forces, Police and STF were also present. Commencing from 15th June 2007, 7,212 families consisting 24,792 persons are to be resettled in Vavunativu in 24 Grama Sevaka Divisions. This process is to be continued until all families are resettled.

Resettlement of IDPs started after securing the area and reinforcing security by the Security forces and Police. Action was initiated to provide transport to the returnees proceeding to their own places of birth with the help of the Security forces and Police. The IDPs returning to their birth places were provided with cooked meals, dry rations, kitchen utensils and clothes in order to ease their burden during the initial days of resettlement. Special team of officers have been deployed on the ground by this Ministry to coordinate this process. A special meeting was held on the same day under the chairmanship of Hon.Minister Rishad Bathiudeen to formulate the modalities of the ongoing resettlement programme at the Batticaloa G.A.'s office.



Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen meets the returnees in Vavunativu area

Hon. Minister Rishad Bathiudeen accompanied by a team of officials were on a tour to Vavunativu area on 18th June 2007 to look into the affairs of the people resettled in this area. Government has made all arrangements to provide basic needs and infrastructure facilities to the returnees. The objective of this tour was to find out the problems faced by the populace in the resettled villages.

Hon. Minister Rishad Bathiudeen had very cordial discussions with the villagers. During the discussions with the people he was able to take on the spot decisions to resolve various problems faced by the people in the area. Accordingly, he has given direction to G.A. and the Divisional Secretary to take immediate measures to resolve their outstanding problems. During Hon. Minister's tour he also made it a point to inspect the activities of Police Station Vavunativu, Divisional Secretary's office, Cooperatives and Schools.

G.A. Batticaloa Mr.S.Arumainayagam, Coordinating Director Brig.V.K.B. (Lal) Weerakoon, Vavunativu AGA Miss.Sivapriya and Grama Seva Niladharis accompanied the Hon. Minister in this fact-finding tour.

Numbers Resettled as at 07th July 2007

Divisional Secretary Divisions	Displaced		Resettled		To be Resettled	
	Families	Persons	Families	Persons	Families	Persons
Manmunai West-Vavunathivu	8,029	31,047	7,212	24,792	817	6,255
Eravur Pattu-Sengalady	5,362	23,653	0	0	5,362	23,653
Koralaipattu South-Kiran	3,976	17,611	0	0	3,976	17,611
Manmunai South West-Pattipalai	6,794	25,279	6,397	21,405	397	3,874
Poraitivu Pattu-Vellavely	9,870	38,577	8,901	28,457	969	10,120
Koralaipattu North-Vaakarai	4,552	15,542	4,545	15,524	7	18
From Trincomalee District	5,692	19,986	3,173	7,881	2,519	12,105
Total	44,275	171,695	30,228	98,059	14,047	73,636

Source: GA Batticaloa

Jathikasaviya concept initiated by H.E. the President, Mahinda Rajapakse.

Dry ration packs including kitchen utensils and clothes were issued to IDPs proceeding to their respective villages under arrangements made by Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services and under the Jathikasaviya concept initiated by H.E. the President, Mahinda Rajapakse. Parcels containing above mentioned items were distributed among the IDPs each worth approximately Rs. 6,000/-.

DRY RATIONS

Rice Naadu (Superior Quality)	10	Kg.
Rice Samba (Medium Quality)	10	Kg.
Sugar	02	Kg.
Tea (Superior Quality)	500	gms.
Flour	05	Kg.
Milk Powder (Anchor 400gm)	01	Packet
Dhal (Superior Quality)	02	Kgs.
Potatoes	01	Kg.
Green Gram	01	Kg.
Sprats	01	Kg.
Coconuts	10	Nos.
Salt Packet	01	Kg.
Bombay Onions	01	Kg.
Small Onions	01	kg.
Curry & Chilli Powder	500	gms.
Coconut Oil Bottle	01	No.
Pappadam 100gm	02	Packets



OTHER ITEMS ISSUED TO THE RETURNEES

Kitchen Utensils

Aluminium pans	02	Nos.
Aluminium Pots	01	No.
Nembili	01	No.
Plate (Silver)	03	Nos.
Plastic Jugs (1.5 Ltrs)	01	No.
Silver Table Spoon	02	Nos.
Tea Spoon	02	Nos.
Silver Tea Cups	02	Nos.
Knife	01	No.

