



NORAGRIC

Centre for International Environment
and Development Studies

Forced migration and changing local political economies: A study from North-western Sri Lanka

by
N. Shanmugaratnam

December 2000

ISSN 0809-4934

NORAGRIC WORKING PAPERS NO 22

FORCED MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL
CHANGE AND LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT

Forced Migration and Changing Local Political Economies: A study from North-western Sri Lanka

N. Shanmugaratnam¹

Abstract

Forced migrations are an endemic phenomenon of the internal war going on in Sri Lanka since 1983. Currently about a million people have been internally displaced. The vast majority of them are Tamils from the war-torn North-East Province. However, substantial numbers of Muslims and Sinhalese have been displaced too. In October 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam expelled thousands of Muslims from their homes in northern Sri Lanka. Most of these forced migrants moved to predominantly Muslim areas in Puttalam District, which lies outside the war zone. The present study examines the impact of long-term displacement of large numbers of Muslim migrants on the political economy of the host areas in Puttalam. After an overview of the changes at the Divisional level in Kalpitya, the study focuses on one village in which the IDPs far outnumber the locals. The study maps the processes of change with reference to relief and development, relocation, distributional conflicts, socio-economic differentiation, vulnerability to deprivation and local and regional politics. The study shows that long-term residence of the IDPs in a safer area outside the war zone has led to major changes in the local socio-economic context and that the IDPs themselves have become more permanent stakeholders as participants in production and services and members of settled communities. While social integration between the IDPs and locals is evident, the former remain politically excluded. Their right to stay is not complete without political inclusion. On the other hand, this right should not in any way negate or undermine their right to return.

Introduction

Internal wars are the major cause of forced migration of large human populations in various parts of the world today. In most countries affected by war, the majority of the forced migrants remain within their national boundaries and are officially designated as ‘internally displaced persons’ (IDPs) in order to distinguish them from ‘refugees’.¹ Some 20-22 million people have been internally displaced worldwide due to armed conflicts (Hampton, 1998). This is greater than the world’s refugee population by four to five million, and the current trend is that the number of IDPs is increasing faster than that of refugees. Crossing international borders has become riskier and costlier for the majority of the displaced, thanks to the ever-increasing restrictions on the interpretation of ‘refugee’ as a legal category and the accompanying limits on immigration imposed by various countries. However, internal wars are on the increase and they have a tendency to become protracted. So, war-induced migrations of civilians continue on a bigger scale than before and most of the forced migrants end up in ‘safer areas’ within their own countries. These migrations are generally and justifiably seen in terms of humanitarian emergencies by relief agencies. There is an impressive body of literature on humanitarian relief and the logistical challenges of

¹ Professor of Development Studies
Centre for International Environment & Development Studies, Noragric
Agricultural University of Norway, Box 5001, 1432 Aas, Norway
Email: norns@noragric.nlh.no

coping with emergencies involving large-scale displacement of civilians. Considerable work has also been done on the relations between relief and development in war-torn areas although the focus of this has mainly been on policy aspects of ‘post-conflict’ development.²

However, a point that cannot be overemphasised is that, in a country with a protracted war, internal displacements are more than humanitarian emergencies. War-induced migrations alter local political economies in various ways due to short- and long-term depopulation in combat zones on the one hand and due to influxes of displaced people into safer areas on the other. They bring about redistribution of populations and resources and change social geographies. Larger the influx of IDPs into a locality and the longer they stay there, the more far reaching are the changes likely to be. The changes at the local level are not isolated site-specific phenomena, of course. They are products of interactions between the wider political economy and the local context. Government policies, relief and development programmes of governmental and non-governmental agencies, market forces and the stability or instability of the security situation play important roles in re-shaping the political economies of localities that have attracted IDPs.

At a broad level, a distinction may be made between ‘host areas’ within the conflict zone and those outside it, when it comes to personal security, linkages with the wider political economy and opportunities for economic activities. In general, restrictions on IDPs are fewer when they live outside the conflict zone and the host areas are part of the national policy environment. Within the conflict zone, even the ‘safer areas’ are subject to various security controls. Relief and development priorities are subordinated to strategic and tactical military considerations by the state’s military establishment and the anti-state armed movement in the areas they control. Moreover, economic activities in the conflict zone are affected by uncertainty due to the armed conflict, lack of inputs and poor access to markets. Thus a safer locality in the conflict zone is different in some fundamental ways from a host area outside it. The present discussion is more applicable to host areas outside the conflict zone.

When local realities as a whole are taken into consideration, a rigid distinction between IDPs and hosts or locals may prove to be an obstacle to a fuller understanding of the interactions between and the differentiation within them. The IDPs-host community (HC) dichotomy is dynamic and is permeated by a host of relationships and distributional conflicts. It operates within an evolving matrix of social relations that link IDPs and locals in different ways. IDPs and locals are brought into closer interaction by relations of production and other forms of economic transactions as well as socio-cultural contacts and new ties through marriage. While cultural commonalities help develop bonds of solidarity and coexistence between the two groups, competition for resources, services and opportunities generates distributional conflicts between as well as within them. Existing distributional issues within the HC undergo alterations, with the entry of the IDPs. The interventions of governmental and non-governmental relief and rehabilitation agencies may exacerbate

distributional conflicts because of their exclusive targeting of IDPs. This often leads to resentment among the locals, especially the poor, and strain HC-IDPs relations. With time governmental and non-governmental interventions move from relief to some forms of rehabilitation or development activities aimed at enhancing the entitlements of the displaced. These interventions are invariably ad hoc and disjointed. This is partly due to the nature of the emergencies that demand speedy action and the multiplicity of agencies acting more or less independently and often with agendas that may conflict or compete with each other. Attempts may be made to form coordinating bodies to achieve some degree of consensus on the priorities of needs and modalities of operations. However, such coordination may not go as far as a common agenda and modes of operation adequately sensitive to distributional and environmental concerns. These concerns assume greater importance as IDPs relocate permanently in areas where they found temporary refuge in the first place.

The stereotype of an IDP as a helpless individual indefinitely dependent on relief obscures the social differentiation that unfolds within displaced groups. The displaced may be ethnically homogeneous but, like their hosts, are differentiated in terms of class and customarily ascribed statuses according to gender and age. These three interact and the interaction further differentiates the individuals according to entitlement–capability statuses and vulnerability to deprivation. This differentiation, which can be traced to differential access to productive resources, employment and services, impacts on IDPs-locals relationships in contradictory ways. It reinforces as well as undermines the ‘Us-Them’ dichotomy. The differentiation would also affect the cohesiveness and hierarchies within groups formed on the basis of kinship ties and, in the case of IDPs, places of origin. Intra-group relations are renegotiated and hierarchical relations are redefined to conform to the emerging class and status differences.

Informed by the above perspective, the present study seeks to capture emerging changes in the political economy of an area that has hosted forced migrants from the war-torn Northern parts of Sri Lanka and that lies outside the larger zone of armed conflict. In geographic terms, the armed conflict is largely confined to the North-East province of the country although border areas and many other parts of the country, including the capital and other urban centres in the South, are also directly and indirectly affected. Civilians have been displaced in small and big waves at varying frequencies depending on the intensity of the armed conflict in particular locations and due to mass expulsions. While the vast majority of the displaced people are Tamils, large numbers of Muslims and Sinhalese civilians have also been forced to migrate to safer areas. More than a million people are displaced within Sri Lanka and more than half a million Tamils of the North and East have migrated to foreign countries.

The study is mainly based on original fieldwork carried out in the Kalpitiya Division of the Puttalam District in the North Western Province. The Puttalam District has provided refuge to more than 60, 000 Muslims who were expelled in October 1990 by

the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) from the Northern districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Mannar. Over 32, 000 of these IDPs stayed in Kalpitiya. Puttalam is an area free of armed conflict and, as of mid-2000, more than 60 percent of the IDPs had moved out of Welfare Centres (WCs) and relocated to permanent, semi-permanent and temporary houses with assistance from the state and NGOs. In mapping the changes, we first looked at the Divisional level to identify the main trends and then focused at a local level to discern the details of the processes. The political economy of the local level (a village) prior to the arrival of the IDPs was reconstructed and the changes that were taking place after their arrival were documented and analysed. The fieldwork was carried out in July 1998, September-October 1999 and September 2000. The study is largely qualitative. Group discussions and interviews with individual IDPs and locals including persons holding leading positions within both groups were the principal means used to collect data.

Framework of the study

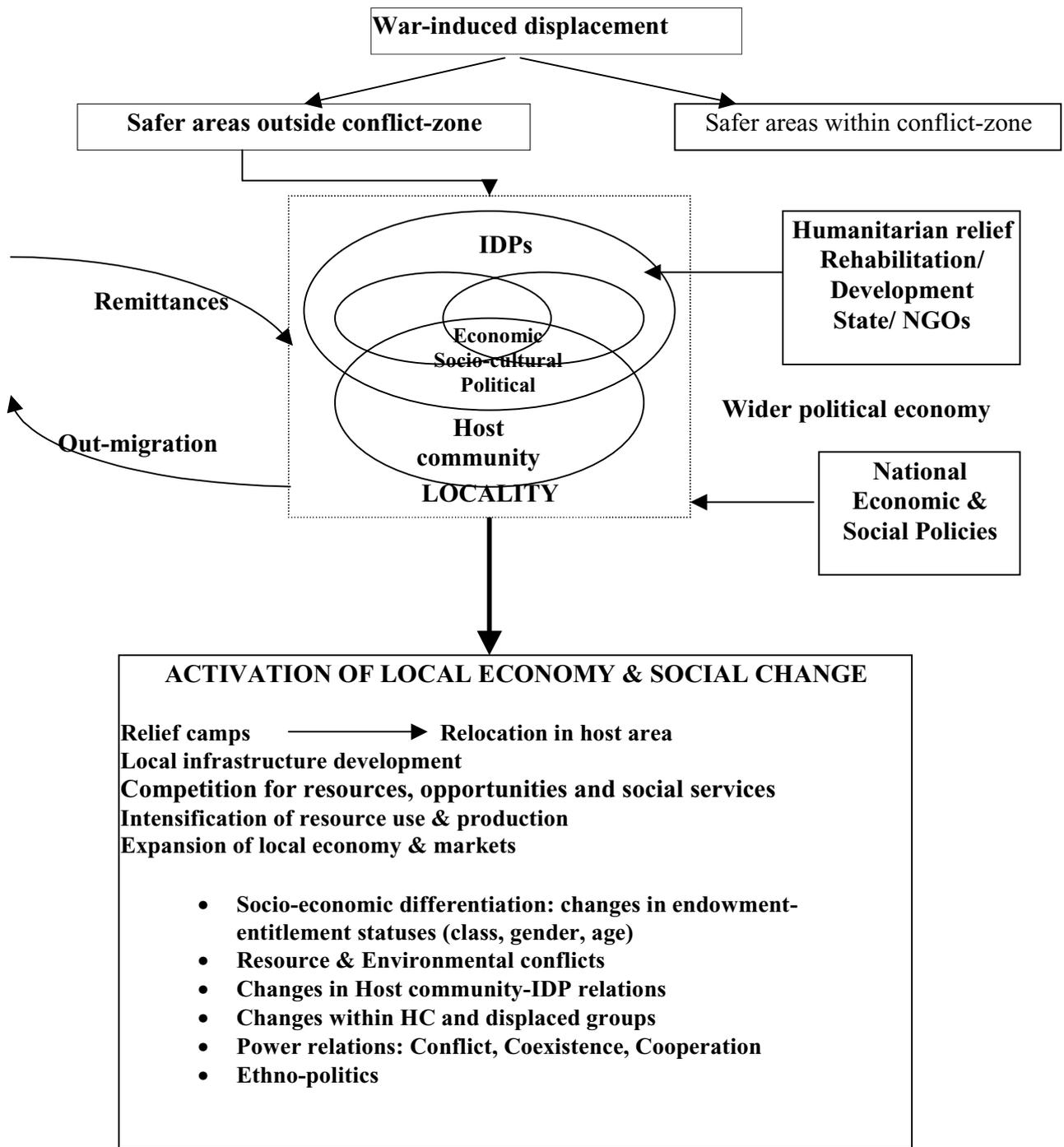
The framework of the present study is shown in Figure 1 and a brief explanation follows. Displaced people migrate towards safer areas. What is a safer area? People displaced by a protracted armed conflict normally look for a host area that is free of frequent and intense armed conflict and whose local residents are not hostile towards them. Another consideration would be accessibility of the safer area in terms of transport, financial costs and time. However, people fleeing violence are normally prepared to endure a harder journey if it would take them to a place where they are assured of a friendly or non-hostile reception from the locals.

As pointed out before, IDPs and locals do not exist in isolation from each other. When displacement becomes prolonged, social relations across the IDPs-HC divide take a variety of forms involving production, exchange and non-economic connections. In Figure 1, the relations between IDPs and locals are represented by two intersecting ellipses. The IDPs themselves may belong to more than one group according to their places of origin. The areas of overlap denote the active interfaces created and reproduced by constant interactions between people from different groups. The interfaces are a product of economic transactions, socio-cultural intercourse and local politics, which invariably involve distributional conflicts, group identities and ethno-nationalist ideologies. The interface is also the arena where conflict management arrangements are worked out and trust building and cooperation take place. Initially, some of the major transactions take place in the IDPs-HC interface - employment of displaced persons and land sales, for example. The interfaces between different groups of IDPs also develop and expand with time. All these processes constantly differentiate, integrate and redefine the local context.

The wider national political economy nowadays is more open than ever before. Sri Lanka has been implementing economic liberalisation from 1977 without any significant interruption at the policy level. While the North-East remained excluded from significant public or private investment since the inception of war, the results

have been spatially and socially uneven in the rest of the country. Some areas enjoyed greater public and private investment than others. Special rural and urban development projects targeting particular areas have added their own effects to this unevenness. The status of a locality would depend on where it lies in this larger picture of spatial differentiation. Our study area, as already noted, lies within the larger geographic environment of macro-economic policy but on the periphery. However, the influx of IDPs and their continued stay in the area have contributed to activation of economies and social change at the local level due to governmental and non-governmental interventions with relief and development projects, relocation and the active participation of the displaced in economic activities. Moreover, remittances may flow into the locality to families from relatives and friends who had migrated to other parts of the country or abroad. Figure 1 shows the main elements of the processes at work. Some of the distributional conflicts that emerge as economic changes unfold may lead to social tensions that reinforce the IDPs-HC dichotomy and differences within both groups. These social tensions may at times take violent forms, particularly where the conflicts are over access to common pool resources like fishing grounds, forests and grazing lands. Social tensions may also develop from conflicts, which may be purely inter-personal in origin involving individuals from the displaced and locals. However, over time, social interactions tend to promote cooperation and local arrangements may be developed to mediate conflicts and prevent them from turning violent. It is of interest to this study to look at how conflicts over access to common pool resources are handled at the local level. Further, it is important to map the process of socio-economic differentiation with respect to distributional aspects and vulnerabilities by focusing on class and gender³. The more important questions here are: How vulnerable are displaced and local poor to entitlement losses and deprivations? Do relations of production involve different terms of employment for men and women? If so, what are the terms and how are women affected?

The changes in the local political context need to be addressed with reference to the rights of the displaced as well as the local implications of the ethno-politics that pervade the larger polity (regional and national). The key questions would be: How have the political entitlements of the displaced and the locals been affected? How do the displaced perceive their present and pre-displacement political statuses? What views do the displaced hold about going back to their original homes? Given the ethnicisation of Lankan politics, does the ethno-religious identity shared by local and displaced Muslims serve as a unifying factor to subordinate their 'internal' conflicts to any larger common political interest?



