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Situation Report

November - 2006

1.0 GENERAL SITUATION

The indefinite curfew slammed on 11.08.2006 gradually relaxed and now it has become a permanent feature from 6.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. and this too subject to sudden imposition in varied areas at the discretion of the security forces. The people are at a loss to understand why the curfew is prolonged especially in the army controlled area. This has a serious impact on the normal life of the people and their activities.

Frequent firing of artillery shells irrespective of the time from army points to Muhamalai, Poonakary and Nagarkovil create disturbance and panic among the people. The artillery points are in the midst of dwelling places of the people and the sound of the artillery shells is so thunderous small children, sick people and students cannot bear up and they are thoroughly sick of the artillery shells and multi barrel shells fired consequently and sometimes at intervals. Even the houses vibrate and there is a danger of walls, windows and ceilings getting damaged.

Generally the economic activities are at a stand still due to the prevailing tense situation, closure of A9 route and a very serious breakdown in the livelihood of the people will occur at anytime. With the exception of the monthly wage earners, the earning capacity of all others engaged in other trades is a big naught and are leading a miserable life.

2.0 LIVING CONDITION IN JAFFNA DISTRICT

The present population of the Jaffna District is 188,000 families consisting of about 650,000 persons.

i) Food Situation

Food situation has not improved. Limited food items such as rice, flour, dhal and sugar are transported by ships and supplied through MPCs to the family card holders. People cannot live with only rice, flour, dhal and sugar. There are various essential commodities required for the day to day life of the people. Items such as coriander, garlic, coconut oil, chillies and jaggery are supplied in limited quantities hardly enough for even few days.

Private dealers have no way of transporting any goods from Colombo and no food items or other items are available in the business centres. However, certain items are available in the black market due to leakage from the MPCs and other mushroom outlets created in this crisis situation. These items are sold at extraordinary high price and people cannot afford to buy them. A good percentage of the business centres have been closed and thousands of employees have been discontinued.

The hotels and tea boutiques cannot cater the needs of the people and they are just marking time as goods necessary for the preparation of eatables are scanty. They cannot purchase milk powder, sugar and the price of tea is Rs. 800.00 per kg.

Monthly Requirement

The estimated monthly requirement of food items, rice, flour, sugar, dhal and other items is 12,000 MT.

During the period 12.08.2006 to 30.11.2006 shipments arrived are;

1	1,500 MT
2	900 MT
3	3,680 MT
4	800 MT
5	1,700 MT
6	3,000 MT
7	2,800 MT
8	900 MT
9	725 MT
10	750 MT
11	2,800 MT
12	700 MT
13	2,800 MT
14	4,250 MT
15	700 MT
16	3,600 MT
17	2,000 MT
Total	33,600 MT

Against a requirement of 44,000 MT for the 110 days period total tonnage received was 33,600 MT a shortfall of 10,400 MT. The gap between the actual quantity issued to the people against the shipment arrived is being studied and findings will published in the next report.

A large number of other items essentially needed are not in the reach of the common man.

The prices of essential commodities available in the open market including the black market listed below;

<i>No.</i>	<i>Commodities</i>		<i>Price fixed by Secretariat, Jaffna (Rs.)</i>	<i>Price in the open market including black market (Rs.)</i>
1	Rice BG 11	1kg	40.50	100.00
2	Wheat Flour	1kg	43.00	80.00
3	Sugar	1kg	63.00	200.00
4	Dhal	1kg	73.00	90.00
5	Milk Power (Anchor – 400g)	1No	167.00	250.00
6	Tea (dust)	1kg	149.00	800.00
7	Jaggery	1kg	78.00	250.00
8	Dry chillies	1kg	223.00	800.00
9	Corrander	1kg	82.00	800.00
10	Garlic	1kg	100.00	600.00
11	Green gram	1kg	110.00	300.00
12	Black gram	1kg	129.00	250.00
13	Box of matches	1No	2.50	25.00
14	Sunlight soap	1No	27.00	60.00
15	Lux soap	1No	24.00	60.00
16	Surf excel (20g)	1No	6.00	20.00
17	Mosquito coil	1box	48.00	200.00
18	Coconut oil	1lit	118.00	1000.00
19	Kerosene oil	1lit	58.00	200.00
20	Petrol	1lit	100.00	250.00
21	Country rice	1kg	-	150.00
22	Shampoo small packet	1No	-	15.00
23	Coconut	1No	-	100.00
24	Fish	1kg	-	1000.00
25	Mutton	1kg	-	600.00
26	Egg	1No	-	45.00
27	Chicken	1kg	-	800.00
28	Beef	1kg	-	360.00
29	Gengely oil	1lit	-	1000.00
30	Pepper	1kg	-	600.00

It is relevant to mention that the prices of the items supplied through the MPCSSs are higher than the prices in force before 11.08.2006.