Clothes

Towel (Medium)	01	No.
Sarong	01	No.
Printed Cotton (2.5M)	01	Piece
T-Shirt (Free Size)	01	No.
Kaftaan	01	No.
Sanitary Napkins	01	Packet
Lux Soap (Large)	01	Cake
Sun Light	01	Cake
Shaving Razor (Single Blade)	01	No.
Tooth Brush	03	Nos.
Tooth Paste (Medium Size)	01	No.
Panadol Card (12 Tablets)	01	No.
Dettol (200mm)	01	Bottle

- **Fuel** Kerosene oil 5 Ltres. per family
- **Cadjans** Cadjans worth Rs.30,000/- per family
- **Financial Assistance** Livelihood assistance of Rs.25,000/- per family (to be given)





H.E. the President meeting the IDPs

“Mr. Anthony Banbury, WFP Regional Director for Asia, during an official visit to Sri Lanka from 14th to 18th May 2007, at a meeting with Foreign Secretary, Dr. Palitha Kohona, at Mr. Banbury’s request commenting on the Government programmes of IDP resettlement in the East, Mr. Banbury stated that the recent reports in this regard were positive. He reiterated WFP’s continued commitment to address the needs of affected civilians.”
(MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, COLOMBO, 22ND MAY 2007.)



IDPs languishing in Welfare Centers



Returning home with high hopes

Resettlement in progress

Following the successful resettlement of 4,545 families consisting 15,524 persons in Vaakarai, from 14th May 2007, 8,901 families comprising of 28,457 persons have been resettled in their original birthplaces in Vellavelly Divisional Secretary area in Batticaloa. Commencing from 1st June 2007 resettlement of IDPs belonging to Pattipola Division area took place. A notable feature in the present resettlement process in Batticaloa District is that the IDPs have volunteered and showed eagerness to go to their respective villages. Resettlement in Vavunathivu Divisional secretary area in Batticaloa District commenced on 15th June 2007 and the process continues until all families are resettled. At a recent conference held in Trincomalee, at the Governor’s Office with the participation of Ministers, Officials from the Presidential Secretariat, Honourable Governor, GA and government officials, it was decided to start resettlement of IDPs belonging to Trincomalee District but presently in Batticaloa District from 14th June 2007. Initially resettlement will commence in the Army cleared areas of Ichallampattu and in areas of Verugal, where abandoned houses are intact.



A Moment of togetherness



Hon. Minister in conversation with the G.A. Batticaloa

Arriving at the villages.



Registration prior to resettlement in progress

Modus Operandi

On the guidance of Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, resettlement programme is conducted according to a meticulous plan as follows:

- Security forces and Police secure the relevant areas with a view to gaining normalcy in the areas under resettlement.
- Land mine clearance by the Army and Quality assurance certificates obtained from the UNDP Mine action project.
- Programme for resettlement is scheduled according to the villages.
- Roadways, School buildings, hospitals and water wells are cleaned before resettlement.
- Electricity power supply is restored.
- Reactivation of government institutions.
- Water bowsers and water tanks are provided to the area for the initial resettlement period.
- Registration and assembly areas are earmarked and the IDPs are informed of the dates for their move to the villages.
- Temporary shelters, medical centers, toilet facilities and a cooking area to prepare and provide a meal to the IDPs on the day of the move is organized.
- Security checks and Registration conducted in the Assembly area.
- A dry ration pack sufficient for two weeks is also distributed to each per IDP family before leaving for their villages.
- Each member provided a hot meal packet.
- Buses are arranged to transport the IDPs from the Welfare centers to the Assembly area and from there to their respective villages where the respective Grama Niladaris and Samurdi Niladaris receive these returnees.

Uplifting living standards through continuous Assistance

Action has been taken to provide dry rations for a period of six months, even after resettlement until such time these families could establish themselves in their birthplaces. Plans have been drawn up to assist the villagers in every possible manner to restart with their normal livelihood. Cadjans worth Rs.30,000/- per family have been provided to those whose houses in the interior of the villages were found to be damaged by wild Elephants. Rs.36 Million has been allocated for dry rations issued through G.A. Batticaloa for IDPs in Vellavelly and another Rs.36 Million for dry rations to those IDPs returning to Pattipola. Most of the farmers have lost their harvest and their farming implements during the last season due to displacement. Hence, arrangements have been made to provide a Mamoty and a Manna knife each to a Farmer in Vellavelly area. Agricultural implements, Seed material, Fertilizer, Agro-chemicals, Fishing gears are to be given to those who have been engaged in Farming and Fishing as their livelihood. It has also been decided to provide Rs.25,000/- financial assistance each per family to start their livelihood activities.