**Figure 1:
 Long-term Internal Displacement and Its Possible Impact On
 Local Political Economy**

Expulsion from the North and Journey to Puttalam

‘One day five years ago, the blow fell on our people in the north. It was like a bolt from the blue. Without any warning and without any kind of charge or accusation against our people, the LTTE announced that every single Muslim man, woman and child must leave their homes and go out of the province. They were ordered to leave their possessions behind. All their money and jewellery and household goods had to be left behind. If anyone disobeyed the order, the penalty was to be death.’

-S. H. Hasbullah, President, Northern Muslims’ Rights Organization. Speech at the Public Meeting held on 30-10-1995 in Colombo to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the expulsion (Hasbullah, 1996: 1).

On the 22nd of October 1990, the Muslims of Jaffna, Mannar and Mullaitivu districts were ordered by the local leaders of the LTTE to vacate their homes and move out of the northern region immediately. The order was announced through loudspeakers and enforced by armed LTTE cadres who moved from house to house in the Muslim towns and villages. The LTTE’s decision came as a rude shock to a people who had coexisted harmoniously with Tamils for centuries in northern Sri Lanka. In 1990, the Tigers were in control of a major part of Northern Sri Lanka where they had set up their own administrative and judicial structures and were running a *de facto* state. The Muslims had no choice but to do as the Tigers said. According to first hand accounts, the local Tiger leaders were initially rather tight-lipped about the reason for their movement’s decision. ‘Orders from above’, some of them had said apologetically to the Muslims, while also adding that the action had a lot to do with the ongoing Tamil-Muslim clashes in the East of the country. The expulsion was executed with ruthlessness and the exodus of a population of about 75, 000 men, women and children began on that very day within hours after the LTTE’s order was announced. In Jaffna, they were given only two hours to leave while in Mullaitivu and Mannar the deadline was extended to a maximum of 48 hours.

Dispossessed and forced out of their homes, the Muslims began their migration towards safer havens by land and by sea. The main routes taken by them are shown on Map 1. The vast majority were headed towards areas in Puttalam, Anuradhapura and Kurunegala districts. From Jaffna, they crossed the lagoon and moved into the Wannu (Kilinochchi and Vavuniya) and proceeded to Anuradhapura and from there to Kurunegala and to destinations in Puttalam district. From Mullaitivu, they went through Vavuniya and Anuradhapura to Puttalam. The displaced from Mannar travelled by boats to Kalpitiya (in Puttalam district) and over land to Anuradhapura. Some groups from all three districts moved to Colombo via these areas. This was not the first time that displaced Muslims from the North moved into Kalpitiya or other parts of Puttalam District. In fact, some displaced families from Mullaitivu migrated

to Kalpitiya in the late 1980s. However, unlike the new arrivals, the earlier IDPs were able to bring their movable assets along.

According to a report from the District Secretary of Puttalam, about 65, 000 internal refugees arrived in that district in the last week of October 1990 and were accommodated in 116 Welfare Centres which were opened mostly in the predominantly Muslim Divisions of Kalpitiya, Puttalam, Mundal and Wanathavillu. About five percent of the IDPs chose to stay with relatives and friends. The Welfare Centres were quickly set up by government officials with assistance from local and international NGOs to meet the emergency. The basic facilities that could be provided were far from adequate but the relief workers and local population received the IDPs with warmth and comforted them. 'After the nightmare of being thrown out of our own homes and the 10 hour long boat trip in pouring rain', recalled a middle-aged man from Mannar, 'we felt a sense of relief and safety when we saw those friendly faces at the Kalpitti pier and later at the camp to which we were taken in lorries. At that moment, I thought that it would not be long before we returned home to our village.' Thus began a new and most unexpected chapter in the lives of the forced migrants from the North.

IDPs in Kalpitiya: An Overview of Trends

In 1997, there were 12, 736 displaced Muslim families (from the North) living in Puttalam district in Welfare Centres (WCs), Relocated areas (camps on state land), new housing settlements (i.e. settlements established through voluntary relocation of families by purchasing housing land) and rented houses and with friends and relatives. Of these, 6779 families (32, 608 persons) or 53 percent were living in the Kalpitiya Division. The Division occupies the major part of the peninsula protruding into the Indian Ocean and Puttalam lagoon (Map 2). It is a narrow strip of sandy land on which the main tree crop cultivated is coconut. Sweet potato and onions are the main annuals grown as cash crops with the aid of lift irrigation from wells. Sea and lagoon fishing is a major activity. The Division is subdivided into 31 local administrative units known as Grama Niladhari Divisions (GNDs). In 1999, the IDPs were nearly 75 percent of the total population of the Division. Most of the IDPs in Kalpitiya were from Mannar and Mullaitivu. The displaced from Jaffna, being urban in origin, stayed mostly in and around Puttalam town. The impact of the IDPs' presence was felt practically in every aspect of social and economic life in the Division. The inevitable arrival of governmental and non-governmental agencies with relief and rehabilitation programmes added a further dimension to the changing local context. The government, with international assistance, extended its emergency relief programme to the displaced. In late 1994, the newly elected government's Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction introduced a package of subsidies to assist families that chose to relocate. Details of emergency relief, the relocation package and interventions of NGOs are shown in Box 1.

By local standards, the increase in demand for living space, building materials, drinking water, firewood, fishing grounds, farmland, casual employment, and health and educational services was dramatic.

Box 1 The relief package and other entitlements

The WFP's emergency relief programme for the IDPs staying in WCs was channeled through the Department of Social Services. All registered members of a displaced family staying in a WC were entitled to emergency food relief, which consisted of a set of essential items supplied in quantities per person per month as shown below:

Rice – 12 kg
Dhal – 1.5 kg
Sugar – 600 kg
Coconut oil – 750 ml

Displaced families staying outside WCs were entitled to out-ration allowances from government as follows:

For a maximum family size of five – SLR 1200 per month
Family of four – SLR 1008
Family of three – SLR 840
Family of two – SLR 616
Single – SLR 336

Other entitlements:

Marriage allowance: An IDP getting married was entitled to an allowance of SLR 12,500 upon producing the marriage certificate to the Village Administrator. This was a one-off payment.

Assistance for Relocation: After the new government coming to power in August 1994, voluntary relocation of IDPs was accepted in principle and the following forms of financial assistance were offered by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction:

Construction of a temporary house – SLR 7000
Construction of a permanent house – SLR 25,000
Settlement allowance – SLR 2000
For kitchenware – SLR 1000

Several international agencies and local NGOs intervened with their programmes and projects too. UNHCR, UNICEF, Oxfam, Reddarna /Save the Children, CIDA, SIDA, ICRC, FORUT and CARE were among the more actively engaged international agencies working with IDPs. Several national NGOs were involved too, often in partnership with international NGOs. These included the Rural Development Foundation (RDF), Sarvodaya, Sewa Lanka and several smaller organisations.

Social change, Distributional issues and conflicts: the emerging scenario

The influx of IDPs and their continued presence since October 1990 altered the socio-economic conditions of Kalpitiya in unprecedented ways. The most obvious change was demographic, of course. The migrants came in large numbers and drastically changed the overall population-resource ratios. Their arrival reduced the natives to a minority in their own villages and towns in most parts of the Division, and this had led to a discernible sense of social insecurity among the hosts. Equally evident to anyone familiar with the area was the economic dynamism it had gained since the arrival of the IDPs. They came in large numbers and remained in an area free of armed conflict and with potentials for certain economic activities. Being free of armed conflict, Puttalam District was already a part of the geographic environment of mainstream economic policies. Though peripheral by national standards, it was going through a commercialisation of its agriculture and fishery and trade and services were growing. The collapse of Jaffna's export agriculture and fishery and restrictions on fishing in many parts of the North-East coast due to the war helped promote production of cash crops such as onion and chillies and commercial fishing in the District and elsewhere.

The majority of the IDPs were farmers and fishermen and most of them were experienced market oriented producers. There were also professional traders, contractors and craftsmen among them. In general, the level of literacy among the IDPs was higher than that of their hosts. The migrant population had not only productive capacities but was also a potential market for consumer and (in the intermediate and longer-term) capital goods. Even though the LTTE did not permit them to take their material belongings along, some of them had financial savings and some managed to hide their gold jewellery and take it with them to Kalpitya. Many IDPs were able to go to the Middle East to earn and remit money to their families. Some of them returned after a few years and invested their savings in farming and other businesses. In the past few years, some of the displaced fishermen from Mannar have been regularly going back seasonally to fish in their former fishing areas and return to their homes in Kalpitya. Groups of displaced fishermen from Mullaitivu moved back to the East coast seasonally and worked for fishing boat owners there. Most of the IDPs, however, had to begin their lives in Kalpitya by working as casual farm labourers and waged employment still remains the major source of cash income for the majority of displaced families. The women were prepared to work as casual labourers. 'We started working on farms from the day after we settled in the camp', said one of them. Thus the presence of these IDPs in an area like Kalpitya was bound to lead to changes in the economy, society and the environment with varied consequences to the entitlements of individuals and families.

The IDPs and the majority of the hosts spoke a common language and subscribed to a common faith. Local people showed a lot of understanding about the plight of the forced migrants from the North and sympathised with them. In fact, many WCs were established on private lands, which were willingly offered by the owners who later

received rents from the government. In October 1990, the widespread perception among the locals was that the Muslims from the North had only sought temporary refuge in Kalpitya. The IDPs had the same feeling and were hopeful that it would not be very long before they returned home. However, their displacement became protracted and this led to developments that constantly redefined the relations between IDPs and locals. Interactions between people from both groups became more regular and extended into economic as well as socio-cultural and political spheres. As illustrated in Figure 1, these interactions produced and reproduced an active interface between the two communities. IDPs-HC relations were being shaped and re-shaped by competition, conflict, cooperation and a growing awareness between both groups that a *modus vivendi* had to be found to coexist. The local context was changing and being redefined as time passed.

Local socio-economic contexts were changing due to the entry of IDPs into labour markets, lagoon and sea fishing and trade and due to their demand for land for housing and farming, for primary and secondary education and for healthcare. The increased availability of labour served to boost agricultural intensification and Kalpitya became a major supplier of onion, chillies, sweet potato and vegetables to Colombo, Kandy, and other urban areas. This was largely facilitated by the existence of a well-organised wholesale market outlet in Nuracholai town. The consumer demands of the IDPs had their impact on prices of essential goods such as vegetables and fish in local markets. Indeed, the IDPs' presence was felt in a big way in all sectors of the local economy. The impact of the activation of local economies and social change was differential. Not every member of the host community was hurt. There were some who profited from the presence of the IDPs. There were others who felt that their interests were being threatened, and some others whose livelihoods were eroded. Their entitlement to humanitarian relief and the attention they received from governmental and non-governmental agencies, made the IDPs look a privileged lot in the eyes of the local poor, lower-middle groups and the unemployed. The IDPs entry into the local labour market pushed wages down. Displaced women became a cheaper source of labour to the detriment of the local workers. The local poor viewed the IDPs with envy and anger. However, the emerging distributional problems cut across the IDPs-HC divide. Yet these problems tended to reinforce the IDPs-HC dichotomy at different levels, both objective and subjective. The social and economic insecurity felt by the middle and poorer sections of the host community found expression in different ways. The subtle and not so subtle cultural distinctions articulated by people from both sides were not unrelated to this sense of insecurity. At the same time, relations of cooperation in economic and social life developed between IDPs and locals too.

The IDPs had their feelings of insecurity as well due to lack of political rights and uncertainties about the future. They were going through socio-economic differentiation with the poorer among them being affected by vulnerabilities due to low wages, unemployment and sickness. Displaced women workers, along with their local counterparts, continuously faced discrimination in wages. A layer of rich IDPs had become visible even to a casual observer. Constituting about 10-15 percent of the

displaced families in Kalpitya, the rich IDPs accumulated through speculation in local land markets, trade, tractor hiring and transport, farming and sea fishing. Many of them made their initial money capital through the 'ration card business', which refers to the pawning of ration cards by IDPs in distress. The ration card represents the food entitlements provided as emergency relief to the displaced. The 'ration card business' continues to this day. Rich IDPs forged business links with their local counterparts in Nuracholai and other towns.

Since the latter part of 1994, a major development concerning the social status and living conditions of the displaced was relocation. It began when the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction introduced incentives in the form of a relocation package which included subsidies for purchase of land and construction of temporary or permanent houses (see Box 1). By the end of 1999, more than 50 percent of the displaced families in Kalpitya had bought housing land and relocated to new settlements within the Division, 10 percent lived in rented houses or with relatives and friends and 25 percent continued to stay in WCs. The rest lived in 'relocated camps' on state land. Thus more than 60 percent of the displaced families lived in their own or privately rented houses.

The decision to relocate was taken by individual families and the housing conditions varied from temporary sheds without proper toilet facilities to permanent modern and well-furnished houses with drinking water and toilet facilities. The variations in housing reflected the socio-economic differentiation among the relocated families. The circumstances in which they chose to more permanently relocate had certain objective and subjective features in common. The most common among these were the conditions of living in the WCs. Congestion and hence lack of private space, conflicts among residents, health problems, sexual harassment and sexual relations that were considered immoral, parental concerns about children's education and future, and the longer-term psychological effects of all these on adults and children were mentioned by relocated IDPs as the major reasons for leaving the WCs. Relocation was seen by these displaced families as a necessary step to move ahead in life. However, under the terms of World Food Programme's (WFP's) assistance, a relocated family ceased to be entitled to the emergency food relief once it received the grant for permanent housing. Many relocated families chose not to take the grant and continued to stay in temporary houses, as they did not want to lose the emergency relief.

Predictably, relocation activated local land markets and as land prices moved up many locals decided to sell their lands to IDPs. Speculators entered the market too. Larger holdings were divided into plots of 10-40 perches and sold to IDPs. Most of the relocating families bought only a 10 perch plot. Relocation contributed to expansion of economic activities through local land booms and mini construction booms. Permanent, semi-permanent and temporary houses, feeder roads, wells and tube-wells were constructed. The trend of relocation that moved upward until the end of 1998 had clearly come down by mid-2000. The Ministry of Rehabilitation and

Reconstruction had discontinued the incentive scheme for relocation since mid-2000. It would seem that most of the non-relocated IDPs would not be able to afford the cost of relocation due to the high prices of land and construction materials. Relocation has significantly impacted on the evolution of IDPs-HC relations. It has enhanced the IDPs eligibility to permanent residence with full political rights in the area. However, this issue remained unresolved.

Relocation led to conversion of considerable extents of coconut and other agricultural lands into housing lands. IDPs had also rented in and bought farmland for cultivation. The land sales led to a broad basing of land ownership. Larger land holdings belonging to individuals or single families were divided into smaller parcels and sold to many IDPs. Thus what was going on was not concentration of land in fewer hands but the opposite. However, almost all the new landowners were IDPs, 'outsiders' in the eyes of the locals, particularly the landless and the poor. There were signs of resentment among locals about land changing hands to 'refugees' and about the rising prices, which were beyond the purchasing power of most of the former. On the other hand, local landowners benefited from the rising price of land. It would seem that both locals and second generation IDPs wanting to have their own homesteads or farms would have to face the reality of rising scarcity value of housing and agricultural land, if the current trend continued.