Earning capacity of fishermen, farmers, masons, carpenters and daily wage earners is practically nil and their livelihood is exposed to imminent risk. It is the opinion of the people that the Jaffna District will be a Somaliya if the present condition prevail for some more time. The panacea is to allow free flow of all items and flood the market.

ii) Nutritional Status

a. Children

Dr. S. Navaneethan's, V.O.G. attached to the Teaching Hospital Jaffna, analysis in respect of the nutritional requirement of a three year child and the present intake of food is listed below;

Food	Required nutritional intake			The present intake due		
	Weight (grams)	Calories	Nutrition	Weight (grams)	Calories	Nutrition
Cereals	150	475	15	150	475	15
Dhal etc.	50	210	20	25	105	10
Vegetables	30	} 60	-	30	} 60	-
Fruits	50			50		
Milk	200	130	6	-	-	-
Fish / Meat / Egg	30	50	6	-	-	-
Sugar	30	120	-	15	60	-
		1045	47		700	25

If this situation continues there is a risk of malnutrition and the children will develop “Kwashiorkor” and “Marasmus”. Kwashiorkor is manifestation of protean deficiency which will retard children’s growth. Marasmus will occur when all kind of food items are not available and affected children are wasted, frequently get infection and diarrhoea.

Children’s brain growth occur till eight years of age and malnutrition during this period affect intelligence. This might be a contributory factor for drop in educational standard in the North compared to pre-war situation.

b. Adults

The Council requested specialists to analyse the effect of inadequate food supply in the Jaffna District. According to their report during the 90 days period since 11th August, calorific value of all food items supplied per person per day is 725 kcal whereas minimum amount required is 2100 kcal i.e. one third of the total requirement is being supplied. Poor people who have no earning capacity has no money to purchase even these items.

The Council brought this to the notice of Mr. Allen Rock, UN representative who visited Jaffna on 11.11.2006.

A letter written to the Government agent, Jaffna in regard to the nutritional status of the Jaffna population is reproduced;

“The recent nutritional survey carried out by the Department of Sidha Medicine, University of Jaffna revealed that the nutritional level has reached a dangerous situation in the District.

Dr. S. Navaneethan, Gynecologist published an article in Uthayan News Paper (22nd October, 2006) regarding malnutrition and its effect on children due to shortage of food intake.

These news have raised deep concern among the public.

An analysis of the food supplied to a five member family during the period of 3 months since 11th August, 2006 is given below;

<i>Status of Issue</i>	<i>Rice (kg)</i>	<i>Flour (kg)</i>	<i>Sugar (kg)</i>	<i>Dhal (kg)</i>
1 st	2.5	-	2	-
2 nd	5	3	0.50	0.75
3 rd	20	10	3	1
4 th	5	3	3	2
5 th	17	8	3	1
Total	49.5	24	11.5	4.75

Calorific Value

1. Rice & Flour for five members - 73.5 Kg
 One person for 90 days - 14.7 Kg
 Energy Q 52,920 K.cal

2. Sugar for five members - 11.5 Kg
 One person for 90 days - 2.3 Kg
 Energy Q 9,200 K.cal

3. Dhal for five members - 4.75 Kg
 One person for 90 days - 0.95 Kg
 Energy Q 3182.5 K.cal

Total energy consumption for 90 days Q 65,302.5 K. cal

Energy consumption / Person / Day Q 725.58 K.cal

The minimum energy requirement / Person / Day - 2,100 K. cal

*It is very alarming to note only **one third** requirement is being supplied."*

iii) Shelter for IDPs

During to the recent disturbances nearly 10,000 families got displaced of which about 3,000 families are located in welfare centres. The families which occupied schools were compelled to vacate the premises in order to commence the schools. The Government Agent authorised UNHCR to be in charge of the shelter programmes for the IDPs in early August but, UNHCR has failed to construct shelters to conform to minimum standard even though three months had lapsed. They provided only three tarpaulins and three rafters for the families to construct the sheds by themselves.



On behalf of the affected displaced people the Council organised a press conference and the local newspapers gave wide publicity regarding the pathetic living condition of the people. Resultantly UNHCR officers have improved the roofing of about 70 shelters. But the

floor continues to be the bare ground which is not suitable during the present rainy season.

Some **salient points** in nutshell are given below to apprise the situation in regard to above.

1. Standard shelter was not provided even after three months of displacement.
2. Facilities and other supports were not provided / delayed as a ruse to send them back to their homes – **Indirect Violation** of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
3. Shelters size – Length 13’ and breath 12’
4. Occupants – 2, 3 families are occupying one shelter and number of persons vary from 6 to 10.
5. Roof - Simple tarpaulins without any cadjans and other supporting frame
6. Floor - Bare ground without any hard and impermeable surface
7. Rainy weather causing floor to be wet which leads to unhealthy condition
8. Sides - No walls, simple tarpaulin cover

Note: Three rafters and three tarpaulins were provided for each shelter instead of a complete shelter. **Can this action be considered as provision of shelters?**

Authorities have completely ignored Sphere Standards in the provision of shelters for IDPs

iv) Protection Concern (since August, 2006)

Arbitrary killings	-	159
Missing persons	-	127
Abductions	-	23
Arrests	-	26
Youths surrendered at the HRC and accommodated in the jail house for safe custody	-	30

3.0 HEALTH

The health authorities are taking all possible action within their means to arrest the spreading of the virus fever “Chikungunya” in the District. A good number of people have contacted this disease. Due to the rainy season there is a risk of abundant mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes are the cause of carrying this disease and sufficient insecticide is necessary to curb the breeding of mosquitoes. Use of mosquito coil has become an expensive one and the price of a box is Rs. 200.00 in the black market.

