

VOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT IN SAFETY & WITH DIGNITY: A ROAD MAP

The following action points or road map could be implemented in order to ensure that a sustainable and voluntary resettlement process is implemented:

- 1. A thorough security assessment has been conducted to ensure that IDPs are not resettled in any place where their life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk.**
 - The Government (SLA and civilian authorities) in collaboration with other relevant actors (MAG, UNDP Mine Action) should ensure that places of return are safe, free of mines and unexploded ordnance.
 - The Government should provide assurances to the IDPs and to humanitarian actors that return sites are not near current or future military installations or high security zones.
 - Security measures (including checkpoints) are in place to ensure that there is a low likelihood of renewed shelling or fighting, and that paramilitary groups are not present in areas of return.
 - Civilian police stations and patrols should be established.
 - Mine awareness training and awareness-raising programmes should be conducted for IDPs in places of displacement prior to any go & see visits or organised return. Local government officials from Vaharai should also receive similar training. Special programmes targeting children should also be conducted.

- 2. Basic infrastructure should be in place to ensure that a sustainable and dignified return is possible.**
 - Once the security condition is conducive to safe travel within Vaharai (i.e. demining and UXO clearance is completed), the Government should undertake a multi-sectoral (protection, livelihood, shelter, wat/san, education, health and other infrastructure) assessment mission to determine whether the conditions for voluntary resettlement are in place and begin planning for eventual return. Humanitarian agencies can be included in such assessments and planning for return.
 - Depending upon the outcome of the assessment, the Government should prepare a return plan including return transportation and return assistance packages (shelter, food and livelihood assistance). The return plan should incorporate a categorization of areas of return in terms of security, infrastructure and other considerations. Areas of return should be prioritized accordingly. Humanitarian agencies can be included in preparing the return plan and in developing return assistance packages.
 - As indicated above, the return plan could include proposals for the following:
 - Restoration of civil administration offices and functions, including documentation services (restoration of lost and/or damaged land title, birth, death, marriage certificates and other Government-issued documentation including driving licenses and vehicle registration);
 - Provision of basic shelter and housing reconstruction assistance (UNHCR and partner agencies that provide assistance with shelter should be provided with adequate time to put in place structures and essential services (shelter, water and sanitation facilities) that meet basic international standards);
 - Food assistance and provision of potable water;

- Restoration of essential medical services;
- Reconstruction of schools and resumption of education programmes;
- Restoration of places of worship;
- Restoration of public transportation infrastructure and services (road and bridge reconstruction, public transportation, etc.);
- Security measures that promote and respect the human rights of returnees, including respect for freedom of movement (within and to/from the area of return);
- Re-establishment of Piradesha Seyalagams, and other community organisations that will enable the population to participate in the planning and management of their return and reintegration. These structures will support the sustainability of return by supporting communities to develop their own coping mechanisms;
- Establishment of Government programmes to assist in the restitution of property and possessions of returnees. When restitution is not possible, the Government should provide appropriate compensation or other forms of reparation. The application procedures for restitution and compensation programmes should be publicised and accessible;
- Development and implementation of livelihood activities, particularly in areas where returnees will not be able to resume their previous livelihood activities (e.g. alternative livelihood opportunities for fishermen if fishing restrictions are implemented); and
- Re-establishment of Government assistance programmes including food assistance and pension schemes.

3. Ensuring that IDPs make a Free, Fully Informed and Voluntary Decision to be Resettled.

- Local government authorities should undertake an information campaign in displacement sites, in which UNHCR and other agencies can participate, on the following issues: conditions in places of origin, return/reintegration assistance to be provided (including restitution and compensation), the principle of voluntariness, etc.
- Focus groups should be facilitated to discuss return and assess IDP concerns and how they can be addressed in greater detail. These groups should be representative of the diversity of the community and include men, women, youth, the elderly, Government servants, fishermen, farmers, etc.
- Local government authorities should organise go & see visits once the security situation has been assessed as safe. The following considerations should be taken into consideration in planning for go & see visits:
 - Because the objective of go & see visits is to give the IDPs a fair idea of how their areas of return look like in terms of security, infrastructure, livelihood, food security, health as well as civil authority and the presence of non-governmental organizations, go & see visits should only be organised after basic infrastructure repairs have begun.
 - Go & see visits can be organised in order of priority of resettlement according to the 3 step plan provided at the 6 February meeting (1st phase: Kathiravelly; Puchchakkerny; Palchchenai; Ammanthanavelly; Vaharai North; Uriyan Kattu;

Vaharai Central; Mankerny Central; and Mathurankernikulam; 2nd phase: Kattumurivu and Kirimichchai; 3rd phase: Panichchankerny and Kaddumurivu).

- Volunteers for the go & see visits who are representative of the diversity of the community (men, women, children, elderly, etc) can be identified during focus groups.
 - The go & see visits should be organised by the Government, including security escort for the go & see visit. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies such as IOM can provide support.
 - Following the go & see visits, meetings should be organised to disseminate and discuss the information obtained during the go & see visit.
 - More than one go & see visit may be necessary to enable IDPs to make a fully informed and voluntary decision to resettle. The Government should facilitate these visits.
- The Government should undertake a registration of the IDP population who wish to return (this can be based upon the basic registration currently being implemented by the Ministry of Nation Building & Estate Infrastructure Development and the Government Agent Batticaloa with the support of UNHCR).
 - UNHCR and other agencies should be given free and unhindered access to ascertain the voluntary nature of the decision.
 - An IDP's decision not to resettle should be respected and guaranteed. The provision or withholding of assistance should not be used to influence this decision.

4. Organizing IDP return

- The Government should organise return movement and transportation together with IOM, including preparation of return manifests. The principle of family unity should be incorporated into planning for return, including in the preparation of return manifests and in the provision of transportation to places of return.
- UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies should be provided with free and unhindered access to areas of return in order to (i) assist IDPs in their return and reintegration and (ii) monitor the resettlement of IDPs to ensure that their protection and assistance needs are met
- All assistance and the criteria for receipt of assistance should be appropriately publicised to ensure that all returnees can be assisted and are aware of their entitlements.

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