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Internally displaced persons remaining in camps
- who are they, why do they stay?

A case study of internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

*Internally displaced persons remaining in camps*

- *who are they, why do they stay?*

Essay in Political Science C, by Rebecka Johansson, fall 2004

This essay is a case study of internally displaced persons in camps in the district of Vavunyia in northern Sri Lanka. The main question was; *Why do some internally displaced persons remain in camps when many displaced people already have settled elsewhere?* The aim of this study was to examine why some people stay in camps even after a ceasefire agreement has been signed and though many people already have settled. The literature on solutions of conflict-induced displacement is not conceptually rich or theoretically exact. Therefore this study also tried to make a model for analysing why some individuals remain in camps. The model is based on the political scientist Robert Dahl theories on “political resources”. The concept used in this essay is “personal resources”. The personal resources examined were social situations and land and property ownerships and political and legal rights. The study assumes from the hypothesis that the remaining people in camps lack these personal resources which are of importance for their ability and motivation to settle outside the camps. The personal resources have been divided into structural and agential factors.

The result of this study suggests that the given hypothesis was right; the remaining displaced persons lack most of the examined personal resources. Their social situation was characterised by low status, small social network in the place they fled from, low education and unskilled work. A majority of the displaced who remained in the camps were landless. Until recently their legal right to choose settlement was restricted. The only personal resource that the majority of the displaced possessed was the political right to vote. The lack of personal resources affects both the displaced persons’ ability and motivation to find a durable solution.

Worthy to note is that it is impossible to draw clear distinctions between what is to be seen as agential and structural factors. Landlessness which in the introduction was categorised as a structural factor was proved to also constitute an agential factor as it affects people’s motivation to return.

The study shows that the circumstances surrounding internally displaced persons are complex and constitute many obstacles to their possibility to find permanent settlements. The most obvious factors, like not having any place to return to and deprivation of the legal rights of choice of settlement, can be the most important explanations.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem
At the end of 2004, the total number of people in the world displaced within their own countries by conflict or human rights violations amounted to roughly 25 million. For four years this figure had remained almost unchanged. This means that for every displaced person who was forced out of his or her home, there was another person having been able to return over the past few years. In 2004, as in the year before, nearly three million were newly displaced, while almost as many were able to go back to their homes. The overwhelming majority, some 22 million people, have been displaced for more than a year; many of them for a decade or even longer. The average length of the conflicts that caused displacement was 14 years. For most of these long-term IDPs, 2004 was just another year without tangible improvements with regard to their ability to exercise their right of return and other fundamental rights and freedoms (www.idpproject.org).

Internally displaced people have recently emerged as an issue of international concern arising out of the changed political environment from the end of the Cold War and growing awareness of the consequences of (and potential refugee flows from) internal conflicts. A willingness to intervene on behalf of internally displaced also emerged from a more expansive interpretation of sovereignty, and the rights for states to provide protection and assistance within the territory of offending states. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, developed an interest in working with internally displaced persons in the early 1990s in order to ensure “preventive protection” for would-be refugees. So far the attention has primarily been devoted to ensuring the displaced people’s protection and assistance during conflicts. The question of resolutions has got less attention (Muggah, 2003, p. 5f).

There are three alternative solutions for internally displaced persons, analogous to the classic three durable solutions sought for refugees; repatriation (return), local integration and resettlement (Newland, 2003, p. 98). Although most internally displaced people settle spontaneously, significant proportions have problems with finding a durable solution and remain in planned camps administered and managed by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Camps for internally displaced persons have been used across a range of cases, from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Somalia, Angola and Sri Lanka (Muggah, 2003, p. 14). These camps are often described as “holding tanks” or “large… crowded sights that are… dependent on assistance” (Black, 1998). The camp model has been roundly criticized. Objectives such as the promotion of self-sufficiency and self-reliance are usually left unmet. Dependency is
an often used explanation for why some individuals stay in these camps even when the conflict, which caused the displacement, has ended (Black, 1998).

Who are the displaced persons who remain in the camps? Why do the displaced persons stay in the camps? Have the displaced people any alternative to their stay in the camps? This essay tries to find an answer to why some people remain in camps when a conflict has eased and many have settled outside the camp.

1.2 Aim

Published literature on solutions of conflict induced displacement is not as conceptually rich or theoretically exact as in the development field. One of the reasons why it has been slow to develop is because the humanitarian community attaches more value to aid delivery and implementation than to reflection and research. While there is a growing literature on IDPs there is very little theoretical work on their settlement (Muggah, 2003, p. 6f). The aim of this essay is to, by a theoretical framework, examine some eventual explanatory factors to why some people remain in camps.

Researchers in the internal migration field have found problems with the dominant language of humanitarian and human rights actors and researchers which generalises, objectifies and decontextualises so as to omit much of social, cultural and historical circumstances. This leads to a transformation of the individual stories of internally displaced into stereotypical accounts of the “typical internally displaced persons”, devoid of his/her particular history and identity (NTNU, 2003, p. 11).

A significant number of displaced people never go back home when a conflict has ended. While many people return to their homes, integrate locally or resettle elsewhere, some remain in camps for ages under dire conditions. An usual explanation is “dependency”, which implies that the people have become passive and reluctant to take responsibility for their own lives (Black, 1998).

The aim of this study is to examine why some people stay in camps even after a ceasefire agreement has been signed and though many people already have settled. The study assumes from the hypothesis that the remaining people in camps lack some personal resources which are of importance for their ability and motivation to settle outside the camps. By focusing on personal resources the study also gives a portrait of the remaining people in the camp. The personal resources explored are developed out of general information based on experiences from
different countries. The study contains a case study of the internally displaced people in camps in northern Sri Lanka. The reason for choosing Sri Lanka is because Sri Lanka has had a civil war that lasted for nearly two decades, and which caused displacement for more than one million people. In 2002 a ceasefire agreement was signed and many people returned home. Between 2002 and 2003 some 260 000 internally displaced persons returned to their homes, but still some people remain in camps fall 2004. Some of them have stayed in camps for almost a decade (UNHCR, 2003, p. 9ff).

This is an explanatory study which intends to examine possible explanations to why some internally displaced persons remain in camps.

1.3 Earlier studies

The question of resolving the problems of displacement are commonly framed as “when does displacement end?” (Brune, 2003; Newland, 2003, p. 97). The focus here is on the prerequisites for finding a durable solution.

1.3.1 Prerequisites for resolution

*Peace and physical safety*

Peace and physical safety are the usual prerequisites to a resolution of conflict-induced internal displacement. A “cold war” can create disputes over whether, when and in what conditions displaced people will be allowed to return or take advantage of other solutions. This happened in Bosnia, where 375,000 people remain internally displaced (Newland, 2003, p. 99f).

Physical safety involves not only an end to armed conflict, but also the meeting of basic needs for food and shelter until livelihood can be re-established, and access to clean water and basic health care. Given their distinct vulnerability addressing the physical protection of displaced women are particularly important. Physical safety is a great concern in Afghanistan as warlords continue de facto rule in many parts of the country. Many internally displaced people have been uprooted more than once. Some returned home only to be enveloped in turmoil once again. This makes people more precautions to return (Newland, 2003, p. 101).

Return in the aftermath of ethnic cleansing poses extraordinary dilemmas. Displaced people often return to face neighbours who resent their departure (Newland, 2003, p. 106). Reconciliation is among the most formidable human challenges in laying the groundwork for sustainable resolution of displacement, particular in connection with return. Continuing ethnic or
religious hostility is a major source of insecurity for returnees and one of the reasons that return in some cases cannot be sustained. For example, two-third of the small number of ethnic Georgians who returned to their homes in Abkhazia in 1994 fled again after their reconstructed houses were burned and other threats were made (Newland, 2003, p. 103).

**Rights**

In the aftermath of armed conflict or far-reaching regime change, reconnecting internally displaced people to the rights and privileges of citizenship in their own countries is the essential framework for any of the solutions that they may find (Newland, 2003, p. 99). In many cases where widespread internal displacement is occurring, appropriate human rights instruments that might otherwise guarantee the rights and entitlements of displaced people have not been signed or ratified (Muggah, 2003, p. 7f).