Explicit and implicit in the foregoing overview of the situation in the Kalpitya Division are several issues concerning changes in local political economies. The rest of this paper is devoted to a more detailed examination of changes at a micro level. We move from the Divisional to the village level to look at how Alankuda has been experiencing the influx and long-term stay of IDPs who outnumbered the locals by 4.3:1. We begin by reconstructing the socio-economic situation in the village at the time of arrival of the IDPs and proceed to look at different aspects of the ongoing processes of change, with due reference to the framework of the study

Alankuda: A microcosm of change, conflict and coexistence

When the IDPs arrived in Alankuda in October 1990, the village was in the midst of an agrarian transition spurred by what locals call 'the onion boom', which began somewhere around 1985. This transition was characterized by the dynamic upward mobility of a middle layer of farmers who seized the opportunity thrown up by higher prices and the advantages offered by a fairly efficient wholesale marketing outlet for onion, chilies and vegetables in Nuracholai. Onion was the most profitable of all the crops at that time, and hence the name 'onion boom'. The lands cultivated by these farmers were originally state land, which they had encroached and converted to farmland. Subsequently, they had their encroachments regularised by the Land Commissioner. The rise of this layer of about 50 families was viewed with apprehension by the traditionally dominant group/class in Alankuda, which consisted of coconut landowners who were also engaged in trade. They wielded great influence and authority through their economic power and control of the local mosque. In fact, this tiny class was a close-knit kinship group of eight families, which owned coconut estates. They had encroached into state land for farming too. The landless poor and small farmers constituted the casual labour reserve for the coconut landowners.

The farms possessed by small holders ranged from less than one to eight hectares in size. However, a major part of this land was not cultivated intensively or left uncultivated due mainly to lack of adequate labour during peak periods of the cropping cycle. Most of the 50 or so families that comprised the upwardly mobile layer cultivated 1-2 ha on average as intensively as they could. Intensification involved choosing high value crops like onion, using high yielding seed variety, increased application of fertilisers and pesticides and multiple cropping (2-3 crops a year) with the aid of lift irrigation. A few of them cultivated larger extents (6-8 ha). For this dynamic group of farmers, the influx of the IDPs was timely as it provided a large pool of labour to expand and intensify production of high value cash crops. It would be fair to say that the ready availability of cheap female labour enabled rapid intensification, which generated surpluses for those local farmers who had more than two hectares of land. These farmers invested their surpluses in land, housing, and trade and other profitable tertiary activities. During the second half of the decade, they shifted more into trade and other tertiary activities without completely giving up farming. Today, they are the dominant group within the upper class of the village. However, the coming of the IDPs had a different effect on the local poor who depended largely on casual employment for cash income. Losing their employment opportunities to IDPs who were willing to work for lower wages, they became more marginalised and resentful about the displaced displacing them in the labour market.

The 'onion boom' did not last very long. It began to peter out rather rapidly after reaching a peak in 1992-93, by which time several IDPs had rented in land for farming and introduced to the village the lower capital demanding sweet potato. Crop failures left many onion farmers indebted, but the 'new rich' of the village had made their fortunes and moved into other less risky and more profitable lines of business. And a

land boom that set in by late 1994 began to gather momentum as a growing number of IDPs sought land to relocate in Alankuda with financial support from the government. The prices offered were too high for many local landowners to resist, particularly those who were in debt due to crop failure and those who needed cash to expand the new business ventures they had entered into. By this time IDPs had also moved into fishing and trade and other tertiary activities. A considerable number of women and men from displaced families had migrated to the Middle East and were remitting money home. Some of the IDPs were rapidly moving upward while another section constituted a significant middle layer. However, the majority of them remained casual workers and dependent on relief. The decline of agriculture in 1999-2000 exposed their vulnerability to deprivation due to unemployment. Alankuda's political economy was set on a course of change that produced diverse social, economic and environmental consequences. Before looking at the changes that have been unfolding in Alankuda over the past ten years since 1990, a brief account of the main features of the village in 1990 would be helpful.

Alankuda in Early 1990

Alankuda is a Grama Sevaka Division (GSD- village administrative unit) belonging to the Kalpitya Division and lying to the south of Kalpitya town (Map 2). It is located on the Kalpitya-Puttalam road. Alankuda GSD was a larger administrative unit consisting of seven villages until 1988 when it was divided into two GSD, viz. Alankuda and Andankerni. The re-demarcated GSD, 712 ha (1758.6 acres) in extent, is bounded on the east by the Puttalam lagoon, on the west by the Indian Ocean, and by Andankerny and Nuracholai on the north and south respectively. Nuracholai is the major town in the area. The interior of Alankuda was connected to the main road by a gravel road. Before the arrival of the IDPs in 1990, Alankuda had about 225 households of which more than 85 percent were Muslims, all of them Tamil speaking.⁴ The rest were Sinhalese. The population was around 1000. There were 65-70 permanent houses, of which 20 had electricity, the rest were semi-permanent and temporary. Most of the houses had no toilets. Farming, livestock keeping and waged employment were the main sources of livelihood for the majority with lagoon fishing playing a subsidiary role.

The area received an annual rainfall of 1000 mm, which was bimodal with long intermittent dry spells. However, it had good groundwater resources at shallow depths and hence high potential for lift-irrigated commercial farming subject to limitations imposed by the sandy nature of the soil. In terms of land use, 250 ha was under coconut and another 250 ha was arable land used for annuals such as onion, chillies, tobacco and vegetables and fruits. There were 30 ha of forest, 150 ha of bare land and 32 ha of residential and other areas. By 1990, almost all the arable state land had been encroached. Coconut was the main tree crop and more than half of the area under it belonged to about ten families in the village. A few larger holdings belonged to families that were not resident in the village. About 40 ha were vested with state

institutions after the Land Reforms of 1972 and 1975. The remaining coconut land of 40-45 ha was owned in smaller holdings by Alankuda residents. The land used for annual crops was originally state land, which over time was encroached upon and converted to farmland by villagers. The encroachments were subsequently regularised by the Land Commissioner's Department, which granted LDO Permits and later *Swarnaboomi, Jayaboomi and Janmaboomi* deeds⁵ to the encroachers. Locals had taken possession of almost all the arable state land in Alankuda before 1990. The extent of state land encroached by a family varied over time, with the early encroachers occupying larger areas than the later ones. In 1990, the size of a family holding of farmland ranged from less than 0.5 ha to 8 ha. All privately held land, including the regularised encroachments, was subject to intergenerational subdivision.

Of the 225 households, 175 were engaged in agricultural production. The rest did not own any farmland and were dependent on casual employment as agricultural and rural unskilled workers. Women from these families were part of the casual labour force although they did not work outside the village. About 40 families, mostly landless, practiced fishing (mainly prawn) in the lagoon with stake nets. Most of them worked for three traders who lent them fishing nets and had to surrender their catch to the traders and accept the price paid by them. None of the fishermen had a boat or a canoe. No one from the village was engaged in sea fishing. A few persons in the village worked in the public sector, mostly as minor employees. More than 50 percent of the families were recipients of poverty alleviation benefits under the Janasaviya Programme.

Coconut was the main cash crop until the early 1980s when commercialisation of subsidiary food crops such as onion, chillies, tobacco and vegetable production began to gather momentum. Puttalam was the main supplier of coconuts to the Northern Province. According to a former trader, about 150,000 coconuts were transported daily from Puttalam to Jaffna and other northern towns before the onset of the war in 1983, when trade between the two regions began to decline due to security problems. This and the import of palm oil and other cooking oils (all substitutes for coconut oil) affected the income of the coconut producers. The traditional dominant class did enter into production of subsidiary food crops. But it was the harder working and enterprising new layer of farmers that seized the opportunity for profit making thrown up by favourable relative prices for onion in the mid-1980s.

The 'onion boom' in Kalpitya was a product of a combination of circumstances. The decline of commercial subsidiary food crop production in the Jaffna peninsula due to the war, reduced seasonal imports of onion, a well-functioning wholesale vegetable market outlet at Nuracholai and the availability of good quality groundwater for lift irrigation were among the main factors that favoured the farmers of villages like Alankuda. Kalpitya farmers were also able to obtain good quality seed onion from Jaffna until 1994, although its agriculture was steadily declining. The sandy soil, while demanding more frequent irrigation, was favourable to root crops like onion and

sweet potato. In 1990, almost all the farmers of Alankuda cultivated onion. It was the most profitable crop at that time, although it was also the most capital demanding of the subsidiary food crops. Enticed by the high profit margins, many farmers cultivated onion continuously on the same land, ignoring the possible longer-term consequences due to build-up of pests and decline of soil quality. Chillies and vegetables were cultivated by a majority, often in smaller extents than that of onion. Alankuda's labour force was unable to fill the demand for labour during planting and harvesting times. This constraint was overcome to a considerable extent by the supply of seasonal labour from neighbouring areas. However, since the same crops were being cultivated more or less at the same time in most parts of Kalpitya, the labour supply constraint was acutely felt during peak demands, particularly at harvest time. Delays in harvesting and post-harvest operations were common and this affected the quality and hence the price of the produce.

Alankuda was served by state owned general clinics in Nuracholai and Etalai, 3-4 km away, and by the maternity hospital in Mampuri 6-7 km away. The facilities at these institutions were basic. Even though the distance to Nuracholai and Etalai clinics was only 3-4 km, residents of Alankuda had difficulty getting there due to extremely poor or total lack of connecting roads and transport facilities. The base hospital in Puttalam is 25 km away. The main health problems were related to water-borne diseases affecting children and adults. Malaria was prevalent too. The village had a primary school with classes up to grade four. There were 100 pupils and two teachers. The school lacked basic facilities such as furniture. The nearest secondary school was at Nuracholai and children pursuing their education beyond GCE OL had to go to a school in Kalpitya town. In 1990, about 90 percent of the villagers had not gone beyond primary schooling, 6 percent had education up to Grade 10 and the remaining 4 percent up to Grade 12, all of them males. Many adult women had not completed even primary education (Marzook, 1989). However, by 1990, the richer families had been sending their male children to better schools in Puttalam, Kurunegala, Colombo and Kandy.

The above description suggests that in 1990 Alankuda represented a rural setting that was emerging from a relatively marginal situation and displaying clear signs of change in the local political economy. This change was signified by the rise of a dynamic layer of entrepreneurs who took to cash cropping and later moved into trade and other tertiary activities like transport and communication. This group joined the old dominant class and gradually took over the leadership of the village. A leading member of the group took the initiative to activate Traders' Association at Nuracholai. Their ascent to dominance in Alankuda was symbolised by the leading role they came to play in the village mosque. The new mosque leaders had been to Mecca and became strong defenders of the religious code. They followed the locally accepted norms of social conduct. This contributed greatly to harmonising relations with the 'old leadership'. The old dominant class resented the rise of the 'new rich' but accepted the reality. Their sentiment was expressed succinctly by one of their most respected members who now resides in Nuracholai:

They worked for us on our lands. I took steps to have 53 of their encroachments regularised in 1970-77 when I was President of the Cultivation Committee. Thanks to the war in the North, onion and chillie production in our area received an extra boost, although I personally lost due to the disruption of the coconut trade with the North. The coming of the displaced Muslims from the North solved the labour problem. I have seen how enterprising the Alankuda farmers were. Today they are the rich in the village and some of them are the biggest traders in Nuracholai. Times have changed and there is no reason to resent their success.

The dominant class had expanded in size and changed in composition. Of the upwardly mobile 50 families, about 30 belonged to this class in 1990. The rest together with some others who were petty traders and employees in government and private sectors formed a loose middle layer. Poor farmers and casual labourers constituted the majority, which was around 65 percent of the families in Alankuda.⁶ The village remained socially disadvantaged in relative terms. Its infrastructure and social services were poor. Alankuda was not a part of any special development interventions like Integrated Rural Development or Village Re-awakening Programmes, which were being implemented in different parts of the country outside the war-zone. However, the poor in the village were covered by the government's poverty alleviation programme (Janasaviya). Experience had shown that Janasaviya's role in enabling the rural poor to move out of poverty and become more self-reliant was highly limited. Village studies have shown that upward social mobility of rural poor families had taken place where they were targeted by a combination of interventions such as housing, rural infrastructure development and employment generation projects along with Janasaviya (Shanmugaratnam, 1999). Alankuda was not in such circumstances. Moreover, the low level of literacy of 90 percent of the village population implied that prospects for social mobility were highly limited for most of them.

The arrival of hundreds of IDPs to this village in the latter part of 1990 and later and their continued stay there in WCs and new settlements had changed its local political economy dramatically. The Alankuda we saw in July 1998 (and later) had gone through a great deal of change in a matter of less than ten years.

Coming of the IDPs and an Impetus to Change

After their coming, everything has got money value, even a piece of wood.

- A local casual worker

Business is very good and there has been a hundred percent increase. Earlier we made Rs 5000 a day, now we make 10,000. What will we do if they left?

- A businessman (from Alankuda) in Nuracholai

IDPs began moving into Alankuda soon after their arrival in Kalpitya. Four WCs, named Alankuda A, B, C and D, were established. The displaced were from Mannar and Mullaitivu Districts and group formation had taken place on the basis of kinship and places of origin. Relocation of families within and in neighbouring villages in new settlements began in late 1994-early 1995. The local and displaced population in Alankuda in 1998 is shown in Table 1 below. With the influx of the displaced in 1990 and the subsequent natural increase, the population of the village had risen to 7543 and IDPs accounted for 81 percent. There were 4.3 IDPs for every local person. The average size of a displaced family was 5, while it was only 3.9 for the local.

TABLE 1
LOCAL AND DISPLACED POPULATION IN ALANKUDA – 1998

	Families	Males (M)	Females (F)	Total (M+F)
Local	345*	632	718	1350
Displaced	1158	2697	3096	5793
Total	1503	3329	3814	7143

*310 Muslim, 35 Sinhalese

Source: Divisional Secretariat, Kalpitya.

Evidently, Alankuda experienced a dramatic demographic change due to in-migration and the situation represented a more extreme case of disparity in numbers between locals and IDPs. And with time, other differences and disparities were emerging and impacting on this disparity. Alankuda's spatial structure had changed fundamentally with the formation of new settlements that the locals had to cope with a feeling of being spatially hemmed in and socially crowded out. Many locals expressed this feeling in different ways. These expressions ranged from qualified willingness to accommodate the IDPs and milder forms of disapproval to explicit statements of anger over the loss of opportunities for the locals. To quote a few on the issue of space and overcrowding:

'They needed some place to stay but they are too many and we have lost the physical space we had to move around and feel comfortable. I do not mind some of them staying here permanently but certainly not all of them. This place has become overcrowded.'

'We thought they would be staying here only for a short time. But now they are being helped by the government to buy land and build houses and stay here

forever. They are in control of everything and we have little left for us. And what about our children?’

‘You are talking about locals and refugees. Nowadays we feel like displaced people in our own village and they behave as if this is their village. We are encircled by a group that is four to five times larger than us.’

‘It is best that they go back.’

These reactions conveyed the dissatisfaction and frustrations felt by individuals in the host community due to the sudden shrinkage of space, or overcrowding, as one of them put it. However, to the IDPs, moving out of the WCs into new settlements with individual houses and homesteads meant leaving an overcrowded camp, which denied private space, to a home with more space and privacy. Of course, the contradicting perceptions of space were conditioned by contextual differences. Relocated families were already beginning to feel the need for more living space as their children grew up, and there was evidence of intergenerational subdivision of housing land. While the ‘us-them’ dichotomy remained, the changes unfolding in Alankuda had different facets and social differentiation cut across the IDPs-HC divide and the divides among the IDPs according to places of origin. In fact, the IDPs referred to themselves as ‘camp residents’ and ‘house owners’ and the latter were further differentiated into ‘big house owners’, ‘small house owners’ and ‘hut dwellers’. They spoke of themselves in terms of owner cultivators, tenant cultivators, tractor owners, vehicle owners, boat owners, businessmen, casual labourers, unemployed and poor. Middle level and poor locals blamed the IDPs for many things including loss of jobs, higher cost of living and environmental deterioration. At the same time, they did talk about farmers, landowners and businessmen from Alankuda, Nuracholai and around making ‘a lot of money’ after the IDPs came. Local businessmen were happy about the presence of IDPs, as reflected in the quote above. However, some of them expressed strong views about what they perceived as ‘the cultural difference’ between them and the ‘refugees from the North’ (see below).

