

Masters of Science in Human Security

By

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Food Security Status of a Displaced

Community:

Study in Thirunavatkulam Village in

Vavuniya Divisional Secretariat Division -

Sri Lanka

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"The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Kishan Deheragoda and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any University for another Degree / Diploma".

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## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
A/L	Advance Level
CBO	Community Based Organization
CGES	Central Government of Essential Services
CPA	Center for Policy Alternatives
DS	Divisional Secretary
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EPRLF	Eelam People's Revaluation Liberation Front
ECHO	European Commission for Humanitarian Office
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FER	Food Expenditure Ratio
FHH	Female headed household
GN	Grama Niladhari divisions
HHs	Households
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCN	Mother and Child Nutrition Programme
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSFH	Medecian Sans Frontiers _Holand
MUAC	Mid Upper Arm Circumference
M/RRR	Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Reconciliation
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
O/L	Ordinary Level
PLOT	People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Programme
SL	Sri Lanka
TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nation High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
USCR	United States Commission for Refugees
WB	World Bank
WC	Welfare Center
WFP	World Food Programme

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**ABSTRACT**

The village of Thirunavatkulam, identified for the survey, is comprised of displaced people from the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi, who were resettled there in 1999.

Displacement, the adverse effects of a protracted conflict, non-availability and non-accessibility of food, unemployment and an unstable security environment have contributed to food insecurity. The food security survey reveals that displacement due to the prevailing adverse situation has threatened and deteriorated the food security situation of the internally displaced community in Thirunavatkulam. UNICEF's conceptual 'Framework of the Malnutrition' was taken as the model for immediate study to find the underlying and basic causes of food insecurity of the displaced.

The survey results reveal that the displaced population has adopted several mechanisms and strategies to cope with food insecurity; changing lifestyles during, and after, displacement. The foremost mechanism practiced among the households was reduction in numbers of meals. Eight six percent (86%) of the households reduced the frequency of meals; forty

eight percent (48%) borrowed food from relatives and neighbors; thirty eight percent (38%) changed their eating habits, selecting cheaper and bulky foods; twenty one percent (21%) of the households opted for alternative sources of food.

During the displacement the people of Thirunavatkulam struggled to have even one meal a day. Unavailability and inaccessibility of food were primary causes for such situation. Living conditions, such as living in unhygienic and wooden congested huts in the jungle, have worsened the situation. Although twenty six percent (26%) of the households surveyed now have two meals a day only eight percent (8%) meet their daily nutritional requirements with fifty three percent (53%) of them meeting them only on occasion

The Food Expenditure Ratio (FER) was one of the indicators used to measure the food security of the particular group. With FER increase the food insecurity also increases. In the survey of the village, it is observed that fifty nine percent (59%) and thirty one percent (31%) of the households surveyed, spend more than eighty percent (80%) and seventy percent (70%) of their income on food respectively. These FERs are an alarming indictment of the food insecurity of the prevailing situations.

There is no doubt that the war threaded food security and livelihoods of the people at Thirunavatkulam. The survey found that all families have lost access to their farming lands and houses after displacement. Certain number of families lost their productive assets due to frequent displacement from their places of origin. Livestock owners too left behind their animals during the displacement process

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 General Introduction

Food security is the capacity to obtain the required quantum of food rather than the ability to produce all food a country needs. Therefore, food security is defined as the “availability of adequate supply of food, which people can have access; to obtain their food needs at prices they can afford” The proposed paper intends to study the food security of the displaced people in Thirunavatkulam. Food security affects all the dimensions of human security such as environmental security, health security, economic security, personal and community security and political security.

The staple food of Sri Lanka is rice and during the 1980s almost ninety five per cent of the staple food rice requirements came from local production. The impact of globalization and industrialization on the agricultural sector as well as mass internal displacement are some of the factors that have a bearing on the economic and food security status.

Other significant factors, which are influencing the food security of the displaced people are loss of life, continuous displacement, disruption of food production, being cut off from market links and relief food, loss of employment and income and loss of livelihood.

The study area Thirunavatkulam is located within the Thandikulam GN Division in Vavuniya DS Division of Vavuniya District. This particular research looks into the underlying causes of food insecurity and the consequences as well as the coping

mechanisms and adjustment techniques of people towards food insecurity in the village Thirunavatkulam. Using retrospective research methods, their past living patterns, livelihoods, food patterns, consumption and utilization patterns will be assessed. Furthermore, the study focuses on the other parameters such as restriction of movement of people due to security measures, lack of employment opportunities and government food policies. No studies of food security in the district of Vavuniya have been made previously and thus this study will assess and bring to light the present situation and the nature of food insecurity among the displaced people.