Displaced people need some degree of legal and political safety to be able to return or to regard themselves as settled where they are. It means an end to impunity for violations of human rights and other measures that signal a return to the rule of law (Newland, 2003, p. 101).

It is the displaced person’s own state that is responsible for the protection of the displaced persons rights. This principle originates from the principle of state sovereignty. In civil wars and in the aftermath of conflicts not all states take this responsibility. Therefore the international community has stated some “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement”. These are guidelines, not legally binding, in what rights displaced persons have. They are addressing issues of particular importance for displaced people, there are for example principles related to the freedom of movement, humanitarian assistance and political rights (Newland, 2003, p. 121). Principle 14 states that “every internally displaced person has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence” (Newland, 2003, p. 101). The guidelines are drawn on Human Rights-, Humanitarian and Refugee law (Newland, 2003, p. 121).

Many internally displaced people are likely to find themselves in ambiguous circumstances, where their needs cease to be addressed before they find a satisfactory, durable solution. People who have been displaced for a long time, especially those who remain displaced after a conflict ended, are likely to have their needs addressed, if at all, as part of an undifferentiated group of people in need: drought victims, slum dwellers, the poorest of the poor. Their rights as displaced people, particularly rights of return, restitution, redress or compensation may never be addressed at all (Newland, 2003, p. 98).
Economic and social aspects

Internal displacement creates a specific set of problems for the people who experience it. They must find shelter, re-establish a livelihood, and connect with institutions that will protect their rights. For example, establish access to education, health care and other public services. They also need to regain access to productive assets such as land and property and resume interaction with a supportive social network. Some people that are forcibly displaced within their own countries may find it possible to solve these problems, even though they cannot return home, and live a life that at least on the outside is indistinguishable from the life of people who have not been displaced. Other may be able to return home but still face severe problems associated with the causes of their displacement (Newland, 2003, 102f).

There are both economic and social aspects of sustainability. Internal displacement cannot truly be said to be resolved until the people affected have secured a source of livelihood. Without it, they may be forced to move again in order to survive. Securing livelihoods is a particular challenge for internally displaced who have been separated from their places of origin and, in most cases, have lost their primary assets. The ability to make a living is the key to many other elements of resolution, including the restoration of physical and social health as well as access to education, health care and so forth. The internally displaced are not always the most deprived members of a community, but they do face particular challenges and vulnerability (Newland, 2003, p. 110f).

Land and property

Land and property issues often lie at the heart of the conflict, and to resolve them is a key to resolving the problems of the displaced. Internally displaced persons are likely to lose some or all of their property as a result of displacement and conflict, through destruction or occupation of their land and homes and the theft or destruction of their belongings. In Colombia, for example, it is estimated that as many as 87 percent of the displaced who owned land have had to abandon it. Nowhere was the pattern of dispossession more central to the conflict than in the Balkans, where seizure or destruction of property was a key technique of ethnic cleansing. In some settings, entitlements to land and resource may be a fundamental cause of conflict. For instance in Rwanda, one aspect of the conflict was access to the limited fertile land in the country. In East Timor, the question of who has legitimate title to land, particularly land acquired or distributed during the period of occupation by Indonesia, was a tinder-box in the conflict and has been a particularly delicate issue for the displaced people returning from West Timor. After a conflict,
internally displaced persons and refugees attempting to return to their homes may find that others are now installed there. Those persons may in turn have been displaced from their own homes during the conflict. Addressing the multiple cycles of displacement and complex questions of equity may be particularly difficult if the conflict has been going on for a long time. Property is often linked to the question of identity, and can serve as a potential symbol for both victims and communities of their individual and collective losses during the war, and for the winners a symbol of their success (Newland, 2003, p. 106f).

Solutions may be complicated by a number of factors. Documents and title registrations are often lost or destroyed during flight or expulsion, complicating efforts to assert ownership in the post-conflict period. Domestic law might view property as having been abandoned after the passage of a certain period of time. In many contexts, women have problems asserting entitlement to land and property rights, perhaps because of an unsupportive legal system or cultural and tribal practices which undermine the statutory system that are in place. In Rwanda, for example, following the upheaval of the genocide, women survivors were unable under local custom to inherit land from their fathers or husbands. Indigenous people who have a special reliance on and attachment to the land may lack the means and access to assert their title following displacement. Moreover, large tracts of land may be rendered unusable because of the proliferation of landmines and other ordinances (Newland, 2003, p. 107).

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement approach the issue of property by drawing on both human rights law and international humanitarian law. The law only provides limited guidance on what to do in situations of mass displacement, when solving the claims of one property owner may in turn lead to further displacement. It provides little guidance on how to tackle those situations where the issue of control of land is itself deeply rooted and intimately connected with the conflict. This happened for example in South Africa under apartheid and in East Timor with respect to those who benefited from the Indonesian occupation. The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the war in former Yugoslavia, is a landmark with respect to post-war claims. Dayton guarantees refugees and internally displaced persons the right to return to their homes of origin, interpreted for the first time ever to be the “physical structure” that a person occupied before the conflict. Some observers have noted that many of the displaced may not want to return to hostile communities and may prefer compensation and help in integrating in their new places of residence. If restoration of land proved not to be possible, alternative state land or just compensation should be made available (Newland, 2003, p. 107f).
2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis

2.1 Theoretical framework

No matter what you are studying, key factors and links are only parts of the network of causation. Other links radiate in definite beyond this immediate focus. How do we explain that some people stay in camps for displaced persons, under dire conditions, when many already have left? Do the remaining displaced persons share similar backgrounds? If we conclude that the remaining displaced persons lack a set of assets to move out from the camps is it the lack of motivation of the displaced or their ability to settle outside the camps that hinder them? If they are not motivated to settle outside the camps, how do we explain that? Have they not been offer resettlement villages? If so, why? What about other causes? Do the remaining displaced persons regard the conflict as too tense for a safe settlement? Is it something particular that is on their mind?

The factors and links on which we focus attention in a causal explanation depend on our purpose and interests. A humanitarian donor agency might want to understand why the displaced persons stay to be able to give proper relief and development aide. Or we may want to determine how political policies and laws affect the displaced persons in the camps. So, our inquiry depends upon our interest. No doubt a complete explanation of influence relations in a political system would entail an attempt to describe and explain effects attributable to all factors and links in the chain of social causation. Yet it is such a staggering task that it might well serve as a research program for all social scientist for generations (Dahl, 2003, p. 35).

The political scientist Robert Dahl’s studies on influence and political power has resulted in a theory about the correlation between political resources and influence. When Dahl explores the concept of influence he concludes that different persons are attributed to different factors that affect their ability to exercise influence. He examines why some individuals tend to participate more than others in politics. He concludes that the access to political resources is unevenly distributed in the political system. The political activity tend to be higher among more educated persons, men, people of higher social standing, older persons which are executives, professionals and other white-collar workers. Dahl’s explanation to why people with these socio-economic characteristics tend to participate more in political life than others is because they possess more political resources, more skills in using their political resources and greater incentives than others to participate (Dahl, 2003, p. 34f).
Dahl’s theory on influence can be illustrated by a spiral of causes where differences in resources lead to differences in influence. People’s political resources and motivations to practice influence is dependent on their experiences and endowment. Different political resources and motivations leads to differences in political skills and the extent resources are used to acquire influence. In turn differences in influence lead to differences in endowments and experiences, and so the spiral continues (Dahl, 2003, 35).

The definition Dahl uses on influence is “a relationship among human actors such that the wants desires, preferences, or intentions of one or more actors affects the actor, or predispositions to act, of one or more actors in a direction consistent with – and not contrary to- the wants, preferences, or intentions of the influence-wielder(s)” (Dahl, 2003, p. 17).

The core in Dahl’s discussion is that people with relevant political resources tends to gain more influence than those with little political resources. What the relevant resources are depends on the circumstances. Political resources can include money, information, food, the ability to make credible threats, jobs, friendship, social standing, votes and a great variety of other things. Politics is the exercise of influence and influence is a relationship that can involve either individuals or groups (Dahl, 2003, p. 34).
2.2 Hypothesis
Dahl means that an individual’s political resources are her/his prerequisites to get influence. Lack of political resources leads to little influence. This essay transfers parts of Dahl’s theory on the question of why some internally displaced persons stay in camps, when many already have left.

