



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE REFUGEES IN A PROTRACTED CAMP LIFE CONDITION

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**ABSTRACT** The researcher focuses on the problems of refugees associated with protracted camp life condition as pertaining to Sri Lankan Refugees spread out in 103 camps across the state of Tamil Nadu, India. The protracted stay of twenty six years (1990-2016) in refugee camps gives rise to the development of problems of socio-economic nature. The thrust of the research is to study and describe the life of Sri Lankan refugees in a protracted camp life condition in Tamil Nadu with special reference to socio-economic aspects. Stratified random sampling method is adopted in this research with 400 respondents from eight refugee camps by using directions like east, west, north and south. Interview schedule is used for collecting primary data. The major findings with conclusion and recommendations are illustrated in the full paper. It also tries to make it understood the role played by the Tamil Nadu State Government in protecting the refugees.

**KEYWORDS :** Socio-economic problem, refugee, protracted camp life

### INTRODUCTION:

Since 1990, People from Sri Lanka have sought refuge in Tamil Nadu due to ethnic war as refugees. The refugees crossed 32 kilometres stretch popularly known as 'Palk Straight' across the Gulf of Mannar and reached the Indian shore, Rameshwaram by boats. Obviously this movement of people has not been inspired by the hope of a better standard of living. There are no midnight knocks; what is more, their wives and daughters can move about freely without fear (C.Amalraj 1997). Their dwelling places today are called 'Ceylon Refugee Camp'. Confined to tiny huts with makeshift camps, congested and overcrowding go-down type camps and with restriction of movement for work there, their life goes on. According to Tamil Nadu Rehabilitation Department (2005), there are 103 camps across the State of Tamil Nadu with a population of 50,703 with 13,333 families living in refugee camps. The government of Tamil Nadu provides them with; (V.Suryanarayan & V.Sudersen 2000)

- Temporary housing with 10 x 10 square feet housing with huts in open space
- Housing in government owned go-downs as well as private go-downs and Government hostels

They are also provided with medical care and education free of cost up to secondary education. Other types of assistance extended to them are as follows. (Policy Note 2006-07 & Public Department, Tamil Nadu)

**Cash Doles:** It was and is being distributed to the refugees twice a month by cash.

	Up to 2007	From 2008 Onwards
For adult (head)	Rs.200 per month	Rs.1000 per month
For each additional adult	Rs.144 per month	Rs.500 per month
For first child	Rs. 90 per month	Rs.400 per month
For each additional child	Rs. 45 per month	Rs.200 per month

**Rice:** It is being supplied to them through the Public distribution outlets and through the shops run by the Co-operative Institutions of Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation; at the subsidised rate of 0.57 paise per kg, at the rate of 400 grams per adult per day and at the rate of 200 grams per child per day.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** As many researches as possible had been undertaken at the global level on the issues of refugees. According to UN, 'if people are staying in camps in other countries for a period of five years with the population of 20,000, then it is said to be a prolonged stay'. Perhaps Sri Lankan refugees are stranded in a protracted condition living in camps. The reviews that follow would give a proper understanding of a refugee camp at the global level. Edith Bowels (1998) used the word 'camp' to describe both 'small and larger' where they are more dependent on assistance. Camp life is the most problematic one. For Bowels, it is the increased dependence of camp dwellers that is perhaps of most concern. C. Amalraj (1997) stated that initially Tamil Nadu government accommodated the refugees in an ad hoc shelter. Camp sites were a yard, market place, rice go-downs or even open air toilets. Hutments put up for just a month in

1990 continue to shelter some 58,000 Sri Lankan Tamils in 100 camps in Tamil Nadu. Physical conditions in the camps are deplorable. The extensive damage to physical surroundings has reduced the camps to a culture of slums. House in temporary hutments made of tar sheets, the scorching heat makes life in the camp intolerable. T.S.Subramanian (2006) highlighted the salient features of refugee camps in Tamil Nadu with socio-cultural dimensions. There are signs of decay and neglect everywhere. The independent houses, in disuse for long are in dilapidated condition, with cracked walls and broken roofs and bushes all around. The row-houses where refugees live are in a state of disrepair and the bathroom and toilet facilities are virtually non-existent. Arafat Jamal (2003) in a 'Study on Camps and Freedoms', explained that a protracted condition is one which refugees find themselves in a long lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk but their rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. All these reviews picturesquely portray the naked reality of refugee condition in camps and make the researchers add to the literature building and improve refugee life.