There is acute shortage of essential drugs. No fresh stock of drugs were brought to any pharmacy since 11.08.2006 and the stock in the pharmacies have been sold out. Even in the hospitals there is shortage of essential drugs and the medical officers give prescription to the patients to buy from the pharmacies but obtaining drugs from the pharmacies is a Herculean task and ultimately the patients have to suffer. Whatever, items if available, are sold at very high price which the average person cannot afford to buy. It will be surprising to note that even Panadol and Paracetol are not available in the pharmacies.

The stock of oxygen has got exhausted in the hospitals and there was no oxygen to perform surgery. After an urgent appeal, a fresh stock of oxygen cylinders were sent by air.

4.0 EDUCATION

Though the schools are functioning from 9th October, 2006 after a long period, the University of Jaffna has not commenced to function. It is reported that the atmosphere surrounding the University area is tense and not conducive for the students to attend the classes through fear and there is a set back in the University education.

The text books for the year 2007 are being issued in schools in other parts of the country, but there is no semblance of the issue of the books in the District before the closure of the schools for the December vacation. When there is a set back in the transport services, it is feared that there will be an inordinate delay in the issue of text books for the year 2007.

5.0 AGRICULTURE

The total extent of paddy land is 13,131 ha and out of this only 6,629 ha are cultivated during the maha season. Total cultivable highland is 8,972 ha and up to November, 2006 only 466.4 ha have been under plough. Fertiliser and insecticide were not brought from Colombo in time and there will a repercussion in the success of the crop.

Due to monsoonal rain, peculiar to the season there is a slack in the vegetable cultivation and the vegetable price has escalated to the maximum and not within the reach of the common man. To quote an example the price of bringal is Rs. 300.00 a kilogram. With no vegetables brought into the District from Dambulla and other parts, there is a dearth in the market.

6.0 FISHERIES

Fishing is completely banned in the District since 11.08.2006. All appeals by the fishermen cooperative societies to relax the ban with some limitations did not have any response and the fishermen are the worst affected. The dry ration supplied is hardly enough for their existence. A small relaxation has been introduced recently to permit few hours of fishing.

Fish is rich in nutrition and the people especially the children are denied of this nutritional food which is found in abundance in the coastal belt of the District and islands.

7.0 POSTAL AND TELEPHONE SERVICES

Postal and telephone services are a vital service and this is completely blocked but for the transport of letters by ships off and on from Trincomalee. It is reported that thousands of letters and parcels have been brought by ship from Trincomalee to Point Pedro after a lapse and these could not be taken out of the ship as the sea is rough. Mail is the cheapest mode of communication and this facility is shut off.

Mobile phones is a means of easy communication with the relatives and friends who are in the other parts of the island and abroad, but this service has been immobilised and the people are at the mercy of the communication centres where the charges are high.

8.0 TRAVEL RESTRICTION

One has to obtain a pass, rather a visa from the army civil affairs office to go out of the District by ship or plane. The procedure to obtain a pass is so cumbersome, many people opt to not to travel even it is very essential for instance like wedding, funeral, examination, interview etc. It could not be comprehended why such a stringent rule is enforced as far as travel outside the District is concerned. If the pass is necessary for reason security, at least people over the age of 60 years could be allowed to travel without a pass.

9.0 TRANSPORT

Frequency of bus service in the District has a bearing on the availability of diesel. The Jaffna bus stand which was in the centre of the commercial area and the hospital has been shifted to Pannai on the orders of the security forces much to the inconvenience of the commuters as they have to walk up the distance between the bus stand and the business centre. Patients too have to walk up the distance of about half kilometre or hire a three wheeler. One way system has been introduced in the town area and some of the roads have been blocked totally much to the detrimental to the users of the said roads. One has to take a circuitous route to reach the town and to come out. Motor vehicles and bicycles are not allowed to be parked in the town area.

10.0 ELECTRICITY

Since the release of the situation report for September – October, it has to be appreciated that the supply time of electricity has been increased to 15 hours (4.00 a.m. to 7.00 a.m., 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. to 11.00 midnight) of course with interruption during 6.00 p.m. to midnight. The supply is increased probably to help the students preparing for the GCE (O/L) examination. The supply hours mainly depends on the availability of diesel.

V. Srisakthivel
Hony. Secretary