Improvement to Infrastructure facilities

Plans are underway to speedily develop the infrastructure facilities of the villages occupied by the IDPs as envisioned by H.E. the President. In this regard the following Hon. Ministers have taken the lead to visit the villages in order to assess the needs of the resettled people and to get first hand information:

Hon. Karu Jayasuriya, Minister of Public Administration, Hon. M.L. Abdul Majeed, Minister of Cooperatives, Hon. E.M. Jayaratne Herath, Minister of Health, Hon. M.I. Anver Ismail, Minister of Irrigation, Hon. M.S.S. Ameer Ali, Minister of Disaster Relief Services, Hon. Nirmala Kotalawela, Minister of Education Service, Hon. Neomal Perera, Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Hon. K.A. Bais, Deputy Minister of Livestock Development, Hon. Suresh Vadivel, Deputy Minister of Health, Hon. T.B. Ekanayake, Deputy Minister of Highways and Road Development, Hon. Susantha Punchinilame, Deputy Minister of Public Estate Management and Development.

Cooperative shops have been opened for the benefit of the villagers in Vellavelly area. Power supply has already been restored and assessment of damages to houses and buildings by NHDA Technical Officers is in progress at Vellavelly. Children of Vellavelly area have been issued with school uniforms and schools have been provided with new desks and chairs. With a view to providing clean drinking water, arrangements have been made to clean the abandoned wells for the benefit of the returnees. Most of the Institutions have started to function and are gradually returning to normal. Action has been initiated to revive in full swing the services required by the villagers. On the guidance of H.E. the President, Mahinda Rajapakse, full potential of the following services is to be tapped ie: Postal services, Police Stations, Telecommunications, Housing, Agriculture/Agrarian Services, Drinking water, Schools, Health Centers, Roads, Temples, Cooperatives and other essential services in areas under resettlement. In this respect, most Ministries have started to deliver the goods in keeping with needs of the villagers. From day one, Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services is in the forefront to make the returnees content in their respective birthplaces.

Victims of recent terrorist attack in Welioya area receive compensation

Hon. Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, visited Athavetunuwewa and Kiri Ibbanwewa in Welioya area on 24th June 2007. He met the victims in Athavetunuwewa Vidyalaya and Kiri Ibbanwewa and spoke to people in the area and inquired into the problems faced by them. He had very cordial discussions with the people of the area. Following the discussions Hon. Minister ceremonially handed over the compensation cheques to displaced families and persons injured in the same incident.

Following this function, certificates and sewing machines were presented at Athavetunuwewa to those who have completed training classes in sewing. In the afternoon another batch of girls who have successfully completed their training in sewing were also handed over sewing machines and awarded certificates to mark the completion of their training at Kabathigollewa Divisional Secretariat.



Compensation paid to next of kin of Chief Hindu Priest killed by terrorists.

During the visit of H.E. the President to Batticaloa District, Selliah Parameswara Kurukkal, Chief Priest, Shri Puthupillaiyar Temple, Santhively at a function held on 3.2.07 at Vakarai had blessed H.E. the President. Following this function, later the terrorists had gunned down the Priest. It has been decided to pay the next of kin of this Priest a sum of Rs. 500,000/- by this Ministry based on a cabinet decision.



Short break before leaving for their villages

IDPs return to Pattipola Area

Commencing from 1st June 2007, 6,397 families consisting of 21,405 persons have been successfully resettled in Pattipola on the guidance of H.E. the President, Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services and Ministry of Nation Building with the local agencies in the area.



Arrival of Rations for distribution



Kitchen utensils ready for distribution

Departments and Statutory Institutions under the Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services

- Development Support Unit
- National Disaster Management Centre
- Emergency Relief Unit
- Resettlement and Rehabilitation Authority of the North (RRAN) (Under Liquidation)
- Rehabilitation of Persons, Property and Industrial Authority (REPIA)

Subjects and Functions of the Ministry

- Implementation of plans and programmes for the resettlement of civilians affected by the war with the assistance of the Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development.
- Co-ordinate UNHCR/UNDP/World Bank/Asian Development Bank/other donor aided Projects related to re-settlement activities with the assistance of the Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development.
- Rehabilitation of persons and properties.
- Restoration of places of worship affected by the war and Tsunami.
- Resettlement of refugees.
- Co-ordination of re-settlement and development work.
- Assisting the relevant State Sector Organizations and NGOs in the restoration of normal civilian life.
- Facilitate co-ordination between the Government and Donor Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society in respect of re-settlement activities.
- Provision of essential services for displaced persons.
- Formulation and implementation of Projects and Programmes to provide emergency relief to the affected parties in disaster situations.
- Implementation of rescue operations under natural and man made disasters.
- Co-ordination with relevant authorities to provide relief facilities to the affected parties.

- Formulation and Implementation of Programmes to restore normal life and livelihood of people affected by natural and man made disasters.

REGAINING THE LOST GLORY

HIVE OF ACTIVITY IN VAAKARAI MAHA VIDYALAYA



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“Say yes to peace, and No to war”

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