The strategy used for primary data collection mainly emphasizes the utilization of well-designed survey questionnaires as well as participatory rural appraisal techniques. The survey questionnaire consists of opinion questions, open-ended questions, barrelled questions, statements and agreements, completion of sentences and case studies and events among forty-nine households (HHs). Therefore the accuracy of qualitative information is maintained whilst quantitative data collection is sustained.

A retrospective approach with statistical, graphical and mapping techniques is used to gather information by reviewing past events such as historical constructions, situations agriculture, crop patterns, food utilization, access and consumption. Displaced people are categorized into two types. They are Firstly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and secondly, Refugees. At the end of 2003, there were 17,690,900 refugees and 24, 600,000 IDPs in the world.

In Sri Lanka there were 185,000 displaced people living in relief camps and by the end of June 2004, more than 350,000 people continue to remain displaced in Sri Lanka. There were 44,733 IDPs living in Vavuniya District in November 2003. Forty nine households (11.6 %) of the total population have been surveyed at Thirunavatkulam.

On the whole, ninety per cent (44) of the families reports that in addition to the other reasons, food security of their households is seriously affected by their continuous displacement. However, only twelve per cent of the households report that the displacement is the only reason for their food insecurity. Twenty per cent of the household says that their food security is magnified by displacement and by unemployment. Sixteen per cent of them report that, the primary reason for the food insecurity is displacement, non availability and no accessibility to food items. Fifty nine per cent (28) of the households have lost livestock. Twelve per cent (6) of the households have lost their tools.

The government and humanitarian organizations, particularly the UN World Food Programme, have provided them with food commodities. However, survey illustrates that ninety-seven per cent of the IDPs after displacement were in a food insecurity situation with inadequate food. Eighty per cent of them depend entirely on foreign food assistance to meet their minimum requirements.

After the settlement in the village Thirunavatkulam seventy-four per cent of the households have experienced food insecurity. The statistical analysis shows that a mere ten per cent only feel food insecurity occasionally. Before displacement, all households were engaged

in multiple employment activities and food security was not a problem for them. However, in the village food insecurity has been devastated with the increase of unemployment and consequently the risk of food insecurity has increased.

Food Expenditure Ratio (FER) is an indicator used to measure nutritional welfare and food security of the households. FER expresses expenditure on food as a proportion of total household expenditure. Fifty nine per cent of the surveyed households spend more than eighty per cent of their total income on food. Another thirty-one per cent spend more than seventy per cent of their total income for food. Only six per cent spend forty per cent for food.

Two further influencing factors of household food security are water and sanitation. Fifty – three per cent of the HHs use unprotected wells. One of the strategies adopted to cope with food insecurity in Thirunavatkulam is reducing the size of their meals or indeed even skipping a whole day's meals during displacement. Forty-two per cent of the HHs surveyed reports that they have changed their food habits. Nineteen per cent of them have borrowed food from relatives and neighbours. Only two per cent of the HHs uses credit to purchase food. Another segment of thirty five per cent has gone for alternative sources of food.

The household size shows a direct relationship with the prevalence of food security and data illustrates how larger families have a higher rate of food insecurity than the smaller

families. In the surveyed village, household income is the primary factor to determine the food security.

Statistics shows that all the school-age children attend primary school but that the drop outs start in high school. Children with insufficient food in school face psychological and behavioural problems and furthermore, children with insufficient food do not interact with other children nor do they have many friends.

There is no doubt that war inevitably threatened the food security and livelihoods of the people at Thirunavatkulam. The survey finds that all families have lost access to their farming lands and houses after displacement. During the war a certain number of families lost their productive assets due to frequent displacement from their places of origin. Moreover, livestock owners left behind their animals during the displacement process. In addition to assets and wealth, many households missed or lost their family members.

## **1.2 Conceptualization**

Sri Lanka has experienced numerous periods of displacement. The country has been through a civil war for the past twenty years, resulting in almost one million people being displaced one or more times island wide (UNHCR 2001). Most of the IDPs are from the north and the east (80%). Twenty years of war have seriously affected the livelihoods of many people as they have been displaced several times. Furthermore, the war has claimed over 60,000 lives. Approximately twenty per cent of IDPs have been staying in