While presenting a microcosm of the emerging trends in Kalpitya discussed earlier, Alankuda displayed certain peculiarities of its own. As already mentioned, it represented a more extreme local context of the displaced outnumbering the locals. Viewed against the evolving spatial patterns and social interactions as a whole, the IDPs-HC dichotomy did not appear to be the most dominant feature. While two WCs continued to exist, 12 new settlements along with 12 new mosques had come into being in a village, which had only one settlement and a mosque. Each of the new settlements had a name and displayed corporate characters of a community. Generally, its residents were from a common area of origin in Mannar or Mullaitivu. A social hierarchy was emerging with the richer settlers assuming leadership roles in the Mosque Committee and in the affairs of the settlement. The residents (i.e. relocated families) regarded the new settlement as their ‘village’ within the larger, open universe of Alankuda. They would use the names of the new settlements (Table 2) to refer to other relocated groups as well as different parts of Alankuda, which they perceived as a cluster of ‘villages’ rather than a single corporate entity. In this larger

picture, the locals occupied a part of a village, which they had been used to seeing as a single entity. Social interactions took place within and between settlements while Alankuda as a whole was becoming economically more integrated into the wider political economy. Within Alankuda, differentiation and integration were going on simultaneously, both socially and spatially. However, competition for resources and opportunities was more among the IDPs than between them and the locals. Thus the local context had expanded and acquired a diversity that cannot be reduced to the IDPs-HC dichotomy. We look into different aspects of the changing context in order to capture it more holistically.

Social Life in Welfare Centres (Camps)

Of the four WCs in Alankuda, two (Camps B and C) were established on state land and the others on private. As of September 2000, only two of these Camps were operating. There was a steady trend of relocation by families from Camps A, B and D. Fewer families from Camp C had relocated. Typically, a WC was a fenced area within which each displaced family was accommodated in a small hut of about 150 sq. ft. The huts were temporary structures with cadjan walls and roofs. The distance between huts was normally 2-3 meters. 10-12 families shared one or two wells for drinking water and bathing. Six or seven families shared a toilet. Residents complained about the inadequacies of the toilet facilities and of the lack of privacy for women during bathing at the wells. Each Camp had a mosque constructed by the residents.

Each Camp had a Camp Leader, a Camp Committee, and a Mosque Committee. The Camp Leader was the official spokesperson of the camp and he coordinated supply of relief entitlements within it. The mosque was the central institution for the community of residents in a WC. It served as a rallying point for the whole group and religious leaders spent considerable time in maintaining social harmony through face-to-face contact with Camp residents. In the traditional way, internal conflicts were first taken to the Mosque Committee, which tried to resolve them. The Camp Leader and members of the Camp Committee and the Mosque Committee were males. Social life in the Camp appeared peaceful where kinship and old neighbourhood ties served to cement social cohesion. Weddings and religious occasions like Ramazan brought larger groups together. But the same ties that enabled group formation also served to keep groups apart within Camps and tensions did develop even within groups based on kinship and old ties as well. More importantly, the physical and social environments of the WC were so different from those of the villages from where the displaced came.

The psychological impact of displacement and the unusual conditions of life in the WC generated tensions at the individual, family and larger group levels, tensions the IDPs had not experienced before. They spoke to us at length about the psychological and social tensions caused by congestion. Back in their villages in Mannar and Mullaitivu a family had a house and sufficient space around to enjoy privacy. Now

there was no private space for a family and neighbours could easily notice intra-family conflicts. Discussion of many private matters was suppressed and this created tensions. 'Displacement', said a young educated IDP, 'has disrupted the social fabric and the framework that guided community life. Life is not normal.' 'When you are living crammed up in a Camp as we do', said a Camp leader, 'misunderstandings tend to increase. There are no family secrets anymore and there is no such thing as private life.'

There were several instances of open conflicts within Camps. In one instance, an internal conflict turned extremely violent and resulted in the death of two persons and a fire that destroyed the entire WC. This happened in Camp A in 1995 when 103 huts were reduced to ashes and all of the residents evacuated. Most of the families moved out of the Camp to other parts of Alankuda and to Kalpitya town area. Some opted to return to the Camp and their huts were rebuilt. The residents of the Camp were from Ahaththimurippu in Mannar and a group of them relocated to a new settlement in Alankuda and named it Ahathimurippu. Officials and IDPs were reluctant to talk about the causes of the conflict. Whatever the immediate provocation was for such violence to erupt, the whole incident was an extreme manifestation of tensions and conflicts that developed over time and the inability of the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution to deal with problems that became complicated due to the peculiarities of camp life. As already noted, the social and psychological tensions of this life were among the factors behind displaced families' decision to relocate.

Relocation within Alankuda

By September 2000, more than 840 families had bought housing land in new settlements and most of them had moved to their new dwellings. 100-150 of them were still constructing their houses while staying in WCs. More than 600 families received a grant of SLR 10, 000 each from the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction to buy housing land. This was an advance paid out of the grant of SLR 35,000 earmarked by the Ministry for permanent house construction. 125 of the 840 families moved to a new settlement named Thayib Nagar in the neighbouring village of Andankerny. A few displaced Northern Muslim families had also relocated to Alankuda from elsewhere, while some from Alankuda moved to other parts of Kalpitya and Puttalam Divisions. 717 families had relocated to 12 new settlements as of August 2000. Some basic information on relocation within Alankuda is provided in Table 2.

The establishment of new settlements had transformed the face of Alankuda and, as already observed, made it a cluster of inter-connected smaller 'villages'. Some infrastructure development had taken place in and around the new settlements, particularly in the form of feeder roads. This had greatly improved transport of goods and people between Alankuda and Nuracholai town, which is well connected to other parts of the District.

TABLE 2
NEW SETTLEMENTS IN ALANKUDA-SEPTEMBER 2000

Name of new settlement	Families
Kalmunaikudi	146
Sarafiyapuram	40
Madeenanahar	46
Thaarusalam	40
Ali Jinna	51
Jinnapuram	65
Almanar 1&2	49
Ahathimurippu	49
Alhijra	115
Alhira	47
Ahmadiyapuram A1	49
Ahmadiyapuram C2	20
Total relocated (12 settlements)	717

Sources: Hasbullah et al (1999), RDF (2000)

The housing conditions of the relocated families varied widely reflecting their wealth and poverty. In September 2000, of the 146 houses in Kalmunaikudi, only 35 were permanent, of which 27 had electricity. The rest were temporary. The new settlement had its road improved and extended with the assistance of the RDF. Seva Lanka, another Sri Lankan NGO with international support, provided a community hall of 60x20 sq. ft. The Shahid family (not the real name) of five from Mannar lived in Kalmunaikudi in a brick house with three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and a porch in a compound of 40 perches. They had electricity and the house was reasonably furnished. The house was thatched with cadjan. The compound, which was fenced with dry coconut leaves, had a well, a detached toilet and a home garden with coconut and other plants. *'I built the house in stages. Bought the land in 1994 for 25, 000 rupees. Started construction and moved into the incomplete house in December 1994. There is little more work to be done, I want to have the roof tiled. Have received the 35, 000 rupees offered by the government for house construction in three instalments. Have spent nearly 80, 000 rupees so far on the house. I opened a grocery shop five months ago'*, said Shahid pointing at the shop at the entrance to the compound. The shop served the displaced families that had relocated to Kalmunaikudi. There was also a poultry shed of 300 sq. ft., which housed 100 birds. This was funded by the FORUT-UNHCR micro project scheme. The Shahid family was producing broilers and earned an income of 2000-3500 rupees a month. *'Poultry feed is expensive and there are disease problems too but the shop is doing well'*, he said. Shahid called

himself a businessman. Back in Mannar, he ran a shop inherited from his father. *'This property here'*, he said proudly, *'is worth more than 500, 000 rupees today.'*

Mohamed (57) living with his wife and five children in the new settlement named Alhira was not as well off as Shahid. He paid about SLR 12, 500 for the 10 perch plot in which a two-roomed temporary house was constructed. He had a good word for the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, which granted him and his neighbours money to buy land and put up temporary houses, and for NGOs such as FORUT, Redd Barna and RDF for helping them construct toilets, wells and roads. Only three of the nearly 50 families at Alhira had permanent houses. *'Most of us are reluctant to embark on constructing new houses'*, said Mohamed, *'because we cannot afford to lose the dry ration. Once you take the money offered by the government for permanent house construction, your dry ration will be stopped. It is too big a risk to take. I am happy that we have a house of our own, though it's nothing compared to the one we lived in back in Chilavathurai. But we still don't have a personal address. Our letters have to be collected from the post office.'* He also said that some families had already subdivided their housing plots to give land to their newly married members and that almost half of the relocated families were likely to subdivide their plots in the near future. The legality of such subdivisions remained questionable (see below).

Relocation changed the status of the displaced from being 'temporary guests' to that of *de facto* permanent residents. It gave them the social anchorage to re-build communities and form group identities. It provided a more stable basis for social interaction and integration across group distinctions based on places of origin. At the same time, relocation became the major driving force of a land boom with mixed consequences to both IDPs and locals in Alankuda.

The land boom and tenurial uncertainty

The natives are selling their lands to refugees. I am not totally against it but at the rate this is going on, most of the natives may end up landless in a few years and those who came as refugees will own the land and become natives. The natives don't seem to be thinking about the land needs of their future generations.

- A local notable in his late forties (September 1999)

A housing lot of 40 perches lay vacant in the new settlement of Kalmunaikudi. An IDP bought it for SLR 22, 500 in 1994. In October 1998, it was being offered more than SLR 100, 000 by another IDP. Jabbar (not the real name), from Mannar, bought the adjoining plot of 40 perches in 1994 at the then going price of 22, 500. More recently, he sold 20 perches of it to a relative for SLR 80, 000. These are eloquent indicators of the land price boom in Alankuda. It should also give an idea of the competition among IDPs for housing land and the purchasing power of some of them. Within Alankuda land prices varied according to location and they increased with

time as demand rose. Because of access roads and availability of electricity, housing land in Kalmunaikudy was in high demand. Land closest to the road fetched the highest and that furthest away the lowest.

IDPs were competing with IDPs for land and some of them made good money by buying more land early and selling it in smaller housing plots later at higher prices. Speculators were active in the land market and some of them entered it even before 1994 when the land market in Alankuda was rather thin. In fact, the 40 perch pieces of land referred to have an interesting history in this regard. They were part of a block of 8 acres of coconut land bought from a local landowner by two persons, one from Mannar and the other from Jaffna, in 1992. In 1994, they divided the land into approximately 40 perch plots and sold it at 22, 500-25, 000 rupees a plot. They also constructed a path in the middle of the block of land so as to enable access to each of the plots. The exact price they paid for the land in 1992 was difficult to ascertain. Senior local residents said that 40 perches of housing land did not cost more than SLR 16, 000 in 1992 and in all probability the price paid for this land was much lower as it was not in an area considered suitable for housing by the locals.

Most of the housing land bought by IDPs in Alankuda was agricultural land, which was differentiated by locals into coconut land and farmland, the latter referring to land used for annuals. Many locals had also rented out a part or all of their farmland to IDPs for farming. According to our estimate, by September 2000, 102 ha (52 ha of coconut land and 50 ha of farmland) had been bought by IDPs and converted into housing land. The extent of land sold by a single owner varied from 0.42 ha to 7 ha in the case of farmland and 1.2 ha to 12 ha for coconut land. The lands were divided into plots of 10-15 perches and sold to individual families of IDPs. However, there were two or more transactions before this final stage was reached. Normally, the landowner sold his land as one block to an intermediary who later subdivided it and sold at a higher price to individual buyers. In some instances, some of these individual buyers bought 40-80 perches each and subdivided the land into 10 perch plots and sold them to the final buyers. At each stage, the price went up. In several instances, the intermediaries were camp leaders who were already into the 'Ration card business'.

The lands sold belonged to two types of property rights. All coconut lands were privately owned and had clearly defined and transferable ownership rights. The farmlands were regularised encroachments. Most of them had *Swarnaboomi* and *Jayaboomi* deeds, which had strong restrictions on transfer. According to the terms of tenure, these holdings could not be sold or transferred in parts or whole without the written permission of the Divisional Secretary. However, to our knowledge this procedure had not been followed in the sales of these lands. The generally adopted practice was as follows. A deed of declaration was signed by the landowner to the effect that he was in possession of the said land for many years by right of inheritance or uninterrupted occupation. This deed of declaration was deposited at the land registry while a sale agreement was entered into between the transacting parties. As already noted, the sale of land went through two or more stages, with each stage

involving a new sale agreement and re-demarcation of boundaries. The deed of declaration may not be defensible in a court in the event of litigation. It disregards the existing title to the land and gives the impression that the land was the owner's property by right of inheritance or long-term occupation. However, the Land Commissioner's Department has documentary evidence of the actual tenurial status of the land. In fact, we came across at least one instance where an IDP's right to ownership of the *Swarnaboomi* land he had bought was disputed. In this case, the former landowner's son had demanded the land back from the IDP. Local mediators settled the dispute informally. The IDPs who had bought such lands were aware of the tenurial uncertainty but were hopeful that long-term occupation of the land would strengthen their case for legal ownership.

It would seem that the main reason for not following the prescribed procedure was that Divisional Secretaries in Puttalam were not in favour of sale of *Swarnaboomi* and *Jayaboomi* lands to IDPs from the North. Apparently, this had a lot to do with the ethno-politics of land. '*An unwritten yet well known policy followed by the land bureaucracy*', said a leader of an organisation of the displaced, '*is that transfer of state lands should be done without altering the existing ethnic ratio in favour of minorities (i. e. non-Sinhalese)*'. However, the procedure adopted to circumvent this obstacle created problems for the IDPs when they applied for the permanent housing grant to the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction through the Divisional Secretary. The latter refused to approve and forward their claim on grounds of lack of proper title. Some of the IDPs whose applications were rejected this way made fresh applications directly to the Ministry and succeeded in obtaining the housing grant.

Land prices continued to remain high throughout 2000 although they were not rising. A transaction involving 15 acres (6.07 ha) was called off at the last minute in September 2000 as the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction announced that it had suspended payment of the SLR10, 000 grant to IDPs for purchase of housing land. A landowner, who was a successful businessman in Nuracholai, wanted to dispose of his 15 acres of farmland in Alankuda as he had incurred losses from onion cultivation for two consecutive years. He had reached an understanding with the leaders of a WC to transfer his land to them at a total price of approximately SLR 3 million. The camp leaders in turn would subdivide the land into 10 perch plots to be sold to IDPs at a higher price. It was assumed that there would be enough IDPs willing to buy these plots as they would be receiving the grant of SLR 10,000, which would cover a part of the cost. The Ministry's decision to suspend its subsidy scheme had caused the cancellation of the deal.

Since 1991, IDPs had been renting in or buying land for farming too. Most of the 100 or so IDPs engaged in farming in Alankuda in 1998-99 were tenants operating 0.5 to less than 1 ha; only about five percent were owner cultivators. The demand for farmland from IDPs began to decline after 1998 due to rising cost of production and crop failure. In 1999/2000, the area cultivated in Alankuda declined by 40-50 percent. However, both IDPs and locals saw this decline as temporary.

