Human Security Issues among Sri Lankan Refugee Returnees from India Resettled in the Kilinochchi District

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Refugee returnees often encounter serious human security issues in the post-war context. Primary objective of this study was to assess the multiple human security issues of Sri Lankan refugee returnees from India resettled in Kilinochchi district. A mixed methods study design was employed. Primary data were collected through interviewer administered questionnaire, case studies and interviews. Based on stratified random sampling technique, 346 respondents were selected for the study. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis methods using SPSS (Version 25). The results highlight that the prolonged armed conflict between the Sri Lankan state armed forces and the LTTE was the primary cause for war-affected people fleeing to India as refugees from 2000 to 2008. Refugees began returning to Sri Lanka and resettling in the Kilinochchi District during the period from 2016 to 2022. Results reveal that agriculture (39.9%), wage laborer (30.3%) and self-employment (20.2%) were the common types of livelihood activities of the resettled people. The monthly labor income of the majority (71.1%) of the people was ≤ 20,000 LKR. Majority (69.6%) of them faced personal security issues. Majority (69.9%) of them encountered community security issues such as social discrimination in accessing services and resources by the people of the resettled villages and the institutions, poor welfare assistance, poor social support from their own community and lack of trust. There was a weak positive relationship education and unemployment ($r=0.180$, $N=346$) based on the Pearson correlation analysis. All respondents reported that they experienced economic security issues. Unemployment, lack of employment opportunities, poor income, increased living cost, poor financial support, poor marketing facilities and difficulties in getting loan facilities were the adverse economic security issues faced by the resettled people. The study demonstrates that all the participants of the study faced health security related issues. Resettled people also encountered food security issues such as difficulties in accessibility of food, inadequate food, poor food quality and food safety, and lack of nutritious food. The study recommends that socio-economic empowerment programs be accelerated and community based organizations be strengthened in the post-war context to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of the resettled people in the war affected villages.

Keywords: armed conflict, displacements, economic security, personal security, social discrimination