



**Report of ADEPT Fact Finding Mission
to Mandapam Sri Lankan Refugees Camp
Dated 15 July 2006**

Background

Located on 287 acres on the Rameshwaram – Madurai National Highway, No.490, Mandapam refugee camp, was originally raised in 1917 by the British Raj. Then, it served as a transit facility for shipping laborers to work in the coffee, tea and rubber plantations in erstwhile Ceylon. After independence it continued as the property of the Sri Lankan government, and was purchased per the Srimao – Shashtri agreement of 1969 and converted into a repatriates camp for those returning back to India from Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government had originally constructed 107 Semi permanent houses. In 1969 1514 houses were added. Today there are 1955 houses of which 92 are under repair.

There are 3 types of housing:

1. Barrack type with Mangalore tiled roofing which form the majority
2. Barrack type with asbestos roofing
3. Barrack type with flat cement roofing

All of 150 sq. ft. single room accommodation with provision for a 3x3 ft. kitchenette alcove.

From 1969 to 1984 about 114,712 families of repatriates and refugees have passed through the camp and been returned to Sri Lanka. Prior to the current refugee influx there were 708 persons comprising 236 families were housed at the camp. From Jan 2006 till date more than 5500 refugees (1785 families with 2169 men, 1879 women, 968 boys, and 774 girls making a total of 5790 persons) have poured into the camp. In the last 45 days alone 872 families totaling 2915 persons have entered the camp.

Reception of Refugees:

The fishermen sight the refugees when they are off-loaded from Sri Lankan fast boats. They are dropped in close proximity to the coast in neck deep water depending on the tide. The Navy and Coast Guard located at Harichal point or Dhanushkodi act on the information and pick up the refugees. NGOs like the OFFER and JRS have positioned their representatives who get in touch to bring food. The refugees are given tea and buns and wait transportation.

From Harichal point to Dhanushkodi is 10 kms and only 4x4 vehicles can ply due to the sandy bars. The police bring them to C3 Dhanushkodi police station

Action at the police station:

The police take the fingerprint, photographs and note of all the belongings and prepare a list. They wait the whole day in the police station compound, which has only one toilet for the staff, which is also used by others. They are fed by the Government in the compound. At the end of the day when no more refugees are expected they are



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transported to Mandapam camp. The people are under stress and tension and look for medicines which are not available. They also wait at the camp for completion of various formalities. The formalities includes checking by the CB-CID/Q branch, CID, Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the revenue officials. At the end of it the following documents are prepared/provided.

- a. Refugee ID card
- b. Refugee Ration card
- c. Refugee Data Dossier
- d. Bedding
- e. Utensils
- f. Ration

At the completion of all those documents they are sent into “Quarantine” for 72 hours, which is utilized in cross-interrogation. The men are kept in separate enclosures. Those that have least suspicious of political leaning/ sympathy are separated and sent to special camp located in Chenglepet. Others are then allotted with accommodation and sent to their residence. Till date from Jan – June only 12 such cases have been sent to Chenglepet as per the DIG of SLR police.

Accommodation

The accommodation slate is as under

S.No	Type of house	Old	Semi Permanent	Total
a.	Total Houses	755	1200	1955
b.	Loss under Repair	42	50	92
c.	Fit for occupation	713	1150	1863
d.	Occupied	668	614	1282
e.	Balance for Occupation	45	536	581

The houses are laid down in Barracks type in a linear pattern consisting of 20 dwellings. Each barrack has bathroom and toilets co-located but are common to the community of men and women. There are houses with asbestos roofing as well as flat cement roof. The flooring is of cement and needs extensive repair. The size of each dwelling per family is 10 x 15 = 150 sq. ft.