Interestingly, the influx of forced migrants into Alankuda altered the prices of land and labour in different ways. Land prices shot up to the benefit of the landowners while wages were pushed down to the detriment of the workers, as their exchange entitlements declined. The other side of this scramble for plots of land was the shattering of the dream of many IDPs, including their second generation, and locals to have a house or a farm of their own in Alankuda. The ongoing land transactions in Alankuda had their socio-cultural and political implications. In a sense, they take us to the heart of the dynamics of the changing local social geography. Relocation manifested itself in new human settlements, which altered land ownership, land use and the social composition of the village. Similarly the entry of the new settlers into farming contributed to this changing local geography not only by altering the tenure and resource use intensity but also by reinforcing the political and social legitimacy of the forced migrants' claim to be regarded as locals. Further, the acquisition of land by the forced migrants had its implications for construction and negotiation of local identities. A deeper treatment of the issue of local identity construction is beyond the scope of the present study but it will be commented upon in the concluding section.

Agricultural intensification: linkages, ups and downs

Land conversion and stepping up of agricultural intensification were going hand in hand since the beginning of relocation. Between 1990 and 1994, all available farmland was intensively cultivated. More farm wells were constructed. Of the 272 wells in Alankuda in 1998, 162 were exclusively used for irrigation. After 1994, the area used for farming was reduced due to land conversion caused by relocation. There was fragmentation of farmland with the entry of nearly 100 displaced persons into farming. However, intensive multiple cropping continued with increased use of chemicals. There was no labour constraint to intensification and the latter generated increased demand for tractors, water pumps and irrigation equipment, kerosene, fertilisers, pesticides, sprayers and packing materials. This demand promoted the growth of Nuracholai town as a supplier of agricultural inputs. Local businessmen seized this opportunity; two from Alankuda were among those who expanded their business into fertilisers, pesticides and water pumps. Tractors were in demand for land preparation and transport of farm produce from Alankuda to the wholesale market in Nuracholai. Mechanisation of land preparation saved time and aided multiple cropping. The development of local road infrastructure brought about by relocation enabled easier transport. Before 1990, bullock carts were the means to transport farm produce from Alankuda to Nuracholai. These were replaced by tractors and to a lesser extent by three wheelers (autos) as local infrastructure improved. The tractor owners were IDPs as well as local businessmen. There were seven autos in Alankuda, all of them owned by IDPs. The autos were used mainly to transport people but at times for taking smaller quantities of farm produce as well to the wholesale market and retail shops in Nuracholai. A former cart owner lamented that he lost his livelihood because of 'the man from the North who brought a tractor into the village'.

Most of the IDPs who took to farming chose to grow sweet potato as the main crop, mainly because it required less capital than onion. Local farmers began to adopt this crop too. However, in the heydays of the onion boom, many farmers (locals and IDPs) cultivated onion thrice or even four times a year on the same land without rotation. This was the most probable cause of the subsequent crop losses due to build up of pests and together with rising cost of production, it contributed to indebtedness of farmers. The declining fortunes of cash cropping affected both farmers and casual workers. Indebtedness among farmers and unemployment among workers was high in 1999-2000 when the area cultivated dropped drastically. Ameer (not real name), an IDP from Chilavathurai, Mannar, seemed to have decided to try his luck with farming at the wrong time. He rented in two acres of land from a local farmer in 1999, because he was unable to find regular employment as a carpenter to support his wife and seven children. The farm had a well and the total rent was 20,000 rupees per year. He bought a water pump from the 'Singer shop' (a big shop in Nuracholai owned by a businessman from Alankuda) for 35,000 rupees to be paid on instalments. The price included an interest and transaction charges of 10,000 rupees. Ameer planted onion in the first season and incurred a heavy loss as the crop largely succumbed to pest attack. He then switched to sweet potato but barely managed to break-even. In September 2000, Ameer was still in debt to the shop owner as he was unable to pay his instalments on the pump. His family had no ration card as he had taken the full grant for permanent house construction. He had pawned his wife's jewellery at the People's Bank to feed the family and to meet other immediate needs. 'I was hoping to have 3-4 crops of onion a year and make some money, but now I am in debt', he said.

The environmental consequences of heavy use of fertilisers and pesticides remained to be investigated. Another matter of concern was the intensive use of groundwater. Some speculated that aquifers were probably depleted due to continuous pumping of water for irrigation.

Lagoon fishing: conflict, accommodation and threat of resource depletion

Lagoon fishing became a highly charged issue as locals found themselves outnumbered again in an activity, which had its spatial and biological limits. Lagoon fishing was a supplementary source of subsistence to the local poor and now they found this traditional entitlement threatened by 'outsiders who had no right to fish in this lagoon'. They accused the IDPs who engaged in fishing in the lagoon of over-fishing and using banned techniques. This led to open conflicts, which turned violent at times. In 1993, a major clash took place between IDPs and locals in the Alankuda-Andankerny area of the Kalpitya lagoon. Sinhala fishermen from Andankerny and Muslim fishermen from Alankuda got together and attacked IDPs fishing in the lagoon. A Sinhalese fisherman from Andankerny described the incident in the following terms.

Normally, only 50 to 100 villagers fish in this part of the lagoon. We use spread nets and stake nets and we are conscious not to overfish and not to damage those parts of the lagoon that have to be preserved as breeding grounds for prawns and certain species of fish. They enter the lagoon in larger numbers and use push nets, which are banned. They do not care about the special breeding grounds. Naturally we were not happy. The catch and consequently our earnings were becoming smaller. Discontent was building up among our people as people's livelihood was at stake. On the day of the clash, about 200 of them were fishing in the lagoon. Most of them were using push nets, as usual. Our people went and attacked them. After this major clash, they did not come to this area until after the change of government in 1994. The previous government backed us. But now they have political backing and they are back in the lagoon fishing. Many of them are still using push nets.

This fisherman, who was an office bearer of a Fishermen's Cooperative Society, had strong opinions about the IDPs in general. While insisting that the conflict had no ethnic basis since both Sinhala and Muslim locals were opposed to the IDPs' use of push nets, he repeated that *'they have political backing and are dominating everywhere to the detriment of our people'*. A local Muslim community leader said that *'the conflict had less to do with them being refugees than with their using a banned technique of fishing. They broke a basic rule of fishing in the lagoon'*. The IDPs we interviewed admitted that they used push nets. The general feeling among them was that they were attacked because they were regarded as outsiders. A person from the area told us that the IDPs were encouraged by some local fish *mudalalis* (traders) to use push nets. According to this person, these traders were responsible for the conflict.

The IDPs avoided fishing or using push nets in the Andankerny area of the lagoon after the violent episode of 1993. Several locals in Alankuda were not happy about the violence although they felt that the IDPs had done something wrong. After the incident, the IDPs began to fish in the Nuracholai area of the lagoon where not many locals were fishing. The Alankuda part of the lagoon was dominated by fishermen from Andankerny. Nuracholai was almost totally Muslim and only few of them fished in the lagoon. Moreover, the IDPs felt more secure because the locals were Muslims. More than 200 IDPs fished in the lagoon along with 70-80 local (Muslim) fishermen. Not all of them were fishermen before coming to Alankuda. Many who were only farming before took to lagoon fishing for their livelihood. *'I did not have money to buy or lease in land and too many are fighting for work on farms and the farmers prefer to employ women. So I learnt to fish with the help of fishermen from my area'*, said a farmer turned small fisherman from Mannar. The push net did not disappear either; it became more widely used as some locals began to adopt it with the help of IDPs. There was no repetition of the violent episode. In July 1998, more than 200 IDPs fished along with 70-80 local persons in the Alankuda-Nuracholai part of the lagoon. Relations between the displaced and local fishermen had become friendlier

though it was common to hear some locals complain about the numbers of the former, the dangers of using push nets and the exclusive focus of NGOs on displaced fishermen.

It appeared that the conflict had been contained and any turn towards violence was being avoided. Certain developments had directly and indirectly contributed towards this state of non-confrontation if not accommodation. The change of government in 1994 and the establishment of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in the same year led to an environment in which the IDPs felt more secure. The local social atmosphere was improving as a result of more frequent contacts between IDPs and locals. It is difficult to say how friendly the relations between different groups had become, or to assert that a conflict over fishing rights would not take a violent turn in the future. What had become more evident over time was that the displaced felt secure enough to continue fishing in the lagoon. A group of them had even organised themselves into a fishermen's association.

A group of IDPs from Mannar formed an organisation called the Alfala Small Fishermen's Association (ASFA) in February 1998. Initially the association had 43 members and by October 1998 the membership increased to 68. The Norwegian NGO FORUT, assisted by UNHCR, supported the establishment of ASFA by providing an initial grant of SLR 206,000 for a revolving fund. All 68 members received loans to buy fishing nets and other tools. The nets used by the fishermen were hand net, prawn net and small-fish net. The loans were interest free but a transaction cost of SLR 250 was charged on each loan. A one-off membership fee of SLR 50 was charged too. The average loan per member was SLR 7000 and it was being repaid at the rate of around SLR 500 per month. The President of the ASFA said that the revolving fund was being managed well. However, the Association could not be registered as a fishermen's cooperative because its members were not considered as local (permanent) residents by the Fisheries Department.

None of the Alankuda IDPs fishing in the lagoon owned or used a boat. The main fishing season was for six months from October to March. The average daily earning of a member from fishing was about SLR 150. Many sold their catch in the village or to fish vendors. However, prawns were sold to bigger fish traders. In Alankuda, there were about 32 bicycle fish vendors of whom 25 were IDPs. *'Fishing is men's job and most of the wives work on farms for a wage of 80-100 rupees. Most of the men look for work on farms in the non-fishing season and they do get jobs in this and other villages around though not so regularly'*, said the President.

The formation of ASFA has certainly helped the members enhance their self-employment capacity. The President felt that the membership would continue to increase up to about 100 or so. When asked about the impact on the locals, the President was frank. *'Yes, the local lagoon fishermen feel deprived. They are not organised like us. True, there is a problem, an employment problem for them, due to our numbers.'*

The families of all 68 members had bought housing land, 10 perches each for SLR 6000. Most of them were still living in temporary houses. *'After we formed the sangam (Association), said the President, 'we began to rebuild our community. Now we have houses and our own mosque. When the Tigers forced us out of our place, most of us managed to bring only a gold ring and a few hundred rupees. We have struggled and got somewhere. We now feel we have stayed here long enough to be legally regarded as local residents but we do not even have the right to vote here.'* He was concerned about the lack of formal recognition of ASFA by the Fisheries Department. On the other hand, the authorities did not prevent the IDPs from establishing ASFA or from fishing in the lagoon. Their numbers and the functioning of ASFA had changed the balance of power in favour of the displaced lagoon fishermen although a majority of them remained unorganised like their local counterparts. Most of the non-members did not own the different kinds of nets owned by ASFA members. Many rented prawn nets from fish traders and sold their catch to them. More importantly, the exclusion of the locals from AFSA might lead to conflicts, especially if and when the locals choose to form their own association to stake their claim as the rightful users of the lagoon's resources. Such a development could not be ruled out when the socio-economic consequences of resource depletion begin to be felt more acutely. The use of push nets coupled with the increased number of fishermen had raised the intensity of fishing in the lagoon and consequently the threat of resource depletion loomed large. No attempts had been made to develop a sustainable resource management system for the fishing grounds in the lagoon or to institutionally integrate the two groups as users of a common pool resource. In this regard, a workable resource conflict management arrangement has yet to be thought out at the local level. In the absence of records of the actual status of the fish resources it was not possible to ascertain the extent of overfishing, although there was awareness among some locals as well as IDPs that it was taking place.

Sea fishing by IDPs – Higher earnings amid conflict and uncertainty

Several displaced fishermen from Mannar and Mullaitivu were able to practice their vocation of sea fishing using a landing site (*paadu* in Tamil) in Alankuda. Rights to a landing site are governed by customs and the fisheries legislation and the IDPs had no formal access right to a landing site. The licensee of the landing site used by the IDPs was a Muslim boat owner from Nuracholai. He had held this right since 1973. There were altogether four landing sites on the Alankuda coast. The licensees of the other three were not from Alankuda but from Wennapuwa. Before the arrival of the IDPs, the fishing grounds along Nuracholai, Alankuda and neighbouring areas were mostly used by Sinhalese fishermen migrating from Wennapuwa-Negombo areas. These fishermen had established landing sites along the coast. Sea fishing was not a common activity among Muslims of the area though many of the dominant fish traders were Muslims. The licensee who allowed displaced fishermen to use his landing site owned three boats and employed 20 IDPs. He said that he wanted to help the IDPs and he was happy to employ them because they were good fishermen. His was the only

landing site at Alankuda used by the IDPs. In October 1998, 12 IDPs in Alankuda owned second hand boats with engines of 9.9 to 15 HP and fishing gear and other equipment needed for sea fishing. Each of them employed 2-4 IDPs.

The fishing season was from November to March/April. The value of a day's catch was divided between the boat owner and the workers according to a formula commonly adopted in the area: 1000 rupees for food and 50 percent of the remaining money to the boat owner and the rest divided equally among the workers. The boat owner supplied the fishing instruments and bore the cost of petrol and upkeep of the boat and engine. Wage differentials existed where special skills played a role in fishing. For instance, the person who acted as the leader (*mandadi* in Tamil) could earn about SLR 10, 000 a month because of his technical skills in guiding certain fishing operations. However, earnings varied according to the catch and its market value. Boat owners and big traders were doing well. Those who worked for a wage had a seasonal employment, which did help their household economies.

The displaced fishermen had run into conflicts in the sea with fishermen from Wennapuwa. The main cause of the conflict was the use of *laila* net by the IDPs. However, there was a strong feeling among them that the conflict had an ethnic dimension as well. Fishermen from Mannar were used to fishing with *laila* net, a special net used to catch certain species of fish that migrated to the Puttalam region in December-February. The net was used in the North and East of Sri Lanka and in Southern India. However, the Sinhala speaking fishermen accused their displaced counterparts from the North of using a technique that also netted the small fish. There were occasions when they had cut *laila* nets cast by displaced fishermen and assaulted the latter. The department of Fisheries intervened and suspended the use of *laila* net and asked the National Aquatic Resources Authority (NARA) to study the problem and report. Fishermen from Mannar insisted that the use of *laila* net was not banned at any time in Sri Lanka. They also said that it was still being used and that '*even the Sinhalese fishermen who attacked us have started using it too. The fish are here only for three months and with laila nets the catch could be as big as 1000-1200kg.*'⁷

During the off-season in the Northwestern area (i.e. April-September), some groups of displaced fishermen travelled overland to the East coast to work for big boat-owners and traders as paid fishermen. Actually, the employers came to Kalpitya and took the fishermen along with them to the East. From Alankuda, 100-150 IDPs of Mullaitivu origin went to Pulmuddai-Trincomalee area. The monthly earnings were good, ranging from about 6000 for ordinary fishermen to 15, 000 for divers, but the risks of getting caught in a cross fire between the Sri Lankan navy and the Sea Tigers (LTTE's naval wing) were high. There was also the risk of fishing boats being shot at by the navy on suspicion that they might be LTTE boats. The boat owners had to pay the Tigers to be allowed to fish in the East.

The vicious circle of vulnerability: From distress sale of relief entitlements to distress sale of labour power

The provision of emergency relief entitlements ensured the food security of displaced families to a great extent. Casual employment was another important means to enhance entitlements. However, one of the most marked manifestations of the ongoing social differentiation was the vulnerability of a significant section of the displaced population to deprivation at various times. The vulnerability was related to their inability to meet urgent and regular cash needs without resorting to distress sale of relief entitlements and in many cases their labour power. These needs varied from medical expenses, repayment of debt, wedding and funeral expenses, buying clothes, and sending a member of the family to the Middle East to work as housemaid. Seasonal unemployment and the absence of employable persons in the family aggravated this situation. Pawning of the ration card and the little jewellery they had was the commonest way among the poor IDPs to obtain loans.