**METHODOLOGY:** The specific objective of the research is to study the socio-economic condition of the refugees

### Hypotheses of the study:

- There is a significant difference between the occupation and the monthly income of the household heads.
- There is significant difference between income earned by the household heads and camps. (Comparison of monthly income by Camps)

**Area of Study:** The researcher made a research study on 8 camps out of 103 camps spread out across the state. They are Gummidipoondi, Chinnappallikuppam, Mettupatti, Bhavanisagar, Kottapattu, Lenavilakku, Sevalur and Naranammalpuram. The rural-based and urban-based are listed below.

Rural-Based Camps	Urban-Based Camps
Chinnappallikuppam	Gummidipoondi
Mettupatti	Bhavanisagar
Lenavilakku	Kottapattu
Sevalur	Naranammalpuram

**Research Design & Sampling Method:** Descriptive design is adopted in this research. While the universe of the study was 103 camps, to get a representative sample from all the camps, the camps were divided into four-regions namely Chennai in the North, Coimbatore in the West, Trichy in the Centre, Tirunelveli in the South. From each of these Stratum, one rural-based camp and one urban-based camp was taken at random. Thus totally eight camps were taken for the study. From each camp, fifty house-holds heads were selected at random. For this purpose the sampling design followed in the study was two-stage stratified random sampling with 400 respondents.

**Sources of Data:** The interview schedules fulfils the primary sources and the secondary sources were collected through the Refugee sited books, Reputed Journals, Periodicals, Research Reports, News Papers

and Magazines. **Statistical Tools Used:** The researcher has applied standard statistical tools like One way ANOVA in this research.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:** The economic and social dimensions are main concern of this research study and perhaps both dimensions are dealt with and analysed below with interpretations. Primarily the economic dimension is done.

**Formulated Hypothesis – 1 :** There is a significant difference between the occupation and the monthly income of the household heads.

**Test Used - One Way ANOVA**

**Table – 1 Comparison of monthly income by Occupation**

Employment	N	Mean (Monthly income)	Std Deviation	F	Significance
Advertisement Board Preparation	1	1500.0000	---	5.886	0.000
Artist	2	2000.0000	0.00000		
Blacksmith	4	1000.0000	0.00000		
Business	7	1571.4286	188.98224		
Coolie	144	1629.8611	674.13035		
Farmer	3	2000.0000	0.00000		
Painter	23	2017.3913	644.31230		
Plumber	1	1500.0000	---		
Tailor	36	1338.8889	856.58050		
Teacher	20	665.0000	293.84027		
Driver	10	1620.0000	493.96356		
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1541.0359</b>	<b>719.22828</b>		

(Note: 149 respondents are unemployed and they are not taken to analysis)

The above table shows the value of F is 5.886 and the corresponding significant value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. So there is significant difference in the average monthly income of the household heads among the occupation groups. The Occupational groups like Artist, Farmer, Painter have more income of Rs.2000 & above than the other groups. It is observed that the respondents who have been involved in semiskilled work like Artist, Painter and farming have higher income compared to other occupational groups with Rs.2000 & above. After the digital era, especially from the year 2002 onwards, the Artists face the problem of unemployment. And it is to find here that the farmers get more income, because of its location. Though Sevalur camp is located in a rural setting, people go for farming work like plantain that grow during the season. At the same time during non-seasonal time of agriculture the people work in match industries at Sivakasi and plantain groves in and around. Those who are involved in teaching get low income compared to all other occupational groups with Rs.665. For, they are involved in teaching in the evening tuition centres in camps only for three hours. *Therefore the Research hypothesis is accepted and Null hypothesis is rejected.*

**Formulated Hypothesis – 2:** There is significant difference between income earned by the household heads and camps. (Comparison of monthly income by Camps)

