

**2004 DECEMBER 26 "TSUNAMI"
RESETTLEMENT OF THE EASTERN PROVINCE MUSLIM VICTIMS
IN THE BUFFER ZONE**

(M.I.M. MOHIDEEN)

Recommended Buffer Zone

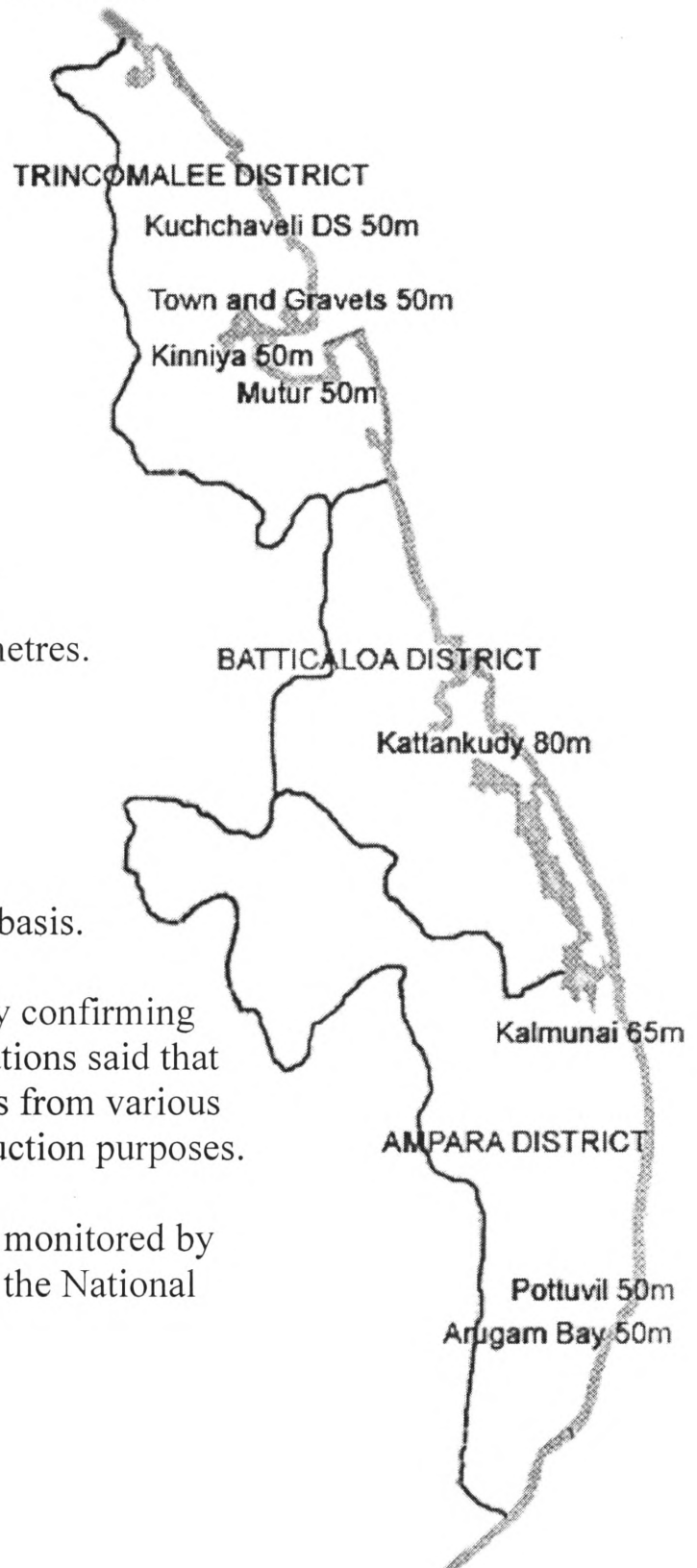
The government has relaxed the hotly-debated 100/200metre buffer zone due to the difficulties in finding alternate land to resettle the Tsunami affected people.

The buffer zone in Mutur, Kinniya, Kuchchaveli in the Trincomalee District has been relaxed to 60 metres, Kattankudy in Batticaloa District to 80 metres, Pottuvil and Arugambay to 50 metres, and Kalmunai to 65 metres in the Ampara District from the earlier 200 metres.