The ration card system was introduced in 1991. The Village Administrator was responsible for ensuring the supply of the provisions to the Camp. He worked through the Camp Leader who collected all the ration cards in his Camp and produced them to the Village Administrator who forwarded them to the manager of the cooperative store supplying the provisions. Apparently, it worked well as a practical arrangement to administer relief. For the IDPs, the possession of the ration card ensured their entitlement to certain essential food items. And for the poorer IDPs, the card served as a pawn as well, a purpose for which it was not meant. While some IDPs sold a part of the food items they received to meet immediate cash needs, many pawned their ration cards to traders who were IDPs as well as locals. Calling it ‘the ration card business’ and a ‘racket’, an IDP went on to explain.

Many refugees mortgage their ration cards for money. The reason for doing so is poverty. There is a network involving traders, who are also refugees, and Camp Leaders, who mediate between people in their camps and the traders, and the officials of the co-operative store that supplied the provisions. At least two Camp Leaders are in the ‘ration card business’. They remain in the camp for business reasons. They have bought land here and other assets like tractors too. They own shops. Once pawned, the card is with the trader. He takes the pawned cards in his possession to the Camp Leader on the date when the provisions are collected. Actually he goes with the Camp Leader to the coop and collects his share straight away according to the cards he has. A poor family may pawn its card for a few weeks to six months or even longer. It depends on the amount of money borrowed and the family’s earning capacity and the availability of work. The GS (Village Administrator), the manager of the coop that supplies the food items and its Board of Directors are in the know of this racket and rumour has it that they also get some benefits out of it.’

According to another source, as many as 40-50 percent pawned their cards for amounts varying from less than 1000 to as high as 12,000 rupees. The mortgage value of a ration card depended on the number of beneficiaries (members) included in it. The normal monthly rate was SLR 200 per member, but desperate IDPs were willing to accept 100 rupees. A card of a family of five could be pawned for a maximum of SLR 12,000 for a year. Based on retail prices of the items concerned, the monthly value of the provisions supplied to a family of five was approximately SLR 1500, which was the interest on the loan accruing to the lender. In other words, a trader engaged in ration card pawn brokering could appropriate SLR 18,000 a year for a loan of 12,000 from the card of a displaced family of five members, an interest of 150 percent! Apparently, he paid a part of it to some others in the 'racket', to borrow the term used by the IDP quoted above. Rentier economy of a new form, an innovative one at that! Emergency relief was turned into a source of accumulation by a perfect mechanism invented by a few to capitalise on the distress of the displaced. According to several IDPs, a particular camp leader had in his possession more than 100 ration cards pawned by families living in the two WCs and in temporary houses in new settlements.

The mortgagors depended on earnings from waged labour and help from friends and relatives to repay the debt and reclaim their cards and on the same sources to feed themselves too. Items like rice, sugar, dhal and coconut oil supplied to IDPs were sold at shops owned by IDPs in the camps and in Nuracholai town. In 1999, displaced families were selling their rice ration at 17 rupees a kilo. Later, they were buying back a kilo of rice at 20-24 rupees. The families that pawned their cards or sold a part of their relief entitlements were affected by food insecurity to varying degrees at different times; their vulnerability increased when their cash income declined. The total cash income of a family, which was not receiving remittances from relatives or friends elsewhere, depended on the number of family members going for waged employment which again depended on the demographic and health status of the family and availability of work. Many of the IDPs who had pawned their ration cards were compelled by circumstances to sell their labour power for lower wages. The distress sale of relief entitlements led to distress sale of labour power, the only means available to the poor IDPs to obtain an income. In particular, women who already suffered institutionalised discrimination in wages were the main losers. Thus they ended up with reduced exchange (market) entitlements and increased vulnerability to food insecurity and health hazards. Many IDPs worked on farms on an informally agreed seasonal contract with the employer and received their wages monthly or seasonally. They sold part of their provisions (mostly rice, coconut oil, dhal and sugar) whenever cash needs arose before receiving their wages. These families had to reduce their consumption to cope with food shortages at different times. Women in such families often went hungrier in order to let others have a little more food. The vulnerability of these families was aggravated in 1999-2000 by the reduced employment caused by the decline of agriculture. This most seriously affected about 25 percent of the displaced families in Alankuda.

Pawning of jewellery was also common among IDPs. At the People's Bank branch in Nuracholai, opened in 1997, more than 75 percent of those pawning jewellery for small loans were IDPs. Some pawned jewellery to buy productive assets like fishing nets, to build or renovate their houses and to invest in petty trade. In most cases pawning was to meet other cash needs such as mentioned above. Many IDPs pawned their ration cards in order to redeem their jewellery.

The poor IDPs, while coping with their daily survival needs by reducing consumption, had little or no means to invest in the long-term human development of their children. However, we came across some middle and lower middle families that occasionally pawned their ration cards for short period to obtain cash to pay school fees and other expenses of their children studying in schools in Puttalam town and elsewhere. We also discovered that some of the better-off IDPs sold their relief provisions for a different reason. Being not satisfied with the quality of some of the foodstuff received they sold it and bought better quality products.

Labour, gender and local perceptions⁸

These women from the North are more Tamil than Muslim in their behaviour. They move around freely without men, are not shy to stand in open tractor-trailers and go long distances to work and they often do not observe the dress code properly. This is a bad influence on our women. Our women do not travel out of the village without being accompanied by men from the same family. We do not let them work as labourers for others. They dress properly.

- A middle-aged male, owning a large farm (15 acres) and a shop and regarded as a local leader.

Such perceptions about displaced women by locals, mostly males but not entirely, were not uncommon. However, the picture the local leader was trying to portray about local women was not entirely correct. Women from poorer local families did work as farm labourers although most of them did not go outside Alankuda. As for the 'women from the North', forced migration had changed their lives in some ways. Most of them began to work as casual farm labourers only after coming to Alankuda. Back in their villages in Mullaitivu and Mannar, they did farm work too but on their own family farms. Becoming waged workers was a significant change for them. It also meant longer hours of work as they continued to bear the burden of housekeeping. The displaced families were in dire need of cash, and the farm owners preferred to employ female workers because it was cheaper than employing males. Compelled by the deprivations suffered by the family due to displacement, the men did not object to their wives and daughters going out to work as farm labourers. They did not see the male-female wage differential as unfair as they regarded the work offered to women to be traditionally meant for them and less heavy than men's work. Almost all males we met shared this attitude and by subscribing to it they acquiesced in the perpetuation of a traditionally discriminatory practice. Such were the circumstances in which displaced women became proletarianised. Their entry into the rural labour market

drove wages down. In 1990, their average daily wage was 50 rupees and it was 75-100 rupees in 1998-99. The employer normally provided breakfast and tea to the workers. The working day was from seven in the morning to six in the evening with tea and lunch breaks adding up to less than two hours in between. The work involved planting, watering the crop (mainly onion, sweet potato and chillies) with hosepipes, harvesting and collection and cleaning of the harvest. The farm owner provided transport to the workers, where the farm was at more than walking distance from the Camp, and deducted 10 rupees from the wage as transport charge. A farmer was able to get all the workers he needed as a group from one Camp and by providing transport he was able to ensure their timely arrival to work. He could also come to a deal with the IDPs to pay them monthly or even seasonally with some smaller payments in between. These were additional advantages of hiring IDPs instead of local workers. Agricultural employment opportunities for men were limited. Demand for labour for tasks such as land preparation, which were regarded as men's work, was reduced due to tractorisation. More men moved into fishing to make a living. Some worked on prawn farms in neighbouring villages. Unemployment tended to be high among local as well as displaced men.

Obviously, the employers, including the rich farmer and local leader quoted above, were benefiting greatly from the cheaper and more readily available labour of the IDPs. This local leader, who owned 15 acres of land in three different parts of Alankuda and produced mainly onion, employed 25-30 persons. Nine of the workers were local males and they were engaged on a regular basis at 4500 rupees per month. Except for one local, all the others were displaced women. He paid the women 100 rupees a day. However, he was not willing to admit the advantages employers like him enjoyed because of the presence of a labour reserve of displaced women in Alankuda. He often harped on the cultural differences between the locals and the IDPs, making specific and repeated references to the displaced women. He insisted that there would not be any big problem to find labourers if the IDPs left. *'Before they came, we had Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil workers coming from other parts of Kalpitya. They will come back if the refugees left. Refugees are no longer a source of cheap labour. In the early stages, they accepted low wages but now they demand the same wage as locals. I pay 100 rupees a day for a woman worker whether she is a refugee or a local.'* However, not all local employers had the same perceptions. Another rich farmer, who was also a businessman, expressed different sentiments, although most of the 20 women and 10 men employed by him were not IDPs.

I did not want to stop employing the local people I had been employing. So I employ fewer refugees than natives. The refugees are persevering and frugal. The local economy has expanded after their coming here and it has benefited them and us. With so much of labour available, there are possibilities for new economic activities as well. For example, garment factories, broiler production etc. They have stayed here for many years. This is not the only place it has happened. It is difficult to say how things will change in the future. Yes there are cultural differences between them and us but these are

minor. Some people try to make a big thing out of the minor differences. I think both groups are likely to become one larger community in the end.

He did express his concerns too. He was worried that most of the land in Alankuda would end up in the hands of IDPs. He said that many displaced families had three or four wage-earning members and they saved money to buy land. *'One has to appreciate their perseverance but there can be conflicts when local people become landless.'*

Displaced women worked on farms owned or leased by IDPs as well. Mubarak (not the real name) from Mullaitivu owned an acre of land and cultivated it intensively. He said that there was no labour constraint to ensure timeliness of operations and cultivate three crops a year. His was a small farm and hence his need for hired labour was small too. He made the point that bigger farmers in Alankuda and the neighbouring villages preferred to employ women in groups from the same Camp and due to this demand there were times when displaced women workers were not available to work on small farms like his. *'I hire locals when our people are not available',* he said. For reasons already stated, the local workers were relegated to the margins of the labour market. They spoke about being doubly hit by the presence of the IDPs: reduced income due to reduced employment and lower wages and higher cost of living due to increases in prices of essential goods. *'It is not a fair competition',* said a local worker, *'since they get their food free, they can work for a lower wage. We don't have such assistance. I have only an acre of land and that too belongs to my father-in-law. I have always worked as a farm labourer. I used to have five or six days of employment during the season but now it has come down to two or three and I have to go long distances to find employment. My wife does not go out of the village to work and there are times when she does not get any work at all here. My income has gone down but the prices have gone up. A piece of firewood is two rupees today. We never had to pay for firewood before they came.'*

Most of the local poor did receive benefits from the national poverty alleviation programme (PAP). But they knew that the IDPs received more benefits in the form food ration, cash and other benefits from government and NGOs. Moreover, the PAP (Janasaviya) of the previous government was suspended in 1994 by the new government and the latter's PAP became operational in Alankuda only in 1995-96 and many of the earlier recipients had to wait for long to be included in the new programme called Samurdhi.

Displacement had other gender related consequences as well. A notable development was the emergence of female leaders and spokespersons that worked with like-minded men to promote the interests of displaced women. Community Development Organisation (CDO) was formed in 1996 by a group of five men and nine women, who broke away from the bigger RDF. A major part of its activities was aimed at promoting education, skill development and economic advancement of women. The CDO organised discussions and workshops to address problems affecting displaced

women. One of its campaigns was to persuade parents to allow their daughters to continue schooling after puberty. It would seem that some displaced parents tended to fall in line with the local custom of stopping their daughters' education once they attained puberty. *'In a sense, this is a step backward for us'*, said a member of the CDO. *'Back in our areas, the trend was the opposite. More parents were willing to let their daughters continue their education. At least 30-40% of the girls continued to go to school after puberty. Now our campaign has been showing results.'* On the other hand, local parents were being positively influenced by the keenness shown by displaced parents to have their daughters educated.

A practice that locals felt had become more widespread due to the IDPs was that of dowry at marriage. *'This is another custom the Muslims of the North have taken from the Tamils. Before they came, dowry did not play a big role in marriages here,'* said the man who was quoted above on the 'bad influence' of the 'women from the North'. In fact, the dowry system was very strong among Tamils and Muslims in the North. The displaced Muslims from the North continued to practice it in Kalpitya. Marriages were taking place between IDPs and locals and the practice of dowry had become more common among the locals as well.

Upwardly mobile IDPs and the local rich

It is time to sum up the characteristics of the upwardly mobile IDPs and their links to the local rich. The biggest traders in Nuracholai were locals and two of them were from Alankuda. They dealt in water pumps, petrol and kerosene, electrical goods, fertilisers, pure beverages, hardware and building materials, jewellery and wholesale trade of farm produce. The upwardly mobile IDPs moved into trades that did not require large working capital. In 1999, thirty seven of the 53 shops in Nuracholai belonged to IDPs who had rented the buildings from locals. Local traders activated the Nuracholai Traders Association, which was dormant for a long time, in 1997. The 37 IDPs were included in the Association. This gave them more opportunities to interact with the local businessmen who, though smaller in number, wielded greater power because of their wealth and networks. However, many of the upwardly mobile IDPs in Alankuda did not have shops in Nuracholai.

In the course of discussions in September 2000, IDPs in Alankuda identified 50-55 displaced persons (families) as rich. The consensus was that there could be more, not less. They mentioned the following as the distinguishing characteristics of these rich IDPs:

- Had savings from before in banks and managed to bring valuable jewellery. The savings were used for money lending.
- Received larger remittances from relatives abroad. Savings from remittances were used for lending or to invest in assets, mainly land.
- Made money through 'ration card business'. Most of them were doing this and some, at least 10, had made a lot of money this way.

- Made money by buying and selling land for housing.
- Owned retail shops in camps/ new settlements; some owned shops including pharmacies in Nuracholai town.
- Owned farmland, tractors, fishing boats, vans and autos.
- Served as local (or sub-) agents for Colombo based foreign employment agencies recruiting housemaids and unskilled workers for employment in the Middle-East.

The general view among them was that ‘ration card business’ and money lending were initially the principal means for these IDPs to get rich. We have described the working of the ‘ration card business’ in detail. It was shown how a network involving some IDPs, government and Cooperative officials and local traders, operated. These IDPs also owned retail shops in WCs. They invested their profits in land, farming, tractors, textile shops, communication centres and pharmacies. The contacts they made through ‘ration card business’ were useful in getting land and setting up shops in Nuracholai. A caveat needs to be added about the deceptive appearances of some of the upwardly mobile IDPs. Some IDPs who had accumulated money and material assets continued to stay (or maintained their registration as residents) in WCs for business reasons. They were camp leaders or leading members of the camp’s mosque committee. As camp residents, they received their relief entitlements. Some other rich IDPs stayed in ‘temporary houses’ in new settlements.

Iqbal (not real name) was an enterprising camp leader who had moved upward to the envy of many IDPs. Back in the North, he was a farmer owning three acres of land and was doing well. After becoming a camp leader in Alankuda, he went into ‘ration card business’, opened a shop in the camp and, bought 1.25 acre of farmland in Alankuda in 1996 and was cultivating it since. He had a son working in the Middle East and remitting money home. He had built a permanent house worth 500,000 rupees on a 10 perch plot in Nuracholai. This was for the son. He was building a permanent shop (16 sq.m) in Alankuda to be opened before October 2000. Iqbal had good links with local businessmen. One of them had provided him with storage space for the provisions on the pawned ration cards. One of our informants added that Iqbal had been on pilgrimage to Mecca, which would have cost him at least SLR 150,000. Another camp leader, who was involved in ‘ration card business’, had bought three acres of farmland in Nuracholai and was producing onion. His wife was lending small loans to IDPs who pawned jewellery. Before displacement, he was a paddy farmer owning three acres and his family ran a restaurant too. We have earlier discussed the support provided by a local owner of a landing site to displaced fishermen. This cooperation had helped the boat-owning fishermen from the North to develop their business. Some enterprising displaced fishermen had joined hands with local businessmen to go into fishing of *beche-de-mer* and conch shells, which had high export value. The local businessmen had the money and the former had men with diving skills but not the capital. The two combined their resources.