The focus in this essay is to create a model to find possible explanations to why some people stay in the camps. The concept used here is personal resources, instead of political resources. The reasons why to call it personal resources, instead of political resources, is because the resources are not used to influence others, as it is in Dahl’s studies. The notion of “political” indicates that it is a power (or influence) which affects others, not only those who exercise it (Dahl, 2003, p. 28), as Dahl’s definition of influence suggests (Dahl, 2003, p. 17). This study examines if the resources affect the individuals’ capacity to influence their own stay in the camp. Therefore the word “personal” is more appropriate then “political” in this study.

In the spiral of causes Dahl assumes that personal resources and motivations are parallel processes that affect a person’s ability to influence. This study rather presupposes that the individual’s motives as her ability to influence are affected by her personal resources. If you for example had no social standing and no social network in the area you fled from you are probably less eager to return than if you had high social standing and lots of friends and relatives there. If one counts social networks as a personal resource then one can say that the motivation to move is dependent on the resource, it is a consequence of the resources, not a parallel process.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2.

After having read Newland and Dahl I have built a hypothesis based on some variables which seem to be of major importance for the internally displaced persons’ capacity to settle outside the camps. On the basis of the account above it is possible to discern some areas of major importance, namely; physical safety, socio-economic factors, land and property and rule of law.

I have chosen to examine and divide socio-economic factors, land and property and rule of law into three variables. By purpose I have chosen not to examine physical safety as a personal
resource although it is a fundamental prerequisite for displaced persons’ ability to find a durable solution. The focus in this study is on situations when a conflict has eased and many people have already returned to their homes or settled elsewhere. Even though there can be some regional differences, a prerequisite for this study is that there should be fairly calm circumstances in the country. However, in section 4.3.1 the displaced persons’ own arguments for why they stay in the camp are presented, and the question whether physical safety is a major worry will be answered there.

The first variable to be examined is social standing (social status, network, work and education) which is closely related to Dahl’s classification of political resources for gaining influence, but also Newland’s theories on socio-economic prerequisites.

The second variable; land and property is related to Newland’s writings on the subject of internally displaced persons’ ability to find solutions. She argues that that having somewhere to return is a fundamental prerequisite for returning.

The third variable that will be examined is whether the internally displaced persons in the camps posses legal and political rights. Also this variable is developed out of Newland’s account above. (A further presentation of the variables follows under 2.3.)

The hypothesis this essay builds upon is that most internally displaced persons living in the camps lack these personal resources and that this lack affect their ability and motivation to influence their situation to settle outside the camp. The lack of these personal resources makes them stay in the camp.

Some say that the displaced persons stay in camps out of their own choice, that they have other alternatives than to stay. This essay tries to analyse the internally displaced person’s preconditions to settle outside the camp by exploring whether they lack personal resources which affect their stay.

2.2.1 Questions

Personal resources are used to examine who the remaining people are that stay in the camps in northern Sri Lanka, why they stay, and whether they have the opportunity to influence their residing.
The objectives can be expressed through the main question;

- Why do some internally displaced persons remain in camps when many displaced people already have settled elsewhere?

And three sets of questions;

- Do the remaining displaced persons lack any personal resources of potential importance for their ability and motivation to find a durable solution?
- Have the personal resources been decisive for their stay in the camp?
- Do remaining internally displaced persons stay in the camps because of agential or structural factors?

2.3 Operationalisations of personal resources

As Dahl points out, our inquiries are dependent on our interests. Most studies done on the issue of what makes internally displaced to settle after displacement, are carried out by humanitarian organisations. This is often reflected in the questions posed and the answers received. Much focus is on problems they can solve, for example scarcity of dwellings and schools. Studying personal resources help to give a broader picture of why some internally displaced persons remain in camps. As mentioned earlier it is not possible to get a complete picture of the network of causes. There are of course many different variables you can examine when it comes to the factors of what might hinder internally displaced people to settle outside the camps. On the basis of the account above three variables have been discerned.

The first variable that will be examined is socio-economic factors, i.e. social network, social statues, work and education. This study rests on the hypothesis that the remaining displaced in the camps are people of low status, which are recognizing themselves to have a small social network in the place where they fled from and that they have no formal higher education and had unskilled jobs prior to their displacement. The study also assumes that the people living under these conditions are probably not anxious to return to the place where they fled from. Therefore the first point to be examined is whether they consider themselves to have social statues, a broad social network and whether they have any higher education or formally trained skills.

The second variable to be examined is whether the displaced people own any land or property. As mentioned above, displaced people need to regain access to productive assets such as land and property. If they do not have any place to return to, that is a crucial hinder for the
displaced peoples’ ability to return. Therefore the study rests on the hypothesis that the remaining internally displaced persons are landless and don’t own or have access to any property (housing).

The third variable that will be examined is the rights-aspect. In a civil war or in the aftermath of a conflict, especially between different ethnic groups, legal and political rights often become personal. Those matters that are meant to be communal, belonging to all citizens, are often restricted in a discriminatory manner. Therefore they can under these circumstances be categorized as personal resources. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are stating that displaced people should be able to move and resettle wherever they want, just as ordinary citizens. This right is fundamental for the displaced people’s ability to find a durable solution. The legal rights that will be examined are the legal rights of movement and resettlement.

Conflict-induced displacement is caused by political turmoil. This often results in disfranchisement among displaced persons. Their political rights are not always fulfilled as they often are a marginalised group. Displaced people are vulnerable and in need of special concern and treatment. It is their own government that is responsible to meet the needs of the internally displaced persons. Having political representation can for the displaced persons be of major importance for getting their needs addressed. Among political rights the right to vote is the most fundamental one. The political right to vote is the second rights aspect that will be examined. The study assumes that displaced persons lack these fundamental legal and political rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social status/ network, work and education</td>
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</table>

Figure 3.

2.3.1 Perspectives
Put most simply the question of structure and agency is about the explanation of social and political phenomena. It is about what is deemed to constitute a valid or adequate explanation of a political effect or outcome; about what adequate political explanations entails. Traditionally
phenomena have been explained by two types of explanations; by structural factors and by agency (agential) factors (Hay, 2002, p. 93f).

The notion of structure is related to the context of a social and political effect or outcome. Structure basically means context and refers to the setting within which social, political and economic events occur and acquire meaning. It mainly refers to political institutions, practices, routines and conventions which appear to exhibit some regular structure but can also include social-economic, cultural and historic contexts as parts of a structure (Hay, 2002, 94f).

Agency factors can be defined as the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously to attempt to realise his or her intentions. Agency refers to actions, i.e. conduct. In the same way that the notion of structure is not entirely neutral synonym for context, however, the notion of agency implies more than mere political action or conduct. In particular it implies a sense of free will and the ability to choose, i.e. that the actor could have behaved differently and have made an active choice between potential courses of action. Political conduct, agential factors, is closely related to the concepts of rationality and motivation (Hay, 2002, 94f).

There are those who mean that internally displaced people stay in camps out of rational thinking, which indicates that they have a choice to either stay or settle outside. This study will however analyse both the internally displaced persons’ ability and motivation to settle outside the camps.

The ability to move is a prerequisite to the ability to choose to stay. The displaced persons must have the alternative to move, if they should be able to choose to stay in the camps. It is the outer contextual settings that decide whether the displaced person has ability to choose. The political right to vote can be of major importance for the displaced ability to move, as it is their own government, their own politicians, which are responsible to assist the displaced persons. The legal right of movement and resettlement is of fundamental importance for the displaced persons ability to settle outside the camp. Access to own land and property is an important prerequisite for return.

These two variables (“legal and political rights” and “land and property”) are consequently categorised as structural factors. If the displaced doesn’t have these structural factors their ability to move are very limited and the explanation to their stay will thus be structural factors.