Former residents with in the buffer zone who were told to move out but wanted to return to their original location of residence, such instances would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Urban Development Ministry Secretary confirming the relaxation of the buffer zone regulations said that the revisions came after representations from various quarters seeking permission for construction purposes.

The approved reconstruction would be monitored by the Urban Development Authority and the National Housing Development Authority.



Resettlement

When we talk about planned resettlement of Muslim Tsunami victims of the Eastern Province in the buffer zone, we are talking about an extremely diverse population. In addition to their socio-economic differences, there are also other characteristics that need to be taken into account. These include ethnicity, religion, culture, age, health condition, and gender. All these factors need careful attention in the process of resettlement. If not, it can lead to serious problems.

The biggest challenge the Government is facing to-day is the immediate restoration of the lifestyle of the "Tsunami" affected people to normalcy. This requires reconstruction of their damaged houses and providing them livelihood assets.

For planning the rebuilding and resettlement programme in the buffer zone area, it is essential to have reliable and accurate information about the impact on the lives and properties destroyed by the "Tsunami". It is a complex process that should be handled with care with the full participation of all stakeholders at the grass roots level. If this is not done properly, it can have adverse effects on the quality of life of the victims.

The extent and the value of land and other assets owned by the affected families cannot be ignored in finding solutions to their resettlement problems. No arbitrarily designed resettlement should be imposed on helpless victims of Tsunami as such solutions are likely to aggravate the problems of the people who are already traumatized. Makeshift housing should be replaced by solidly built structures at a reasonable distance from the beach.

The Muslim areas and the families affected by the Tsunami in the Eastern Province are within the administrative and security control of Sri Lanka Government (GOSL). All those who are engaged in resettlement related activities should work within the framework of the local bodies. At present all the local bodies in the predominant Muslim Area in the Eastern Province stand dissolved and do not have the capacity to manage a massive planned resettlement and reconstruction programme of this magnitude.

The people affected expect individual attention and specific solutions to suit different families. The agencies that deal with issues of livelihood restoration will be required to visit each family and or household to find out how best they

can be assisted. This is a painstaking exercise but we have no choice in the matter if the objective is to ensure that people who lost their livelihoods regain their economic strength within a reasonable period of time.

The Muslim Reconstruction and Resettlement Organisation - MRRO conducted an assessment survey by visiting each and every family in the Tsunami effected Muslim areas in the Eastern Province to evaluate the damages to persons, residences and occupations of the Tsunami affected Muslim people.

Since some affected families were not available in their original places at the time of the survey, it was not possible to obtain the required details of all the victims. However we have obtained the informations from 20,091 families which is about 70% of the total Muslim victims in the Eastern Province.

1. Personal Destructions

Families	Population	Death					Injured				
		F	M	B	G	Total	F	M	B	G	Total
20091	81846	199	436	583	749	1967	1808	1407	1062	772	5049

F-Father, M-Mother, B-Boys, G-Girls

2. Residential Destructions Total

Families	Land Value	House Value	Total
15981	6,338,413,543 (US\$ 63,384,135.43)	5,895,458,940 (US\$ 58,954,589.40)	12,233,872,483 (US\$ 122,338,724.83)

3. Occupational Destructions

Families	Business Value	Other Value	Total
20091	1,768,518,711 (US\$ 17,685,187.11)	3,133,241,525 (US\$ 31,332,415.25)	4,901,760,236 (US\$ 49,017,602.36)

Total			17,135,632,719 (US\$ 171,356,327.19)
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Primary Objects - Muslim Reconstruction and Resettlement Organisation:

- i To ensure the safety and security of the Muslims displaced as a result of ethnic conflict and Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka.
- ii To protect and promote the welfare of the Muslims in Sri Lanka.
- iii To assess the needs of Muslims affected by ethnic violence and Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka.

- iv To obtain aid and support for the reconstruction and resettlement of Muslims affected by ethnic violence and Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka.
- v To reconstruct the Residential Houses, Business Premises, Educational, Religious and other properties of the Muslims affected as a result of ethnic violence and Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka.
- vi To resettle the Muslims displaced as a result of ethnic conflict and Tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka.

M.I.M. Mohideen,

Chairman/ Managing Director,

Muslim Reconstruction and Resettlement Organisation - MRRO

28 December 2005

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