

This report was issued by OCHA Headquarters. It covers the period from 24 to 27 April 2009. The next report will be issued on or around 28 April.

I. Highlights

- There has been an increase of some 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) over the past few days, bringing the total to over 150,000 IDPs in the IDP camps in Vavuniya, Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee. UN estimates that 50,000 people still trapped in the conflict zone.
- The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), John Holmes, arrived in country on 26 April for a two day visit. On 27 April he visited Vavuniya, where he met with people in the Manic Farm camps (zones 2 and 3), as well as the Omanthai screening point.
- There are reports of overcrowding at some of the IDP sites, Manic Farms in particular. Communal cooking needs to be in place. Health facilities continue to be overwhelmed and more capacity is needed, including field hospitals. Water and sanitation in the camps is a serious concern and does not meet international standards.
- In the recent days, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) has provided more resources, staff and equipment to assist the displaced in Vavuniya. The GoSL has appointed the Competent Authority (CA) to coordinate all administration and implementation of all relief work in relation to displaced civilians.
- ICRC is loading 30 ton ferry boats with food and hopes to deliver three shipments to the conflict zone from Trincomalee as soon as possible. ICRC also hopes to evacuate more civilians this week. No medical supplies have reached the conflict zone since early April.

II. Access & Security

-The Government has repeated its instruction to its forces to end the use of heavy weaponry or aerial support in the conflict zone.

-The CA of Vavuniya facilitates the expediting the movement of humanitarian supplies through the Meddawachchiya check-point, and has committed to a team of ten policemen to fast track relief items.

-The ERC has requested access for a UN Humanitarian Team (at the technical level) to conduct an assessment in the conflict zone. The conditions have not been created by the parties for this to take place. There have been reports of continued military operations, including artillery attacks, over the last few days in the conflict zone.

- The ERC has also requested access by the international agencies to the screening points in Omanthai and Kilinochchi.

- Some 14 UN staff and approximately 207 NGO staff have not been able to leave the IDPs camps and the conflict zone, according to the UN humanitarian team.



III. Situation Overview

-During the period 27 October 2008 to 27 April 2009, 151,231 persons have crossed to the Government controlled areas from the conflict zone.

-Some 149,421 people are accommodated in temporary camps. This includes: 138,203¹ in Vavuniya, 52² in Mannar, 11,166³ in Jaffna and 5,414 in Trincomalee. In addition, 1,810⁴ IDPs (this figure includes injured and care givers) are in hospitals in various districts⁵ as of 27 April. This represents an increase of 41,805 IDPs since 24 April.

-There are reports of overcrowding in some of the IDP sites, especially Manic Farm zone 2, which has been open for new arrivals and currently accommodates some 30,000-40,000 people.

-The Government is setting up an office in Manic Farm zone 2 to respond to the emergency and address the concerns of the IDP population. This office will be headed by two Government Agents from Polonnaruwa and Kandy who are mobilizing resources from their own Districts to respond to the situation.

IV. Humanitarian Response

Shelter

-Camps in Vavuniya are reportedly holding an average of 18 persons per tent (normally fit for a family of five) with limited water supplies, according to the UN humanitarian team.

- UNHCR has advised the Government to establish medium-sized camps to ensure standards are met and to avoid small scattered camps or camps that become too large (such as the growing size of camps in Vavuniya).

-On 25 April, at a meeting in Manic Farms zone 2, the CA in Vavuniya committed resources to allow shelter to be built at the speed of 2,500 tents per day.

-The Government Agent of Vavuniya will deploy ten trucks and twenty laborers to speed up the delivery of tents from the Shelter Cell warehouse to Manic Farms.

-The authorities announced they will also enlist 200 IDPs as manual workers to help setting up the tents. As land clearance continues, 3,400 tents have been set up.

-Army engineers were deployed to address drainage issues in Manic Farm zone 2.

Food

-The GA of Vavuniya expects communal cooking to start on 27 April in Manic Farm zone 2. Authorities have committed to three cooked meals per day for all IDPs in zone 2.

-The GA of Polonnaruwa has been put in charge of food distribution for Manic Farm zone 2 and will be assisted by a representative of the Army.

Health

-Limited medical supplies have been received both in the conflict zone and in camps. There is an average of one nurse to attend 40 patients in medical facilities, and not enough surgeons, according to the reports from the hospitals.

-The CA has announced that a field hospital is to be built in each of the three zones of Manic Farm, and has asked the local health authority to deploy two doctors to be on 24 hour stand-by at these facilities. Construction of a field hospital for zone 2 started on 25 April.

-7,723 cases of chicken pox were identified and treated among the IDP population that recently escaped from the conflict zone in the last 3 months.

-The French Civilian Protection is deploying a field hospital in Cheddikkulam (Vavuniya District) with a team of 30 medical staff including two surgeons and two anesthesiologists.

¹ Source: Government, UNHCR (Vavuniya) and Divisional Secretary Vavuniya (DS VA)

² Source: Assistant Project Director Office (PDA Office Kachcheri)

³ Source: UNHCR (Jaffna)

⁴ Source: Dr.E.G.Gnanakunalan - Programme Coordinator (GH Trincomalee)

⁵ This includes General Hospital Trincomalee, Base Hospital Kanthalai, Peripheral Unit Thampalakamam, Field Hospital Pulmoddai, Base Hospital Padaviya, National Hospital Colombo, Teaching Hospital Kandy, Cancer Hospital Maharagama, General Hospital Polonnaruwa, General Hospital Mannar

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Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH)

- The WASH cluster estimates it will need an additional 20 water bowsers to cover the caseload in Vavuniya. At the moment 55 water bowsers are already deployed in the District.
- The WASH cluster focal point warns that the capacity of humanitarian partners has reached its limit with the present caseload of IDPs in Manic Farm zone 2.
- There is an urgent need to build stands for an estimated 235 water tanks that are available for Manic Farm in zone 2. The CA is enlisting IDPs as manual workers to build the stands. The CA has asked the local authorities to buy 5,000 bags and 300 shovels for this purpose.
- With the massive influx of IDPs arriving in Manic Farm zone 2, sanitation is an urgent concern. The WASH Cluster has already built 30 toilets in the area and more are on the way.
- The Government has announced that 5 garbage collectors will be deployed from Colombo Municipal Council and will arrive at Manic Farm zone 2 on 27 April.

V. Coordination

- The Government has appointed the Competent Authority (CA) to coordinate all administration and implementation of relief work in relation to displaced civilians. The focal point is the Chief of Staff of the Sri Lankan Army, Major Gen GA Chandrasiri.
- There is concern over a lack of cohesive coordination mechanisms and structures between NGOs, UN and GoSL in response to the emergency. Setting up stronger information linkages between Colombo and Vavuniya is a priority.

VI. Funding / CHAP

As of 27 April, the CHAP for 2009 remains 31% funded. The ERC is was considering further funding from the CERF, while the Humanitarian Team is discussing preparing an Emergency Appeal within the existing framework of Common Humanitarian Action Plan 2009.

All humanitarian partners including donors and recipient agencies are encouraged to inform FTS of cash and in-kind contributions by sending an email to: fts@reliefweb.int.

VII. Contacts

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