Low social standing, i.e. lack of “social status, network, work and education” is assumed to affect the internally displaced persons’ motivation to settle outside the camps. Consequently this variable is categorised as an agential factor, as it tends to affect the displaced persons’ motivation to return and find a solution to the displacement. It is also a consequence of rational thinking.
Whether these categorisations are right and meaningful or not will be discussed in 4.3.2.
Criteria on how to interpret the results are presented in section 3.3.

### Personal resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Social status/ network, work and education</th>
<th>Land and property</th>
<th>Legal and political rights</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Agential</em></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Structural</em></td>
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Figure 4.

### 2.4 Definitions

While it is fashionable to speak about the importance of labels in social relations, there are few more obvious cases of the importance of clear definitions than in debate on forced migration. In reviewing the literature on internal displacement and resolution there is literature that draws from academic and practitioner-oriented writings on subjects as diverse as economic and labour migration, refugee protection and assistance, development-induced displacement and resettlement and disaster-related displacement and relocation. The definitions are loose and carelessly applied. The concepts “migration”, “refugee” and “internally displaced persons” are often used synonymously (Muggah, 2003, p. 6f).

*“Internally displaced persons”*

So what constitutes displacement and who is a displaced person? Population displacement is an outcome of multiple sets of factors. The many “push factors” leading to internal displacement can be aggregated into a range of overlapping categories: natural and human-made disasters, ethnic or religious persecution, development and conflict. Displacement is by definition forced and involuntary and involves some form of de-territorialization (Muggah, 2003, p. 7f).

The most used definition of “internally displaced persons”, which are displaced due to conflicts or human rights violations, is stated in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
It says that internally displaced persons are individuals or groups "who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or habitual places of residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border".

"Camp"

What is meant by a camp? There are various elements that constitute a standard view of a camp, some of which might be regarded as more important than others in leading to adverse effects for the residents. The most obvious example of camps is tented cities, supplied wholly from the outside. In contrast, there are wider definition which uses the word camp to describe either “small, open settlements where the refugee communities have been able to maintain a village atmosphere” or there can be “larger, more crowded camps” where they are “more dependent on assistance”. It is the latter that are more clearly recognisable as camps, distinguished from what might be regarded as “settlements” or even “villages” by their size, density, dependence on external aid, and the level of control exercised over inhabitants by national or international authorities (Black, 1998).

2.5 Disposition

In chapter 2 follows a presentation of the methodology used in the study. Chapter 3 presents the results and the analysis. It begins with a short background of the conflict and the displacement in Sri Lanka with focus on the area where this study was carried out, then follows the results and analysis. The first part constitutes a description of who the displaced people in the camp are, by exploring their personal resources. The second part consists of an analysis of the meaning of the personal resources for the displaced people’s stay in the camp, the displaced persons’ own explanations to their stay in the camps are also presented. The third part discusses however if is structural or agential factors that makes the displaced people stay in the camps. Finally, chapter 4 summarizes the conclusions. Last follow references and appendix.
3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological procedure

The case study of internally displaced persons in camps is made in a district in northern Sri Lanka. The reasons for choosing Sri Lanka was because they have had a long civil war which caused displacement of more than one million people. In 2002 a ceasefire agreement was signed and peace was in sight. Many of the displaced people have since then returned home, relocated or integrated locally in the area to where they fled (UNHCR, 2003, p. 9). But still some people remain in government administrated camps (so called Welfare Canters) under dire conditions. The study has taken place in the district of Vavuniya. Vavuniya was picked as there are many camps for internally displaced there, and because although many people have left the camps some stay.

When studying the personal resources of displaced persons one need a cross-disciplinary approach including political, judicial as well as sociological elements, which resulted in the use of a combination of methods. The study is based on both written sources and informant interviews with staff of international organisations working in the area, government officials and lawyers.

In order to get an agential perspective and a deeper understanding of the displaced persons’ situations I made 16 interviews with internally displaced persons in a camp in Vavuniya. The only way to understand the displaced persons’ own view of their situation is to talk with them. That gives a clear agential perspective.

The interviews do not intend to give statistical evidence but to give an insight to the displaced persons reflections on their stay in the camp. Therefore I chose to interview 16 persons as that give a proper view on what is on their mind. Making more interviews was not possible as the study is rather small.

Interviews as a method were also chosen because it gives a closer contact and a better dialogue with the respondents than does a survey. Interviews can give an overall picture even on complex issues. Interviews also give better understanding of social processes and contexts, than does surveys (Holme and Solvang, 1997).

The interviews were made during fall 2004. To get statistic figures I have used other studies on internally displaced persons living in Welfare Centres in Vavuniya made during the same period. I have as far as possible tried to double-check figures and controversial facts.
The study was done from mid-October to mid-December 2004 and was made possible by a Minor Field Study scholarship from Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).

3.2 Interviews with the internally displaced persons

The interviews were made in the largest Welfare centre in Vavuniya, Poonthontam, where around 4 500 people resides. Me and my translator randomly picked one unit where we carried out the interviews. We went around and randomly interviewed people in that unit. It is possible that these persons had influenced each others’ way of thinking as they lived in the same neighbourhood. But I went around to some other units and camps to see that the background of the internally displaced persons did not differ much.

The interviews were prepared by a questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, i.e. there were no prepared answering alternatives. The advantage of using open-ended questions is that they do not steer or restrict the respondents answers (Andersson, 1985). The interviews were not identical as some further questions only appeared in some interviews and as some persons replayed to question in connection with another question it was unnecessary to pose that question again.

I interviewed 16 families (or households). Mostly I talked with one adult family member, predominantly a female. Ten of the respondents were women. This can be explained by the fact that I made my interviews during daytime and that it then was easier to find women to interview as many of them stay at home while the men were gone for labour work. The ages of the respondents were between 25 and 61 years old. Most of the interviews lasted around 30 minutes. The interview situations were informal. I and my translator were invited into the respondents’ houses. Children of the respondents were sometimes present. I did not use a tape recorder, as this might have made the interviewees less willing to speak freely. Therefore I can not go back to check translation and the exact sentences. The respondents showed no reluctance to talk, instead people showed great interest in getting an opportunity to talk about their lives. Only one family refused to be interviewed, they were fortunate to have a TV and were occupied by watching their favourite soap opera.

The language used in Vavuniya is predominantly Tamil. As I do not speak Tamil I had to work with a translator, thus not getting the words and formulations directly from the respondent.

1 Appendix 1
I was told that it was very important to get a female translator. After having interviewed mostly female respondents I am grateful for this recommendation. I got a female translator who usually worked for Sewalanka, a Sri Lankan humanitarian organisation which is working with IDPs and resettlement. She was a very nice woman, with a gentle approach and with good English she was a good help.

### 3.3 Criterions for interpretations of the results

The main question “Why do some internally displaced persons remain in camps when many displaced people already have settled?” is answered by the following questions; Do the remaining displaced persons lack any personal resources of potential importance for their ability and motivation to find a durable solution? Have the personal resources been decisive for their stay in the camp? Do remaining internally displaced persons stay in the camps because of agential or structural factors?

To conclude that the hypothesis is right, it has to correspond with the situation of the majority of the interviewees. The results are presented under each variable.

The answers to the question regarding whether personal resources can explain the displaced persons’ stay in the camps are received by analysing the eventual lack of personal resources and the displaced persons’ own explanations to why they stay.

As mentioned earlier; the ability to move is a prerequisite to the ability to choose to stay. Agential factors are defined as the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously to attempt to realise his or her intensions. Agential factors are closely related to the concepts of rationality and motivation, while structural factors constitutes of contextual settings (Hay, 2002, p. 93f). On the question whether it is agential or structural factors that are decisive for the displaced person’s stay in the camps, the result will be interpreted like this;

If the displaced persons lack the two structural variables (lack “land and property” to return to and do not have “legal and political rights”), but had the agential variable (good social standing in the area where they fled from, which makes them motivated to return), the explanatory factors tend to be clearly structural.

If the displaced persons lack the two structural and the agential variables, the explanations to their stay still tend to be structural, as their choice to move are still very limited.
If the displaced have the structural variables, i.e. do have land and property and legal and political rights, and not the agential variable, i.e. low social standing, the explanatory factor tend to be clearly agential.