These examples show that upwardly mobile IDPs were persons with business acumen including skills to develop links with local businessmen and officials who mattered. They show that these three groups were able to develop relationships that were mutually beneficial. Further, it is obvious that elements of complementarity provided the basis for these relationships, which are indicative of links that promoted integration. There had not been any open conflicts between local businessmen and the upwardly mobile IDPs. This is not to say that there was no competition or conflict of interest at all between the two. The point that deserves to be stressed is that there were areas of common interest, and conflicts, if there were any, had not turned into hostilities or total non-cooperation. This may be contrasted with the conflict over lagoon fishing or the internal conflict in a camp that turned violent.

Of the various activities, 'ration card business' was a highly touchy issue. Initially, many IDPs were very reluctant to talk about it. On the other hand, it was no longer a secret. We first came to know about it after a couple of days in the field in July 1998 during a casual conversation with an IDP who had to pawn his family's ration card to obtain money to meet an urgent need. On the same day we discovered that many in Alankuda and Nuracholai town knew about this activity. We felt it was necessary and proper to delve deeper into it as it had become a part of the unfolding social change. It was a source of accumulation for some and vulnerability and deprivation to many. A purely legalist view of it would only obscure the realities of the change.

The middle stratum was a loose, broader category consisting of petty traders, teachers, lawyers, employees in international and bigger national NGOs, auto owners, van owners, farmers and fishermen (who owned nets and other fishing equipment). Many of them engaged in more than one income generating activity; a teacher doing petty trade, a family doing farming and hiring out labour, for example. Some continued to receive dry ration, which helped them divert resources to saving or spending on non-food items. They also had the option to convert their ration into cash without being distressed like the poorer IDPs. The teachers, lawyers and NGO employees had wider contacts with locals and different groups of IDPs. Some of them were leading public spokespersons for the IDPs' right to return. Like the rich IDPs, the upper middle level families sent their children to better schools in Puttalam town and elsewhere.

Education: pressures and challenges

Disruption of children's education was one of the major effects of displacement. It affected almost all the displaced families that moved into Puttalam district. Prior to the coming of the IDPs, the existing facilities in Tamil Medium Muslim Schools in the Puttalam district were not regarded as adequate by parents. The main grievance was that the Ministry of Education had failed to provide funds and facilities for science and post secondary education in most of the schools. These schools were far from being able to absorb even a quarter of the 8600 displaced children in the district. The education system was not able to cope with the enormous logistical challenge.

There were some displaced persons especially teachers and the more educated among them took the initiative to organise special classes with the assistance of NGOs. These efforts produced impressive results although many displaced children were unable to begin their primary education or continue it. In the past ten years several schools had been able to expand their physical facilities and to become upgraded though congestion continued to be a problem.

The IDPs placed a high value on education as reflected in their generally higher levels of literacy, especially among women. Locals openly acknowledged the positive impact of the IDPs that changed their own attitudes towards children's education, particularly girls'. However the quality of education imparted in the local schools remained low due to lack of qualified teachers and facilities for science education. In more recent years rich and middle IDPs, like their local counterparts, were sending their children to better schools in Puttalam town and even outside the district.

The situation in Alankuda reflected the above but the logistical challenges were of a higher magnitude. The vast majority of the displaced and the locals sent their children to the Alankuda and Nuracholai schools. Though established in 1958, the school in Alankuda had remained a primary school and did not have adequate facilities even for the 76 pupils it had in 1990, before the arrival of the IDPs. In the beginning of 1991 about 450-500 children (of which 80% were displaced) needed enrolment for primary education in Alankuda. The school had only three teachers and three classrooms. The children were enrolled and in 1992 the school had 645 pupils of whom 336 were girls. Several volunteer teachers were appointed. Each year, 150-175 children sought admission. Since 1993, the school started adding a grade more and by 2000 it had become a secondary school with classes up to GCE Ordinary Level (OL). In 2000, there were 1404 students (1128 displaced) of whom 49 percent were girls, 17 regular teachers and 12 volunteer teachers. The teacher-pupil ratio was 50, far higher than the national standard of 30. Most of the teachers were IDPs. The displaced regular teachers (10) were already in service before displacement and had themselves transferred to this school. No IDP was newly appointed to the permanent tutorial staff. An Italian organisation donated a new block of classrooms, which had eased the space problem a great deal. However, some classes were still being conducted under trees in the compound. Of the teachers, only one was a university graduate in arts and seven were trained teachers. The others were designated as 'trainee teachers'. There were no qualified science teachers. Parents complained about the lack of qualified teachers. Many children from Alankuda went to the Nuracholai School for secondary and AL education. The school became upgraded to Maha Vidyalayam (classes up to GCE Advanced Level –AL) after it received displaced teachers and students. There were 1300 students (850 displaced) and 33 regular (25 displaced) and 10 volunteer teachers (most of them IDPs). Over 60 percent of the OL and AL students were IDPs. This school faced similar logistical problems as the Alankuda School. There were three science teachers who taught science subjects up to OL but the school did not have a single qualified mathematics teacher.

While the two schools had experienced major expansions, the quality of the education they provided was a matter for concern. Absenteeism among teachers was considerable as many of them were engaged in other activities such as trade and farming during working hours. Absenteeism among students was high too. One of the reasons for this was that children were sent by parents to work on farms during onion harvests as piece-rate labourers. Sickness was another major reason. More than half of the students did not proceed beyond OL and more than half of those who did the OL failed to complete it. In other words, a majority of the students left school with an education that could hardly help them find a vocation. The prospects of most of them joining the already swelling ranks of unemployed youth were unfortunately high.

The schools had a potential, and in our view a social responsibility, to play a positive role in building bridges between the displaced and locals and the different groups of the former. Unfortunately, they had not taken up this role except for some minor efforts by one or two individual teachers who tried to promote social contacts among students. Some teachers from the Alankuda School told us that the violent episode of 1993 had an adverse effect on relations between parents of local and displaced children for some time. In the same year, UNICEF distributed school bags only to the displaced children at the school. The local children and parents were not happy about this. Local and displaced children tended to reflect the attitudes of their parents during that time. This situation had gradually changed over the years and teachers told us that in more recent times the relations between children from different groups had changed to the better. However, the Parent Teachers Associations were inactive and the teachers had not been actively promoting these Associations to get more interested in school development and social integration of the children. Even though the local parents had come to see the positive impact of the displaced, including the displaced teachers, on education, much remained to be done to get all parents more involved in making the two schools function better.

Political issues

There was a common impression among locals that the IDPs enjoyed special political patronage after the People's Alliance government came into power in August 1994. The appointment of M. H. M. Ashraff,⁹ the leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, as Minister of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction and the policies adopted by his Ministry to assist the displaced had contributed in a big way to this impression. However, the IDPs did not see themselves as a group with special political clout. The most common feeling among them was that they had been politically marginalised and were being treated like second-class citizens by the government bureaucracy due to their 'refugee status'. While appreciating the subsidy provided for relocation by Ashraff's Ministry, many IDPs said that no state land was alienated for the purpose. The government was not willing to distribute the state land on which a WC had existed for ten years to the IDPs living in that WC, they pointed out. The IDPs were excluded from electoral constituencies in Puttalam District although they had been

residing there since October 1990. They continued to be voters of the electorates from which they were displaced. This had not helped them enjoy basic rights such as the right to join local associations for fishermen or farmers or to have their own associations legally recognised. ‘Actually, we are victims of double standards when it comes to education and employment’, said a displaced person from Mannar. He explained:

When it comes to university admissions, our children are considered as locals and they have to face tougher competition here than back in Mannar. For government jobs in this District, we are considered as outsiders and disqualified. It’s a double disadvantage. Several displaced persons who are qualified for appointment as teachers were not considered for vacancies in the region. There is a shortage of teachers here and both local and displaced Muslim children are affected as a result. But some of the qualified people were offered teaching jobs in areas like Vavuniya in the North.

Whether they should cease being voters in their original electorates and become voters in Puttalam District was a political issue involving principles and emotions among the IDPs. This issue remained one of the most discussed in their organisations. There were 11 organisations of IDPs based mainly on their areas of origin in the North and a federation of these organisations. They all shared the common objective of working towards the return of the displaced to their homelands. Their spokesmen told us that losing their right to be voters in their ‘home electorates’ was out of the question as that would seriously weaken their case for returning to where they were expelled from. The point, however, is that an IDP did not have the choice to be a voter in the area where he/she had lived for several years. When this was raised, the spokesmen agreed that the government was unfairly denying the displaced a fundamental right. This denial was a serious matter for those individuals who wanted to have the choice. It was an obstacle to the political integration of the migrants and it impinged on their economic interests including educational and job opportunities in the public sector for the second generation. The IDPs had stayed in the District for years and become active participants in the local economies and hence stakeholders in the affairs of the villages and towns they inhabit. More than 60 percent of the families had bought land, relocated and become permanent residents of the host area. The children of the displaced were going to local schools. IDPs and locals were learning to coexist and socially integrate. In such a situation, a displaced individual had good reasons to have the right to stay and that right was not complete without the right to be a voter in the area of residence.

The spokesmen pointed out that this denial was inspired by ethno-political considerations. In the larger scene of electoral politics in the District and Province, the IDPs-locals distinction among Muslims was less than secondary in importance to the Sinhala-Muslim distinction. Some local Sinhalese politicians had openly expressed their disapproval of the continued presence of a large number of Muslim migrants in the District. They viewed relocation of the IDPs as a strategy by Minister Ashraff and

his SLMC to expand the Muslim constituency in Puttalam. Their concern was that the dominance of the Sinhala majority would be affected if the displaced Muslims became voters in the District. Muslim politicians in the District avoided speaking openly on this issue although it was likely that they favoured an expansion of the Muslim vote bank. Local Muslim politicians belonging to the SLMC supported relocation of IDPs. Such ethno-politics were not unique to the Puttalam region, of course. It is a universal feature of Sri Lanka's communalised politics. Relations between Sinhalese and (local) Muslims in Puttalam were generally peaceful. The local Muslims spoke both Sinhala and Tamil and they have been coexisting with the Sinhalese for a long time. However, communalism raised its head when it came to electoral politics.

In Alankuda, the dominant attitude among locals was ambiguous on the issue of voting right to the IDPs. On the one hand, there was concern that once they became voters their numbers would give them undue political power at the local level. On the other, there was the feeling that it would enhance the collective security and electoral strength of the Muslims at the district and regional levels. The IDPs, however, were not a politically undivided block. Like the locals, they sympathised with different parties. More importantly, they were in a dilemma themselves whether to demand to be registered as voters in Alankuda. Their current interests would be better served if they had voting rights in Alankuda, but there was concern that this might jeopardise their right to return. We take up the latter issue and its socio-economic dimension in the concluding part of this paper.

Concluding remarks

This study set out to trace the emerging socio-economic changes brought about by the continued stay of a relatively large number of Muslim IDPs in the Kalpitya Division of Puttalam District. After presenting an overview of the main trends at the divisional level, the empirical analysis moved to the village level to map the processes of change in greater qualitative detail. Lying outside the region of armed conflict, Puttalam was part of the geographic environment where Sri Lanka was practising economic liberalisation since 1977 without any significant interruption. However, Puttalam remained in a peripheral status in terms of public and private investments. The influx of the IDPs into the District in October 1990 had impacted on local political economies in many ways. The impact was most significant in the Kalpitya Division where the majority of the nearly 60, 000 IDPs found shelter. The more obvious change was demographic. In Alankuda, there were 4.3 IDPs to every local. However, the changes that were unfolding were more complex in socio-economic terms as they involved distributional issues that often cut across the IDPs-HC dichotomy. Along with the interventions of governmental and non-governmental bodies that targeted the IDPs, the participation of the displaced in labour markets and productive and tertiary activities infused a significant dynamism into the local economies. The local workers and poor were adversely affected by the sudden expansion of the labour market in which displaced women became a source of cheaper labour. This, the exclusive targeting of the IDPs by government and NGOs, and the exclusion of the IDPs from

electoral politics in Puttalam tended to reinforce the 'displaced-locals' distinction. However, in the overall local context of change, the IDPs-HC dichotomy had been subjected to considerable alterations and was less dominant than generally assumed.

While representing a microcosm of the processes at the Divisional level, Alankuda displayed its own peculiarities as a more extreme case of concentration of IDPs. The IDPs supplied the much-needed labour for the agricultural intensification undertaken by the emerging new rich of the village. The new rich were the major beneficiaries of the cheaper labour of the female IDPs. They accumulated surpluses from cash crop production and invested in more profitable tertiary activities. The desperate circumstances precipitated by displacement paved the way for proletarianisation of the Muslim women. The men did not object to the women going out to work. Their attitude towards wives and daughters going to the Middle East to work as housemaids had also changed positively. Displacement and proletarianisation had opened up more space for the women to move around and socialise more freely. Some women were also active in organisations concerned with women's rights. However, the women's workload had increased since they continued to bear the main burden of household chores while working as farm labourers.

The coming of the IDPs led to extreme logistical pressures on the schools at Alankuda and Nuracholai. On the positive side, these schools expanded and became upgraded. The IDPs placed a high value on education and locals acknowledged their positive impact, which changed their own attitudes towards children's education, particularly girls'. However, the quality of the education provided left much to be desired. Pupil-teacher ratios at these schools were far higher than the national standard. More than half of the children did not complete the GCE Ordinary Level. The majority left school with an education that could hardly help them find a vocation. The schools could have played a more conscious role in promoting social integration.

The IDPs were competing more among themselves than with the locals for resources. Relocation of IDPs and their participation in economic activities had fundamentally changed the spatial and social composition of Alankuda. Relocation was the principal cause of a land boom and a mini construction boom in Alankuda where land prices began to soar from the latter part of 1994 and reached a peak in 1998. It involved conversion of agricultural land (coconut and other farmlands) into housing land, and subdivisions of larger holdings into small plots. Most of the relocated families had 10 perches of housing land each. Of the more than 100 IDPs who were farming in Alankuda, a few were owner-cultivators while the others were tenants. Sub-division and sale had led to a wider dispersion of land ownership and the new owners were almost entirely IDPs. The coconut lands had clear private ownership titles. The other farmlands sold were regularised encroachments, which were subject to restrictions on sale and transfer. There was uncertainty about the titles to these lands bought by IDPs.

More than 700 displaced families had moved into their own houses (permanent, semi-permanent and temporary, mostly the latter two). Twelve new settlements had been

established and each of them displayed corporate characteristics of a community. These settlements were formed on the basis of places of origin of the relocating families. Thus Alankuda had changed from being a village with a single human settlement to one with many. It may be said that there are as many local communities as human settlements, which are interlinked by socio-economic relations. Indeed the identity of Alankuda had changed from a single corporate to a composite of corporate identities, which may coalesce into one in the long run. At present, Alankuda is a dynamic 'little world' of interacting group identities. The IDPs-HC dichotomy was no longer the most dominant feature of this changing landscape where processes of both differentiation and integration were at work. The interfaces between IDPs and locals and between different groups of IDPs had expanded. The IDPs had been going through a socio-economic differentiation as evidenced by the emergence of rich, middle and poorer strata among them. 'Ration card business' and money lending were among major primary means of accumulation for the upwardly mobile IDPs. Many of them also had relatives sending larger remittances from abroad. Urgent cash needs were the reason for many displaced families pawning their ration cards. The loss of relief entitlements caused by this and reduced employment as casual farm workers exposed many IDPs to food insecurity in 1999-2000 when local agriculture experienced decline. The rich and middle level IDPs had economic and social links with their local counterparts. The poor from both groups had much less social contacts with each other. Children of the displaced from different parts of the North and the locals were studying at the same schools and had opportunities to interact. Some marriages had taken place between IDPs and locals.