Toilets/ Bathrooms

The toilets are as under:

S.No	Particulars	Old	Makeshift	Total
a.	Total No. of toilets	713	300	1013
b.	Under use	72	110	182
c.	Damage and requires extensive repairs	641	190	831



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Permanent toilets are available but due to disuse in previous years and vandalism, they have been blocked and cannot be used. Therefore makeshift toilets have been set up. The toilets were neglected, due to less occupancy during previous, and no preventive maintenance was carried out. Some of the toilets require extensive repairs to roof and seats. The bathrooms are in similar state of repair and there is no running water in the many of the bathrooms. So the inmates bathe in the open beside the wells. The refugees themselves have erected palm thatch partition for privacy.

Water facilities:

Water for the entire camp comes from the following water source. Water is inadequate. The table gives the details:

S.No	Particulars	Total
a.	Mother wells inter connected to each other	04
b.	Small wells functional but requiring repairs and dredging/cleaning	73
c.	Overhead tanks	04
d.	Taps	434

People collect their water from taps and store it in vessels, buckets. Water taps are functional. Toilets and bathrooms have no water connections. The individuals have to carry the water.

Electricity

There is no power supply most of the time. When supply is available power is supplied between 6 PM and 6 AM the next day. Each individual house has a single point only with no meter. It can take in one light bulb. No fans or plug point exits in any houses. Vandals have taken away many of the fittings and wiring. The streets are not lighted in the night.

S.No	Particulars	Total
a	Total no. of houses	1863
b	With electrical connections (no power)	980
c	Without connection	883

Roads

The roads have been laid out and connect all accommodations. However they are in bad conditions and require extensive repairs.

Hygiene/Sanitation

Sullage is drained through open drainage channels. Sewage is drained through underground channels. All channels lead to a central well from which the material is pumped into the sea. Drainage exists and all the sullages are drained in a central well



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and then pumped out into the sea. There are a of total of 17 conservancy staff employed in the camp.

Health:

A 20-bedded hospital is located with in the camp but at a distance from the living accommodation. The hospital is well laid out. The following are the staff:

a. Doctors	03
b. Nurses	05
c. ANM	01
d. Lab Assistant	01
e. Scavenger	02
f. cook	01

The hospital has no electricity. Because of poor utilization in past years most equipment has not been maintained and is under repair. Any patient who becomes seriously ill is transferred to district hospital at Ramanathapuram. Others have to attend the out patient facility at the hospital if they fall sick. There is an ambulance which is under repair and does not run.

Malnutrition is visible among the children, among the fresh refugees as well as the old ones. The refugees suffer from the psychological effects of conflict, sudden migration, their refugee status, poverty, dependency on dole and doubts about their future.

Sustenance:

Each family is given the following stipend per month.

a. Head of the family	Rs. 200/ per head
b. Next adult	Rs. 144/ per head
c. First child	Rs. 90/ per head
d. Next child	Rs. 45/ per head

This is paid bi-monthly. A pay as well as physical check parade is held and each individual is paid. Presently they have permanent residents as well as those who are reporting to the camp.

Rations:

All refugees who are reporting now are under quarantine, and for them centralized food is provided in the quarantine area. All other inmates are given uncooked rice as per below:

a. Every male and female adult per head per day	500 gms
b. Every child per head per day	400 gms

They also get 5 liters of Kerosene per head per month

They have to purchase all other provisions at the Government provision store in the camp.



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Livelihood:

Inmates are allowed to seek employment outside the camp in local villages, upon obtaining a permit to do so. They are allowed to leave the camp at 6 am and have to report back by 6 pm. They usually get employed as daily wage laborers at Rs. 20 or 30 per day. Those who are skilled can get employed as painters, carpenters and masons at a much better remuneration that makes them the “haves” in the camp. There are many young men in their teens who are married due to the social requirement in the conflict ridden areas in Sri Lanka for young girls to be married in their teens for safety and security. These young men move aimlessly around the camp without any work.

There is, thus, a social rift between the “haves” and the “have-nots”

Education:

Children have to pay Rs. 65 each for schooling and many children do not attend school as they cannot afford it.