If the displaced have the structural variables (land and property and legal and political rights) and the socio-economic variable (social standing), the explanations still tend to be agential as the displaced seem to have alternatives to their stay in the camp.

Any other results would not give adequate certainty to prove whether the explanations tend to be agential or structural.

Note that it is not only whether the displaced persons possess the resources or not that matters.

The extent to which they seem to affect the displaced persons stay in the camps is also of importance.

The variables content several elements. The study does not place the elements in order of precedence and importance, except for the “legal and political rights – variable”. As mentioned political rights can be of major importance for the displaced persons’ ability to settle, and can also be a precondition for the displaced persons to get legal rights. Nevertheless, the legal right of resettlement is considered to be the most vital element of the rights aspects as the right to choose settlement is fundamental for the displaced persons’ ability to settle outside the camps.

Otherwise are the elements of equal importance. There will however probably not be any problems as the elements are closely connected to one another.

3.4 Delimitations
The essay is examining three “personal resources”, variables, of potential importance for the displaced persons ability and motivation to settle outside the camps. There are of course many other variables that could be of fundamental importance for their settlement, however, these are not looked into as this study is quite a small study and it has to be limited.

In interview situations the respondent might not always tell the truth. When you as a white person come to a camp, you are easily identified as a member of the donor community. This might affect the interviewees’ answers regarding the life in the Welfare Centre. However I was careful to explain that I was a student, unable to influence their situation.
It is important to remember that this is a case study of internally displaced people living in camps in the district of Vavuniya, it is not a case study of displaced persons in the whole of Sri Lanka. It is likely that the problems for displaced persons differ between different regions.

Of course it would have been interesting to track the former displaced that have returned home or settled elsewhere and interview and compare the resources of the individuals that have settled with those who remain in the camps. But because of practical reasons it was not possible to make such a study. However, this essay gives a picture of the people who are remaining in the camps and why they stay, which is the aim of the study.

As mentioned above the persons I interviewed were predominantly women, that can have affected the results of the interviews, as the Sri Lankan society is patriarchal. Having a translator can also affect the result as I did not get the words and formulations directly from the respondents. On the other hand, by being there I had control over the interview situation.

### 3.5 Validity and reliability

Good validity in a study is when it examines the things it says it aim to study. Good validity is dependent on conceptual validity and reliability. Conceptual validity comes out of good resemblance between theoretical definitions and operational indicators. Reliability means absence of haphazard or unsystematically mistakes (Esaiasson, 2004, p. 61f).

There is a deficit in the validity as only the individuals who remain in the camps have been interviewed. The study does not examine the personal resources of the ones that have already moved out from the camps. Therefore there is no control group that can confirm the eventual importance of the personal resources. Anyhow the study examines whether the remaining displaced persons lack any personal resources, and if the eventual lack tends to hinder their settlement.

The operationalisations of what might be of importance for the displaced persons’ ability to settle, i.e. the needed personal resources, are developed out of information from earlier studies on internal displacement and resettlement. As the issues earlier have been identified as prerequisites for settlements, they are adequate when examining why internally displaced persons remain in camps.

One factor that can affect the reliability is that most of the interviewees were female. That can have affected the result.
When studying the personal resources of displaced persons one need a cross-disciplinary approach including political, judicial as well as sociological elements. The methods and sources used are dependent on what is explored.

After the interviews I rewrote them not to forget or misunderstand information. Then the information was ordered under each variable so that similarities and differences easily could be identified. I have as far as possible double-checked figures and controversial facts.
4. A case study in Sri Lanka

4.1 Background to the war and displacement in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has had a brutal conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil populations. The war lasted between 1983 and 2002, when a ceasefire agreement was signed. The conflict can be said in simple terms to arise largely from contested access to services, land and control of political power (Oxfam, 2002).

Most historians agree that the seeds of the conflict were planted in the early 1900s, when colonial rule did little to promote a sense of national identity among the three main ethnic groups on the island; Sinhalese (mostly Buddhist, constituting 74 percent of the present population), Tamils (mostly Hindus, 19 percent of the national population), and Muslims (7 percent). Instead, ethnic and especially regional identification was seen as the primary means of self-identification. This did not necessarily mean that these ethnic groups saw themselves as homogenous. Indeed, both Tamils and Sinhalese groups have always exhibited strong regional affiliations. The “Sri Lankan Tamils” originates 2000 years ago from south India, and together constitute 12 percent of the total population today. The Tamils of Indian origin (usually called “Indian Tamils”) are descendants from India taken by the British to work on tea plantations in the 1900th century, and now constitute 7 percent of the current population. They have developed separate regional identities, according to cast, education and socioeconomic standing. The Sinhalese population can be dividend into different subgroups; primarily they can be dividend in two groups; low- and highland (Oxfam, 2002).

Early disagreements after Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948 between Sinhalese and Tamil groups centred on political representation, the colonisation of traditional Tamil areas by Sinhalese groups, language, and access to employment opportunities and education. In the immediate post-independence period, the new government withdrew citizenship rights for Indian Tamils living in the central highlands. One year later their voting rights, which they had enjoyed for 20 years were withdrawn. This set the tone for the post-independence government’s interactions with the Tamil population. The early 1970s Sinhala was named as the official language of the administration and the courts, thereby disadvantaged the Tamil population, who held a large proportion of public administration positions. A university quota system also reduced the number of Tamils gaining university admission. In 1972 Ceylon was renamed Sri Lanka, Buddhism was given special protection under the constitution as the primarily religion in Sri Lanka. These proclamations and laws, and an increased oppression of the first militant groups, one of these was the Liberation
Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led to a civil war between LTTE and the government army in 1983. The war lasted to 2002 when a ceasefire agreement was signed and many saw an opportunity for peace (Oxfam, 2002).

The war made more than one million people displaced, every 8th person in Sri Lanka has been displaced at least once (UNHCR, 2003, p. 5f). Displaced people stay with friends and relatives or in the government arranged camps for internally displaced, the official term is Welfare Centres. The Welfare Centres are spread all over the Northern Province in Sri Lanka. After the ceasefire agreement in 2002 many people started to return to their home areas of origin, or resettle elsewhere. However some people have remained displaced and many people are still receding in Welfare Centres. In the district of Vavuniya, where this case study was made, there are four Welfare Centres. They opened in the early 1990s and are supposed to be temporary residence for displaced people, but today some people have stayed there for thirteen years. There were approximately 9000 IDPs living in Welfare Centre in Vavuniya when this study is carried out (Government Agency Vavuniya, 2004).

The conditions within the Welfare Centres have been heavily criticized both internationally and by humanitarian organizations operating in Sri Lanka. Everyone says; welfare centre-life must end. To call them Welfare Centres is something many refuse. The displaced lives in temporary huts built like halls which are divided into small sections, one for each family. Each section constitutes one room, apox. 10 square meter. One family share one section, so there can be around 8 persons living in one room. The kitchen is situated in connection with the room, and as the food is cooked on fire, and there is no ventilation, there is a constant fog of smoke in the houses. The stay in Welfare Centre is free of charge, the displaced in the camps are supplied with dry food rations every month, there are some dwell and toilets and the electricity is free of charge.

4.2 Do the remaining displaced persons lack any personal resources of potential importance for their ability to find a durable solution?

- Who are the remaining displaced persons in the camp?

4.2.1 Social status and network, work and education

Social status, social network, work and education are often related. In the Sri Lankan society this, especially status, is also closely related to what cast a person inherits (Foundation for Coexistence,
Cast is, however, a very delicate issue, therefore I choose not to ask about it in the interviews. Instead I asked the persons in the camp what sort of Tamil they were, Sri Lankan or Indian. Being Tamil of Indian origin implies being low cast in the Sri Lankan cast-system (Foundation for Coexistence, 2004). Tamils of Indian origin have historically been treated as undercast, all since they came from India to work in coffee and tea plantations in the mid 19th century. These Tamils have until recently been consistently classified as Tamils of Indian origin in the successive consensuses of the government of Ceylon/Sri Lanka (Foundation for Coexistence, 2004). But the government agency in Vavuniya is now careful to stress that there is only one kind of Tamil. Therefore they have no official figures on how many Indian Tamils that are staying in the Welfare centers. But they have unofficial figures that say that 60 percent of the displaced in the camps are of Indian origin. This is an increase from 2003 when the percentage of Indian Tamils was 40 to 45 percent (CPA, 2003, p. 26). The increased percentage of Indian Tamils indicates that Indian Tamils have more difficulties finding durable solutions than other displaced persons. Of the 16 randomly picked households interviewed for this study 9 were of Indian origin. Among the “ordinary” population in Vavuniya the Indian Tamils only constitute a small percentage (Government Agency Statistics, 2004).