The conflict over fishing rights in the lagoon led to a violent episode in 1993 when locals attacked displaced fishermen for using a banned technique (push nets). There was no repeat of such violence since that episode although the use of push nets did not disappear. In fact, local fishermen had learnt to use these nets as well. Social contacts between locals and IDPs had increased, and time, external assistance and relocation had enabled the latter to strengthen their stakes in Alankuda. Indeed, the terms of negotiations between different groups had been re-framed. While competition and socio-economic differences remained a fact of life, there was a felt need among all groups to avoid conflicts turning violent. Relocation had increased the need to strengthen the social ground of coexistence although the more marginalised locals continued to harbour feelings of resentment and envy towards the IDPs.

In the lagoon, the threat of resource depletion due to overfishing was real and remained unaddressed by fishermen as well as the Department of Fisheries. Lagoon fishing was a means of livelihood for a substantial number of families and there was a need to think in terms of a better system of resource utilisation. The environmental consequences of agricultural intensification needed attention too. The increased discharge of groundwater due to farming and household needs might be contributing to depletion of the aquifers. There were other environmental issues as well. The expansion of human settlements had created more solid waste management problems. The lack of toilets in semi-permanent and temporary houses was a source of

environmental pollution. The increased demand for firewood had contributed to denudation of mangroves, which were already shrinking due to commercial prawn farming, in different parts of Kalpitya.

Even though more than 60 percent of the IDPs had relocated, their political status as residents of Puttalam District remained an unresolved issue. By normal considerations, they qualified to be permanent residents of the District. Yet they did not have the choice to be voters where they had been living since 1990. An IDP's right to stay in the District was not complete without this right. Here ethno-politics were at play, as Sinhala nationalists did not favour an expansion of the Muslim constituency in Puttalam. The displaced were victims of an intolerant form of Tamil ethno-nationalism in the North and in Puttalam their right to stay was being opposed by the advocates of Sinhala ethno-nationalism. On the other hand, the IDPs found themselves in a dilemma. They resented their second-class political status in Puttalam and wanted to enjoy full rights as Sri Lankan citizens. At the same time, they did not want to lose the option to return to their original homes from which they were expelled by the LTTE. There should not be such a dilemma in a democratic polity; the right to stay should not negate the right to return. A major legal issue had also arisen regarding the IDPs rights to the land and fixed assets they left behind. It would seem that under the existing legislation their non-occupation of their properties for longer than nine years could mean loss of the right to claim them. This issue, which has a direct bearing on the right of the displaced to return, needed further investigation.

The issue of returning has become more daunting in socio-economic terms over the years. The IDPs' lands and houses in the North have been badly affected by war and neglect for a long time. Most of the houses were damaged or destroyed and the land is largely covered by bush. Even the boundaries of many properties have disappeared. Local infrastructure has been damaged too. Some IDPs had informally rented out their farms to their Tamil friends and neighbours. Some were probably cultivating land belonging to the displaced without paying any rent. Given the circumstances, re-establishing their economic life back in the North is going to be highly costly for the displaced and a majority of them may not be able to bear that cost. In the absence of a comprehensive state-aided reconstruction and development programme, the high economic cost of re-establishment is likely to be a disincentive for middle and poor IDPs to return. The richer and better established IDPs may choose to return without losing their present bases in Alankuda or elsewhere in Kalpitya. There is already a trend among displaced fishermen, who are not necessarily rich, to go back to their old fishing grounds to fish and return to their homes in Alankuda. This is likely to continue. The feasibility of total return remains a subject for careful study.

¹ The United Nations has adopted the following definition of IDPs: 'Persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of, or in order to avoid, in particular, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally

recognized state border.’ (Deng, 1993). For a discussion of the concepts of refugee and IDP, see Barutciski (1998).

²For informative empirical articles on development work in conflict areas, see Commins (ed.) (1996) and RRN (1995). For a review of selected literature on post-conflict development, see Fagen (1995); Carbonnier (1998).

³We are familiar with the controversies over the concept and meanings of ‘class’. The term is used here in the descriptive sense to denote statuses of persons as employers (owners of means of production) hiring workers for profit motivated production, workers selling their labour power and traders accumulating profits through buying and selling of goods. The exploitative effects of class-gender interaction are most evident in the lower wages paid to women workers purely because of their sex. The term middle layer/stratum is used rather loosely to refer to individuals who occupy the area between the rich who accumulate by means referred to above and the workers and the poor who occupy the lowest stratum. The reader interested in the theoretical debates on class and inequality may see Crompton (1998)

⁴The account of the situation in Alankuda before the influx of IDPs is based on information provided by the GN (Village Administrator), a document written by A.C.M. Marzook in 1989 and on discussions with local residents and data provided by the Divisional Secretariat, Kalpitya. The GS was able to provide only approximate data regarding population and families in 1990, due to changes in administrative units made in 1988.

⁵Sri Lankan governments at different times issued these deeds: Jayaboomi by the SLFP-led government (1970-77), Swarnaboomi by the UNP government (1977-1994), and Janmaboomi by the PA government (1994-). Jayaboomi and Swarnaboomi deeds are identical in content. An important clause in these deeds is that no disposition of the holding or any part of it can be made without the prior written permission of the Divisional Secretary. Most of the lands involved had Jayaboomi or Swarnaboomi deeds or only LDO permits. The newly introduced Janmaboomi deeds did not have restrictions on transfer or sale but only a few had this type of deed.

⁶The estimates regarding rich-middle-poor groups in the village were obtained through a series of discussions with a cross section of individuals and groups at different times between July 1998 and September 2000.

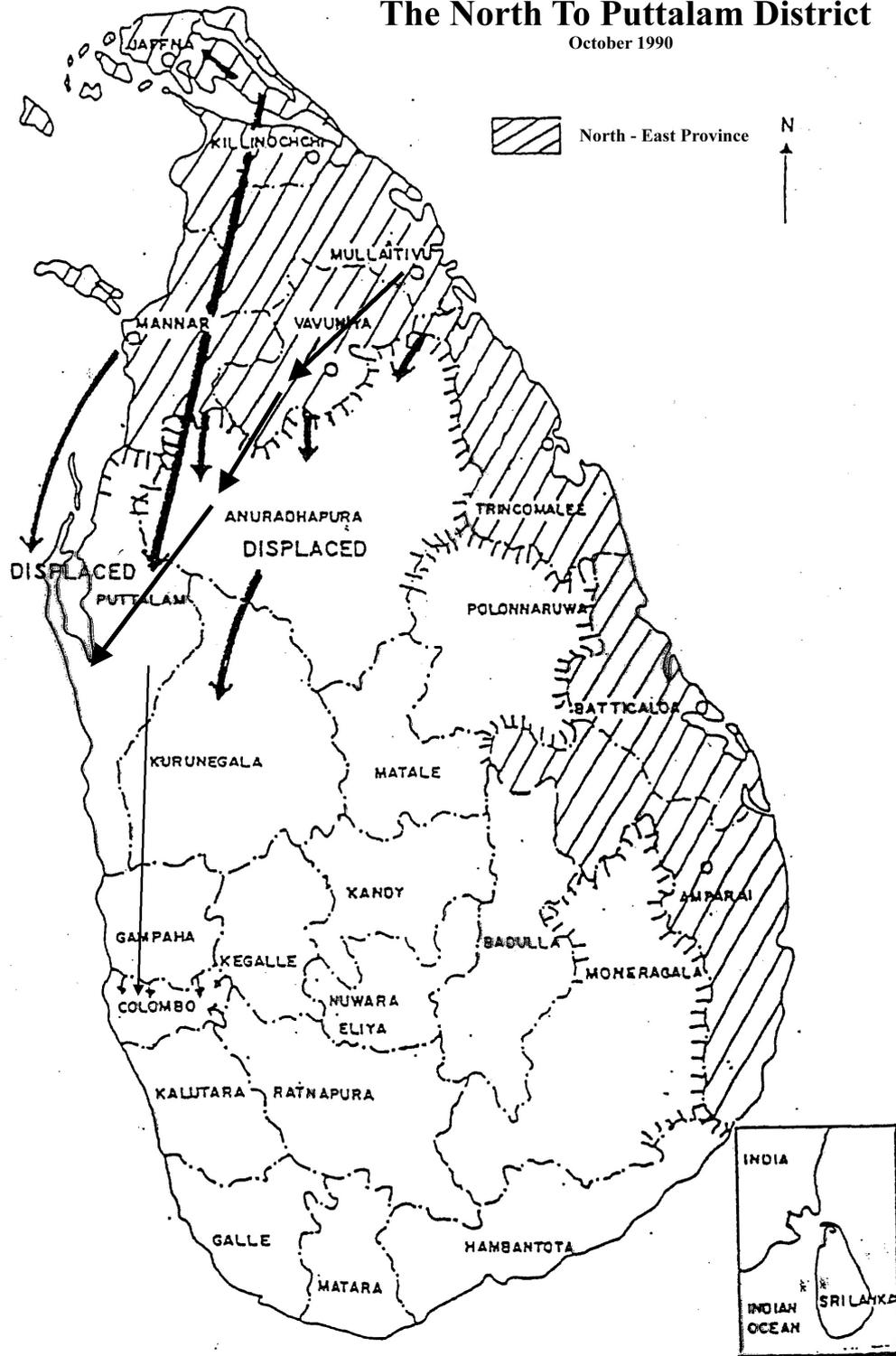
⁷Nowadays, fishermen from Mannar do go to fish in their traditional fishing grounds as well.

⁸Gender aspects of displacement are discussed in greater detail in a separate paper by Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam (2000–forthcoming).

⁹Until his untimely death in a helicopter crash in September 2000, Ashraff was a powerful Minister in the PA government.

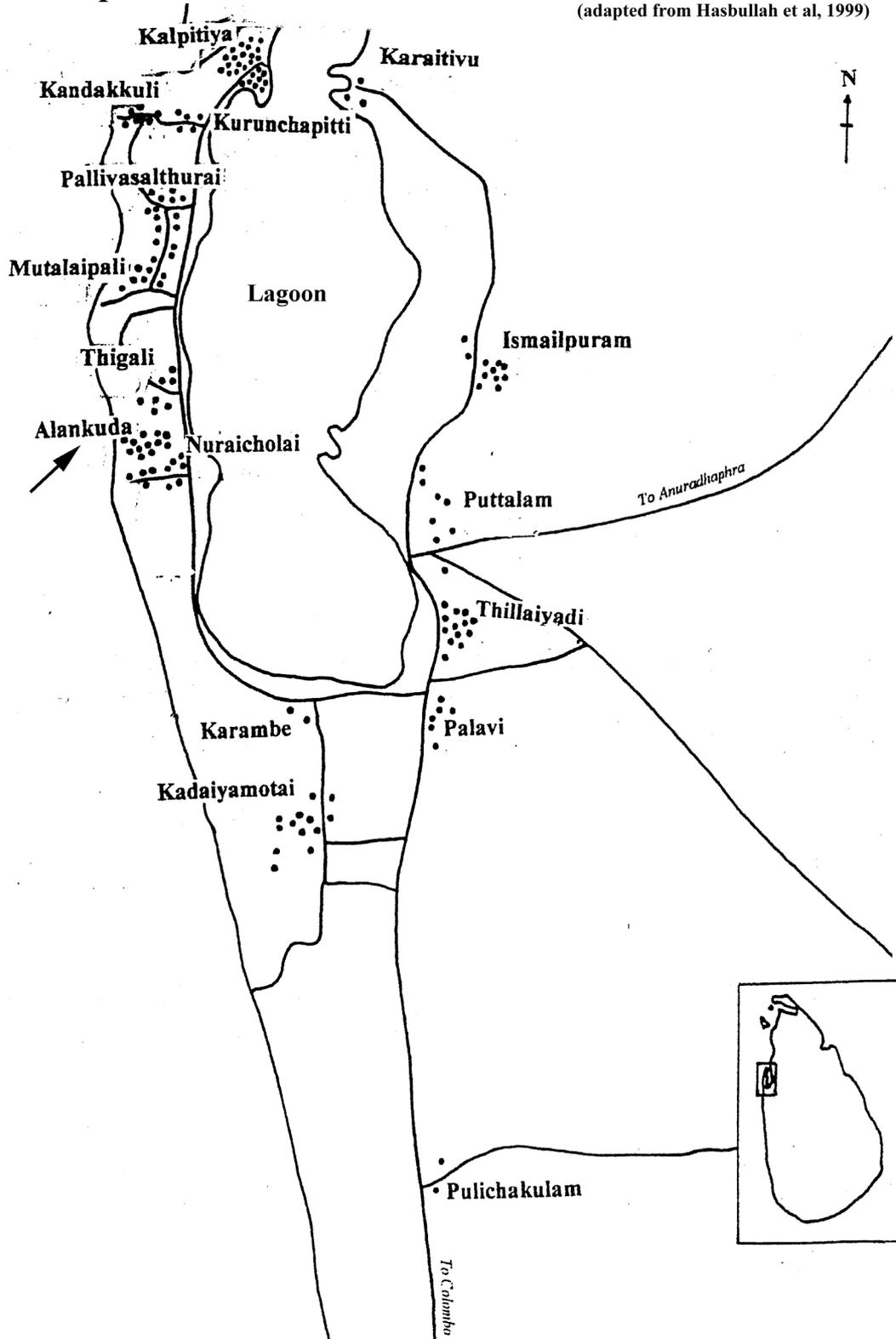
Map 1: Migration of Muslim IDPs From The North To Puttalam District

October 1990



Map 2: Concentrations of IDPs in Puttalam District

(adapted from Hasbullah et al, 1999)



References

- Barutciski, M. 1998, Tensions between the refugee concept and the IDP debate, *Forced Migration Review*: 3
- Carbonnier, G. 1998, Conflict, postwar rebuilding and the economy: A critical review of the literature, UNRISD War-torn Societies Project.
- Commins, S. 1996 (ed.), *Development in States of War*, Oxfam (UK and Ireland)
- Crompton, R. 1998, *Class and Stratification: An introduction to current debates*, second edition, Polity Press.
- Deng, F. 1994, *Internally Displaced Persons: An interim report to the United Nations Secretary General on protection and assistance*, Washington DC: Refugee Policy Group/ UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs.
- Fagen, P.W., 1995, *After the Conflict – A review of selected sources on rebuilding war-torn societies*, UNRISD.
- Hampton, J. (ed), 1998, *Internally Displaced People – A global survey*, Norwegian Refugee Council, Earthscan Publications Ltd.
- Hasbullah, S.H. 1996, *Refugees are people, The Northern Muslims' Rights Organization*, Colombo.
- Hasbullah, S.H., S.H.M. Rizni and A.G. Anees, 1999, *Preliminary findings on the living conditions of the IDPs in Puttalam Districts*, Mimeo.
- Marzook, A.C.M. 1989, *Community Development Programme for Alankuda – A proposal to Redd Barna (Tamil)*.
- RRN (Relief and Rehabilitation Network) April, 1995, *Development in Conflict: The experience of ACORD in Uganda, Sudan, Mali and Angola. Network Paper 9*, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Rural Development Foundation, Palavi, Puttalam, 2000, *Internal documents*.
- Shanmugaratnam, N. 1999, *Rural Poverty in Sri Lanka: A synthesis of preliminary qualitative studies*, Report to the World Bank, Noragric, Agricultural University of Norway.

Zackariya, F. and N. Shanmugaratnam 2000, Women and Displacement in Sri Lanka: Renegotiating socio-economic and political spaces amid deprivation, Working Paper (forthcoming), Noragric, Agricultural University of Norway.