**Test Used : ONE WAY ANOVA**

**Table – 2 Comparison of monthly income by Camps**

S. No	Camp	N	Mean	Std Deviation	F	Sig
1.	Kottapattu	28	1721.4286	622.03795	2.772	0.009
2.	Mettupatti	32	1687.5000	972.69164		
3.	Gummidipoondi	38	1283.5526	655.90551		
4.	Bhavanisagar	24	1345.833	658.08792		
5.	Lenavilakku	34	1785.2941	598.04345		
6.	Chinnappallikuppam	35	1300.7143	681.59862		
7.	Naranammalpuram	31	1659.6774	620.27136		
8.	Sevalur	29	1581.0345	730.99905		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1541.0359</b>	<b>719.22828</b>		

It can be seen from the above table that the observed value of F is 2.772 and the corresponding significance value is 0.009 which is less than 0.05. So there is significant difference in the average monthly income

of the household heads among the camps. The respondents residing in camps, Kottapattu, Mettupatti, Lenavilakku and Naranammalpuram have slightly higher income compared to other camps based on their occupation.

It is inferred that Kottapattu and Naranammalpuram are located in a town setting, Trichy and Sankar Cements, Sankar Nagar, Tirunelveli respectively. They have access to better employment and earning. Though Mettupatti is located on a dry rocky ground in an interior place, it is surrounded by Poultry-yards. People somehow find employment in the poultry yards. And Sevalur is a rural based camp with agriculture as the main occupation. During non-seasonal period, people move to Sivakasi and find employment in match industries. Therefore there is a significant difference in the income of the household heads and the camps. *Therefore the Research hypothesis is accepted and Null hypothesis is rejected.*

**SOCIAL DIMENSION: Physical Setting of the Camp:** In any refugee's situation, the infrastructure facility is to be provided to the refugees by the host country concerned. The refugees in Tamil Nadu are provided with basic infrastructure facilities like housing, drinking water, toilets, electricity etc. Such provisions are furnished and analysed below.

**Table – 3. Location of the Camps and the Type of Housing**

S. No	Camp	Location of the Camps	Type of housing (10 x 10)		Resp
			Beginning	Now	
1	Kottapattu	Urban	Terraced Building	Terraced Building	50
2	Mettupatti	Dry Rocky Hill	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
3	Gummidipoondi	Industrial	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
4	Bhavanisagar	Dam Site	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
5	Lenavilakku	Open Space	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
6	Chinnappallikuppam	Open Space	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
7	Naranammalpuram	Go-down	Bricks roofing	Bricks roofing	50
8	Sevalur	Rural	Huts with tin/paper sheets	Huts with coconut leaves	50
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>400</b>

From the above table, it is observed that Open space camps are Lenavilakku and Sevalur with 100 respondents of 50 each. The other types of camps are Go-down, Dry rocky hill, Dam site, Urban, Industrial and Rural from which 50 respondents are taken from each camp. It also explains the type of housing in which refugees live. Naranammalpuram is a go-down type camp, which has got brick roofing. It is a hall, partitioned with plastic sheets to separate each family. Kottapattu is a special camp, which is urban centred with terraced building. Each family is given a room. All the other camps are of huts nature. In the beginning of 1990's as they arrived, the Government of Tamil Nadu put up 10 x 10 inches housing with tin/paper sheets. But as people got settled, they slowly converted them into huts with coconut leaves, spending from their earnings. Every time they spend money on repairing.

**Toilet: Sphere Project :** It is based on two core beliefs, first that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict. Secondly that those people affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance.

**Key indicators:**

- A maximum of 20 people use each toilet. In case of conflict situation one toilet for 50 people.
- Separate toilets for women and men are available in public places

**Table – 4 . Toilet Facility**

S.No	Camp	Toilets built by Govt and NGO	In Use	Total population of the camp	Average
1	Kottapattu	100	30	1435	47.8
2	Mettupatti	20	10	660	66
3	Gummidipoondi	74	50	2485	49.7
4	Bhavanisagar	40	30	2445	81.5
5	Lenavilakku	10	5	766	153
6	Chinnapallikuppam	18	6	721	120
7	Naranammalpuram	28	10	561	56.1
8	Sevalur	---	---	231	---
<b>Total</b>					

The table above shows that the camps like Kottapattu and Gummidipoondi fulfil the expectation of the sphere project - One toilet per 50 people in case of conflict situation. Kottapattu is a well established camp. Gummidipoondi is spacious, accommodating more number of refugees. Therefore the minimum requirement is fulfilled. All the other camps, Mettupatti, Bhavanisagar, Lenavilakku, Chinnapallikuppam, Naranammalpuram and Sevalur are beyond the standard of Sphere Project. It means that one toilet is used by more than 50 people. Lenavilakku, and Chinnapallikuppam camps' toilets are over used with 153 and 120 persons per toilet. As a consequence people have diseases.