The interviewed displaced in the Welfare Centers say that the Indian Tamil who fled to the Northern district have gradually started to integrate with Sri Lankan Tamils, mainly because of the war. Almost all people that were interviewed in the Welfare Center said that there were strong tensions between Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils before the war, and that the Indian Tamils were treated badly, but that the tensions have eased during the war. During the war many Tamils, despite background, have rallied to the support of LTTE. Many young Indian Tamil boys have been recruited by LTTE. There are rumors in the camp that one boy every second day disappears from the Welfare centers, most probably to join LTTE. And in many homes hang posters and calendars with pictures of the LTTE leader. In the camps every one is treating each other as equal. They say that in the Welfare Center everyone is equal. “Here there is no difference, we are all in the same situation”, said almost all people interviewed.

The majority of the interviewed say that they have their family and friends in Vavuniya, many in the Welfare Center. They say that they have their lives in Vavuniya. “We have nothing to return to”, said many of the interviewees. The majority of the interviewees did not consider themselves to have large social network in the area where they fled from. Many of the people who live in the Welfare Centers in Vavuniya first fled from the plantation area, near the city of
Kandy in the central highland, to the northern part, settled and lived a few years in the new area, and then were forced to flee again. They fled the plantation area in 1971, 1977, 1981 and 1983 and resettled in the northern districts where they started to work as day laborers or occupied vacant State land, many in the districts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu (CPA, 2003, p. 32f). Now they have lived in Vavuniya for almost 10 years.

None of the displaced persons interviewed had any higher education. They earlier worked as unskilled workers in agriculture, many worked in the paddy fields, some women worked as maids in wealthy families. Now when they live in the Welfare Centre most of the households interviewed have at least one person who is working as day-laborer in agriculture.

4.2.2 Land and property

Of the 16 households interviewed for this study only one said that they own land in the area where they fled from. It was a small plot of two acres land, but still it was a place to live on. The documentation of ownership to the land is however lost, so the owner can not return. Another family owned their house, but it is in the area which the government holds as a High Security Zone, so they can not return.

A substantial land area is occupied by the Sri Lankan Army. Some of those High Security Zones cover displaced persons land and constitute a hinder for their return (CPA, 2003, p.10).

The vast majority of the displaced persons in the Welfare Centres did not own any land or property prior to their displacement. This picture is confirmed by figures at the government agency in Vavunyyia. They say that almost 90 percent of the displaced persons in the Welfare Centres are landless (Vavunyyia Government Agency Statistics, 2004).

4.2.3 Legal and political rights

Legal rights

The freedom of movement and the freedom to choose one’s residence is a right that belongs to all citizens of Sri Lanka (Brune, 2003). It is also guarantied by the Guiding Principles on Internal displacement.

Before the ceasefire agreement in 2002 the right of movement was seriously violated by both LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. The Sri Lankan government severely restricted Tamils

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2 See map of Sri Lanka
movements southwards and the LTTE did not permit Sinhalas to move in the North. There was also a stringent procedure to be followed if the internally displaced wanted to travel outside the Welfare Centers in Vavuniya (CPA, 2002, p. 5). These restrictions of movement are eased since the ceasefire agreement.

Until spring 2004 the Government had a policy that hindered internally displaced people in Vavuniya to be relocated on state land in any district other than that of their origin, where they are registered. (A person can only be registered in the district where they are residing permanently. The Welfare Centers are only considered as temporary residences.) The policy, which originates from the 13th amendment of the Sri Lankan constitution, was motivated by the wish not to alter ethnic ratios of the Northern and Eastern Districts (Government agency, Vavuniya). In the case of multiethnic Vavuniya this would imply not increasing the number of Tamil residents. This principle was originally supposed to apply to displacement caused by irrigation and development projects, not to conflict induced displacement (CPA, 2003, p. 67).

Amendment 13 states that some land is granted for disposal at provisional level, and that the land should be distributed to those registered in the district. But the government is allowed to take the land and provide to others (CPA, 2003, p. 33). This happened spring 2004 in Vavuniya. After getting complaints from displaced people, that did not have any land to return to, the government decided to give land to internally displaced persons registered in other districts than Vavuniya (Government Agency, Vavuniya). The restriction of the legal right of resettlement affected the vast majority of the displaced persons in The Welfare Centres who still lived in the Centre fall 2004, as almost 90 percent of them are registered in another district.

Of the 16 interviewees the waste majority was registered in another district that Vavuniya, many in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

Political rights

In 1988 the Sri Lankan government made it possible for internally displaced people to vote in their actual place of temporary residence for candidates in the district where they were registered prior to their displacement (CPA, 2000, p. 23). In Vavuniya the Welfare Centre have polling stations with voting boxes from the districts where the internally displaced are registered (Maadhavan, UNHCR Vavuniya).

The law looks fine on paper but when trying to apply these provisions in a situation of actual displacement some practical difficulties arise which has not been foreseen or provided for. It
helps those that are already registered as voters (CPA, 2000, p. 23). To be entitled to vote in Sri Lanka each person annually has to register as a voter (regardless if there is an election that year or not). The registration of electors is evidence which determinates whether a person is, or is not, entitled to vote in the election. This form of annual registration is costly to implement and disenfranchises large numbers of eligible voters, particular displaced persons (CPA, 2000, p. 24).

To be able to register as a voter there are three criteria that have to be fulfilled. First you have to be a Sri Lankan citizen. Secondly, you have to be over 18 years. Thirdly, you have to have a permanent residence in Sri Lanka for at least 6 months. The first and the third criterion have caused problems for Indian Tamils and other IDPs living in Welfare Centers. Some Indian Tamils have not yet gained citizenship (CPA, 2000, p. 25). They have not been able to vote because they have not fulfilled the basic criterion of being a citizen. It is not known how many of the displaced who lack citizenship (and are stateless) in the Welfare Centers in Vavuniya. But UNHCR have got around 500 applications from displaced persons in the camps in Vavunya which do not have, but want to get citizenship. The third criterion concerns those that moved to the welfare center before they turned 18. Their problem has been that living in a Welfare Centers does not count as a permanent residence, only temporary residence. So if you moved there before the age of 18 you have not been able to register for election. There are not figures on how many this concerns. This problem has been recognized by the election commissioner in Colombo which is working on re-registration of internally displaced living in the Welfare Centers (Ravi, UNICEF).

Of the 16 interviewees the majority had been able to vote in the last parliamentary election, but not all of them had taken the opportunity. UNHCR in Vavniya also confirms that the majority of the displaced people in the Welfare Centers are able to vote in the parliamentary elections.

Because of the civil war there are no functioning provincial councils in the North, and there have not been any elections for those registered in the Northern Province for the last 15 years (Brune, 2003).
4.2.4 Summery

Lacked personal resources

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<th>Social status/ network, work and education</th>
<th>Land and property</th>
<th>Legal and political rights</th>
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Figure 5.

The majority of the displaced persons in the Welfare Centres in Vavuniya lacked two of three personal resources. (Until a few months before the study was carried out the vast majority of the displaced people did not possess the legal right of resettlement.)

4.3 Can lack of personal resources explain why the displaced persons stay in the camp?

- Why do the displaced persons stay in the camp?

4.3.1. “Therefore we stay…”

During the interviews with the people in the camp one thing became very clear. Almost everyone wanted to stay in Vavuniya. The only household that wanted to return to its home was the household that owned a small plot of land. A survey made in Welfare Centres in Vavuniya confirms that most landless people do not want to return (UNHCR, 2004). The displaced persons refer to a set of reasons when they explain why they still live in the camp. Most of the interviewed say that they have nothing to return to, that everything is damaged in the area where they fled from. Some of the persons that they have been forced to flee several times also point out that Vavuniya is more secure than the area where they fled from, in particularly for their children. They fear that their children will be recruited by the LTTE if they move up north. Many also say that there were no good schools in their former home area. Some also say that the livelihood opportunities are better in the urban Vavuniya than in the more deserted areas they fled from.
Even though almost all people interviewed want to stay in Vavuniya they say that the life in the Welfare Centre is very hard and that they want to resettle outside the camp. They tell about the problems of not having enough food, living too close to each other, sexual abuse of young children and the dirty toilets and non-functioning dwellings. They want the government to give them land and permanent houses, not too far from Vavuniya town. In 2001 the government offered some of the displaced in the Welfare Centres nice brick, permanent houses close to Vavuniya town. The remaining displaced people in the camp want to get the same offer. The resettlement village, Menic Farm, which now is offered the remaining displaced in the camps, consists of smaller temporary houses of approximately 15 square meters and is situated 20 kilometres from the city. When the people have moved in and lived there for a while they will get money from the government to build permanent houses. Some of the displaced persons are however sceptic to this kind of promises, and wonder whether they will be fulfilled. But the strongest criticism concerns the location of the settlement village; it is too far from Vavuniya town, according to many of the interviewees. But some are tempted to move and plan to move there in the beginning of 2005.

While the people interviewed are eager to point out the difficulties with living in the camp, some also say that it is good that they get so much for free. Electricity is free, other services are free and they get dry food rations, while in their old home areas nothing worked.

4.3.2. Does the lack of the explored personal resources explain the displaced persons stay in the camps?

Social network/ status, work and education

Many of the displaced have been forced to flee several times and thus lack a large social network. Many of the displaced persons first fled from the plantation area in the central hill country to the northern part of Sri Lanka in the 1970s or early 80s. They were thus displaced prior to their flight to Vavuniya in the mid 1990s. For natural reasons they did not have a large social network in the area where they fled from before coming to Vavuniya.

Some older respondents, who have relatives in the plantation areas, do not wish to go back there due to the hard living conditions. The displaced persons, who were younger when they came to the north or were born there, say that they have most of their families and friends in Vavuniya. That makes them want to stay in Vavuniya. Other studies also confirm that many displaced in the Welfare Centres do not want to return as they do not want to leave their families and friends in Vavuniya (UNHCR, 2004).
Even though the displaced persons complain over living on a small space and talk about all problems it brings like sexual harassment, they also seem to consider some parts of their social situation improved. Most persons remaining in the camps are low status. Many are so called Indian Tamils which historically have been treated as undercast. One Sri Lankan Tamil woman say that there before were big differences between Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil, but that after the war “they speak the same language and eat the same food”. The war has improved the Indian Tamils’ status and in the Welfare Centre everyone is looking at each other as equals. Generally the people in the camp respect each other, background and cast does not matter as much as in their old home area. Whether this better treatment in the Welfare Centres is a factor which only makes life more bearable, or even makes people stay in the Welfare Centre, is difficult to say. It is however not likely that people are motivated to return home if they consider their social life to have improved in Vanuiya. Other studies show that friendly relationships in Welfare Centres in Vavunia between Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils can be damaged when the people move to resettlement villages (Everland, 2004). The life in Welfare Centres might be seen as a “state of emergency” which erases old habits and values. But none of the interviewees refers to this as a factor which makes them stay in the Welfare Centre. So the only certain conclusion that can be drawn is that these people of low statues have no strong desire to move back to the area where they fled from.

The persons interviewed for this study, had no higher education and were unskilled. Prior to their displacement they worked as labourer in agriculture or as maids in wealthy families. They are now working with similar jobs, and have thus not been forced to forsake any more advanced job due to their displacement. Thus job-reasons do not make them eager to return to their former home.

Land and property

Much of the abandoned land in LTTE-controlled area has either been rented or given to the families of LTTE cadres or used by LTTE to host their administrative structures. While the law protects land and property, claiming ownership can be problematic as many internally displaced persons have lost their property documents during their displacement (CPA, 2003, p.10). Even though these problems are a reality for many displaced persons, the problem of land and property for most displaced in the Welfare Centres in Vavuniya is even more fundamental.

Most people that are remaining in the camp were landless prior to their flight. Landlessness is an obstacle for returning, as they do not have anything to return to. At the same time they said
that they do not even wish to return to the area where they fled from. The only household which
owned land prior to their displacement is the only household that wanted to go back to the area
where they fled from, if they got the opportunity. They had a small plot of land, but had lost the
documents of ownership of it. A survey made in Welfare Centres in Vavunia points out
landlessness as the main obstacle for returning. Only 36 percent of those who cited landlessness
as the reason not to return said that they wanted to return home if that problem was resolved
(UNHCR, 2004). This result suggests that people are far less willing to return home if they had
little prior to their displacement. It suggests that the issue of land is more than a technical matter,
it is also a matter of attachment.

**Legal and political rights**

The legal right of movement and resettlement of the persons in the camps in Vavuniya has earlier
been seriously violated. The policy that stated that displaced persons must settle in the district
where they are registered have been decisive for the displaced peoples stay in the camp. As
almost all the remaining persons in the camp are registered in another district than Vavuniya and
do not own any land to return to, they where seriously affected by the restriction. 90 percent of
the remaining displaced was registered in other districts. (Situation Report Vavuniya, 2004). Even
though the restriction was eased autumn 2004, and the displaced were able to settle in the district
of Vavuniya (when this study was made) the policy had probably made many of the remaining
people in the camp stay in the camps, as their main wish is to stay in Vavuniya.

Most of the persons in the camps in Vavuniya have been able to vote in elections. But some have
not been entitled to vote because of loss of documents, or because they have not been registered
as voters, either because they are not Sri Lankan citizens or because they moved into the camps
before they turned 18 years old.

The interviewed internally displaced feel very alienated to politicians, even those whose who have
the right to vote. They say that in election time 15-20 people come and arrange meetings and say
that they will build houses and help with land and transportations. But after the elections it is
silent, nothing happens. The politicians do not care about us, say many of the interviewees.

As the majority of the displaced have been able to vote in the last election, lack of political rights
can not be seen as a factor which affects the displaced ability to move out of the camp.

However, as mentioned in 3.3, the legal right of resettlement is of major importance for the
displaced persons’ ability to settle outside the camps, so the variable “legal and political right” is
although classified as constituting a hinder for the displaced persons’ ability to settle outside the camps.

4.3.3 Summary

Personal resources that affected the stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social status/ network, work and education</th>
<th>Land and property</th>
<th>Legal and political rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 6.

All three personal resources tend to have affected the stay of the majority of the displaced persons in the Welfare Centres in Vavuniya.

4.4 Is it structural or agential factors that have made some displaced people stay in the Welfare Centres?

- Have the displaced people been able to choose their stay?

The notion of structure is related to the context of a social and political effect or outcome. Agency factors can be defined as the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously to attempt to realise his or her intentions. Political conduct, agential factors, is closely related to the concepts of rationality and motivation (Hay, 2002, p. 94f).

Is it the context of the displaced persons that forces them stay in the camps? Or do they have a choice to move, i.e. is it their motivation and rational thinking that makes them stay?

The notion of dependency suggests that the displaced people have a choice, either to stay in the camp or Resettle outside the camp. Many of the staff working for humanitarian organisations operating in the area and staff at the government agency in Vavuniya explain the displaced people’s stay in the camps by referring to dependency, saying that the displaced people have been spoiled by getting services free of charge and that they have become used to the urban life (Program Director, Government Agency).