**Water Facility:** Water is essential for life, health and human dignity. In extreme situation, there may not be sufficient water available to meet basic needs and in these cases supplying a survival level of safe drinking water is of critical importance. More importantly, main health problems are caused by poor hygiene. It is owing to lack of water and by use and intake of contaminated water.

**Key Indicators :**

- 250 people per tap
- 500 people per hand-pump
- 400 people per single-user open well

**Table – 5: Water Facility**

S. No	Camp	Tap	Hand Pump	Total population of the camp	Average Tap	Average Hand pump
1	Kottapattu	8	4	1435	179.375	358.75
2	Mettupatti	8	--	660	82.5	--
3	Gummidipoondi	7	9	2485	355	276
4	Bhavanisagar	6	--	2445	407.5	---
5	Lenavilakku	--	4	766	---	191.5
6	Chinnapallikuppam	2	1	721	360.5	721
7	Naranammalpuram	2	2	561	280.5	280.5
8	Sevalur	2	---	231	115.5	---
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9304</b>	<b>1780.875</b>	<b>1827.75</b>

It is observed from the above table that Kottapattu, Mettupatti, Gummidipoondi and Sevalur camps fulfil the required taps recommended by the Sphere Projects. The other camps like Bhavanisagar, Chinnapallikuppam and Naranammalpuram the taps are over used with more than 250 people per tap.

**MAJOR FINDINGS:**

- The Occupational groups like Artist, Farmer, Painter have more income of Rs.2000 & above than the other groups. (Table.1)
- Those who are involved in teaching get low income as compared with other occupational groups with Rs.665. (Table.1)
- The respondents residing in camps, Kottapattu, Mettupatti, Lenavilakku and Naranammalpuram have slightly higher income compared to other camps based on their occupation. (Table.2)
- In the beginning of 1990's as they arrived, the Government of Tamil Nadu put up 10 x 10 inches housing with tin/paper sheets. But as people got settled, they slowly converted them into huts with coconut leaves, spending from their earnings. (Table.3)

- Camps like Kottapattu and Gummidipoondi fulfil the expectation of the sphere project - One toilet per 50 people in case of conflict situation. Kottapattu is a well established camp. Gummidipoondi is spacious, accommodating more number of refugees. All the other camps, Mettupatti, Bhavanisagar, Lenavilakku, Chinnapallikuppam, Naranammalpuram and Sevalur are beyond the standard of Sphere Project. It means that one toilet is used by more than 50 people. Lenavilakku, and Chinnapallikuppam camps' toilets are over used with 153 and 120 persons per toilet. As a consequence people have diseases. (Table.4)
- Kottapattu, Mettupatti, Gummidipoondi and Sevalur camps fulfil the required taps recommended by the Sphere Projects. The other camps like Bhavanisagar, Chinnapallikuppam and Naranammalpuram, the taps are over used with more than 250 people per tap. (Table.5)

**CONCLUSION:**

In a refugee condition, income plays a pivotal role. The income of refugees is low to maintain a family. A few camps have a slight higher income due to the availability of work. The use of toilet is overdone and as a result, communicable diseases could easily be spread. Water is essential. To get the water is a problem in a refugee condition and they lack the taps for use of water. The basic physical need of a human being is to have shelter that also is under risk in a camp condition. With all odd situation, the Government tries its best to give protection to the refugees.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Govt could provide more toilet facilities
- The houses could be repaired and be maintained.
- Refugee market could be created in smaller and bigger towns where they could sell their artifacts and eventually would increase their income for their livelihood. (Like Tibetan Refugee Bazar in Gorakhpur town in Uttar Pradesh).

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