In the previous section it seems like people with little before the displacement are not motivated to return, because of landlessness and because of social reasons. And the majority of
the displaced people remaining in the Welfare Centres used to live under small circumstances prior to their displacement. But the previous section also shows the displaced people’s ability to choose to settle outside the camp until recently (spring 2004) have been very limited. As most of the displaced do not own any land or property they are afraid that they will not have anywhere to stay if they return to their home area. The policy that restricted the right of choice of settlement stated that displaced persons where only allowed to resettle in the district where they were registered. This policy has seriously affected the displaced people who are remaining in the camp, as the vast majority of them are registered in other districts than Vavuniya. The combination of landlessness and the deprived right of choice of resettlement have complicated the displaced’s ability to all three durable solutions for internally displaced people, namely; return, integrate locally and resettlement.

Since spring 2004 the displaced people have greater possibilities to choose where to reside. Many people have also relocated to the resettlement villages built in Vavuniya, for example “Menic Farm”. Some, however, refuse to move to these villages as they consider them not being decent alternatives to the Welfare Centres. Whether the resettlement villages constitute alternatives to the Welfare Centres is very much a question of subjective preferences, but still it is a place where the displaced are able to settle. What can be concluded is that until spring 2004 the displaced stayed in the camps mainly because of structural factors.

4.4.1 Summery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives</th>
<th>Social status/network, work and education</th>
<th>Land and property</th>
<th>Legal and political rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Agential</em></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Structural</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.

To sum up one can conclude that the combination of the two structural factors compose a great practical hinder for the displaced to find a solution to their displacement. The motivation to
return tends to be affected by small circumstances prior to the displacement, i.e. poor social situations and landlessness.

Worthy to note is that it is impossible to draw clear distinctions between what is to be seen as agential and structural factors. Landlessness which in the introduction was categorised as a structural factor was proved to also constitute an agential factor as it affects people’s motivation to return.

After all the conclusion is that structural factors tend to have been the major obstacle for the displaced persons to find a durable solution. Agential explanations require the ability to choose. This case study however shows that the ability to choose has until recently been limited for the majority of the displaced persons in camps in Vavuniya because of the lack of personal resources which form structural hinders. But now when they have the ability to choose some stay because they are not motivated to move, which must be seen as an agential factor.
5. Conclusion and further reflections

Why do some internally displaced persons remain in camps when many already have settled? That has been the main question in this essay. The explanations have been searched among the “personal resources” of the remaining displaced in the camps. Three personal resources have been examined; social situations, land and property and legal and political rights. The personal resources have also been divided into structural and agential factors.

The hypothesis in this essay was that the remaining displaced persons lack some personal resources and thus lack ability to influence their situation, but also lack of motivation to settle outside the camp. The result suggests that much of the hypothesis was correct. Of the explored personal resources the majority of the displaced lacked two of the three personal resources.

Their social situation was characterised by low status, small social network in the place they fled from, low education and unskilled work. The majority of the displaced were landless. The majority of the displaced persons have been able to vote, but until recently their legal right to choose settlement was restricted.

Landlessness is referred as the main reason why some displaced persons still stay in the camps. Landlessness together with the deprived right to choose where to resettle has until recently constituted a big obstacles for the displaced persons ability to settle outside the camps. The displaced persons are not motivated to return to the place they fled from, one of the reasons is that small social circumstances in the area where they fled from makes many people feel that they have nothing to return to. They consider having their social network in Vavuniya and thus do not want to move from Vavuniya.

What has been categorised as structural factors seem to be of major importance for the displaced persons’ stay in the camps. But the displaced persons also lack motivation to return to the area they fled from. The study shows that it is difficult to draw fine lines between what is to be seen as agential and structural factors. Landlessness does seem to be of importance also for people’s motivation to return to the area they fled from. The result suggests that the structural and agential factors together constitute a big obstacle for the displaced persons move out from the camps. The structural factors which are of more practical character have together, until recently, constituted large difficulties for the remaining displaced persons’ settlement. They have hindered the displaced from settling in Vavuniya and from returning as they do not have anywhere to return. This has been an obstacle for the displaced persons’ ability to choose to stay
or move, i.e. there has not been any alternatives of choice and rational thinking. Therefore is it
the structural factors that tend to be the most accurate explanation.

As mentioned earlier the study has limitations. It is only the displaced persons who stay in the
camps that have been examined. Therefore we do not know what personal resources the
displaced that already have settled possess. Another larger study could examine the personal
resources of both the displaced persons who still remain in camps and track whose who have
already settled, to compare the differences in personal resources. Also the fact that it was mostly
women I interviewed might have affected the result. And as I had help from a translator I did not
get the answers direct from the respondent which make the answers less reliable than if I had got
them straight from the interviewees.

Even though it is hard to draw any definite conclusions from the correlation between
personal resources and the displaced persons stay in the camps, much indicate that the structural
factors have been of major importance for the displaced persons stay in the camp. As mentioned
in the introduction the internally displaced are not always the most deprived members of a
community, but it seems to be the vulnerable persons with few belongings before the
displacement and a poor social networks (i.e. lack personal resources), that end up in the camps
and stays for ages.

An often used explanation to why displaced persons stay in camps after a conflict is that they
have become dependent, which suggests that the displaced persons are pacified and reluctant to
take responsibility for their own lives. This study however shows that even though there might be
circumstances that affect the displaced persons’ motivation to choose some resolutions, there are
contextual obstacles that hinder a choice. This study shows that the circumstances surrounding
internally displaced persons are complex and constitute many obstacles to their possibility to find
permanent settlements. The most obvious factors, like not having anyplace to return to and
deprivation of the legal rights of choice of settlement, can be the most important explanations.
References

Literature


Internet
Global IDP project, www.idpproject.org;

Key informant interviews
Mr. P.P. Devaray, chairman of Foundation for Community Transformation. The interview was made in Colombo December 2004.
Program Director, Government Agency, Vavuniya. The interview was made in December 2004.
Mr. Muthupillai Maadhavan, Protection Assistant at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The interview was made in Vavunyia November 2004.
Mr. Ravi, Protection Officer at United Nations Children’s Foundation (UNCEF) in Vavuniya. The interview was made in Vavuniya November 2004.
Camp Officer in Pontontan. The interview was made in Vavuniya November 2004.
Mr. S. Vijayanandnan, Protect Officer at Human Rights Commission in Vavuniya. The interview was made in Vavunyia November 2004.

Interviews in the Welfare Centre
16 interviews were carried out in the Welfare Centre. The interviews were made anonymously, i.e. the respondents did not give their names. Here are some characteristics of the respondents.

Woman, 45 years old, two children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Woman, 55 years old, husband, one daughter and brother in law, Indian Tamil.
Woman, 32 years old, husband and three children, Indian Tamil.
Man, 43 years old, four children, Indian Tamil.
Woman, 28 years old, three children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Woman, 25 years old, four children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Man, 61 years old, married, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Man, 42 years old, Indian Tamil.
Woman, 35 years old, two children, Indian Tamil.
Woman, 32 years old, seven children, Indian Tamil.
Man, in her thirties, wife and children, Indian Tamil.
Woman, in her forties, nine children, Indian Tamil.
Man, 44 years old, wife and children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Man, 31 years old, two children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Woman, 39 years old, two children, Sri Lankan Tamil.
Woman, 48 years old, two children, Indian Tamil.
The interviews were made in November 2004.
# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview guideline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male/female:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian or Sri Lankan Tamil:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did you live before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what district are you registered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you move into the Welfare Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For how long have you stayed in the Welfare Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is life in the Welfare Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have many friends and relatives in the area where you fled from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you consider your social life now (in the camp/outside)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any differences between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you and your husband/wife work with before you came to Vavuniya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you working now? (With what?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any education or any formally trained skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you or your husband/wife own any land or property?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, do you have access to it? (Why don’t you move there?/Why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been able to vote in the parliamentary election? (Why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you still stay in the Welfare Centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your preferred durable solution? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you going to move to a resettlement village? (Why/Why not?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned earlier this is a guideline. The interviews were not identical as some further questions only appeared in some interviews and as some persons replayed one question in connection with another question it was unnecessary to pose that question again. The question why they still stay in the camps got much attention. First the interviewees gave their own explanations to why they still live in the camp. These are summarized in section 4.3.1. Then the further questions where focusing on whether any of the explored personal resources have influenced their stay.
Appendix 2: Map of Sri Lanka

http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/indian_subcontinent/sri_lanka/sri_lanka.htm