Accumulated Suffering, Aggravated Vulnerabilities: The Impact of Ditwah in the Eastern Province

0.Introduction

On 28th November 2025, Cyclone Ditwah made land-fall in Sri Lanka. Arriving at the Eastern coast, it already brought 2 days earlier strong winds and bouts of rains followed by large-scale flooding. When it moved further land inward, it caused landslides in the up country that buried entire villages. Finally, it reached the West coast, and densely populated urban centers were swamped with water from river and overflowing drainages. Wherever Ditwah went, it left behind a swath of destruction. It directly killed more than 600 people, with 173 still missing[1]. Hundreds of thousands were displaced.[2] Beyond the immediate visible and countable impacts, it also affected livelihoods of already vulnerable populations in the mid- and long-term.

Disasters affect people unevenly as they compound and feed into pre-existing vulnerabilities. As UNDP has stated with regard to Ditwah, *"[t]he highest risks emerge where impact meets structural vulnerability*".[3] This unevenness is socially and politically produced through political decisions, the violation of social, economic and human rights as well as intersecting social hierarchies and conflicts. Hence, disasters are never entirely natural in that they always have a human-made component. They thus function as microscopes that make inequalities strikingly visible, reveal glaring rights violations and shed light on governance.

Human Rights Watch has pointed out that long-standing systemic discrimination has aggravated the impact of Ditwah,[4] while activists, researchers and journalists have revealed the links between past rights violations such as the denial of land rights of the Malaiyaga community and the impact of the disaster[5]. Moreover, observers have called

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[1] As of January 2026: Disaster Management Centre (DMC) & Department of National Planning (NPD), *Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Cyclone Ditwah*, Sri Lanka 2025, March 2026 https://www.dmc.gov.lk/images/pdfs/PDNA_Full_Report_Final%20Updated.pdf.

[2] International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Data Institute, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Sri Lanka*, December 2025 https://dtm.iom.int/sri-lanka.
As of 20th March 2026, 149.000 people were still displaced: UN OCHA, Office of the Resident Coordinator Sri Lanka, *Sri Lanka: Cyclone Ditwah - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 20 March 2026)*, 20th March 2026 https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-cyclone-ditwah-situation-report-no-10-20-march-2026.

[3] UNDP, *Mapping the Initial Impact of Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka. Section: Multidimensional Vulnerability*, 30th January 2026 https://geosmart.undp.org/arcgis/apps/storymaps/stories/25866fbc805c4d70b6bf35c23f896daf#ref-n-czE7Ht.

[4] Meenakshi Ganguly, *Sri Lanka Struggles in Aftermath of Devastating Cyclone. Longstanding Discrimination Against Marginalized Communities Worsens Catastrophe*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Dispatches, 11th December 2025 https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/11/sri-lanka-struggles-in-aftermath-of-devastating-cyclone.

[5] Sri Lanka Brief, *Joint Statement: The Demands of Malaiyaha Tamil Families Affected by Cyclone Ditwah Calling for the Attention of President*, 30th March 2026 https://srilankabrief.org/joint-statement-the-demands-of-malaiyaha-tamil-families-affected-by-cyclone-ditwah-calling-for-the-attention-of-president/;
Methmalie Dissanayake, *Cyclone Ditwah: The ongoing crisis of Malaiyaha Tamils*, The Morning, 25th January 2026 https://www.themorning.lk/articles/DyGIMNLRG6o7GAXLXaGE; Raisa Wickrematunge,

out the securitization of the relief process,[6] and the declaration of an nationwide state of emergency.[7] Experts have moreover pointed to severe governance failures including the violation of the Disaster Management Act No. 13.[8] The lack of preparation was also illustrated by the warnings that came far too late.[9] In addition, though a large number of severely affected people were from Tamil speaking communities, government communication including warnings, information on relief, updates by the government and press conferences were hardly available in Tamil, aggravating the danger and the impact of the cyclone for Tamil speakers.[10] Hence in a similar way as Chemmani is "*a test of the Sri Lankan State's willingness and ability to confront its own past and uphold its legal obligations*"[11], Ditwah likewise puts a spotlight on the NPP's promises towards minorities and probes its commitment to be a government not only for elites and the privileged, but also for vulnerable groups and the marginalized.

In order to triangulate Ditwah's impacts on vulnerable, war-affected populations, and the violations of their social and economic rights, Adayaalam conducted from January until

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Cyclone Ditwah and Sri Lanka's disastrous flood mismanagement, Himal Southasian, 4th December 2025 https://www.himalmag.com/sri-lanka-cyclone-ditwah-floods-landslides/.

[6] Sri Lanka Brief, *Militarisation of Post Ditwah Relief: MOD Issues Guidelines for Accelerated Disaster Relief Operations*, 15th December 2025 https://srilankabrief.org/militarisation-of-post-ditwah-relief-mod-issues-guidelines-for-accelerated-disaster-relief-operations/

[7] Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), *Statement on the Declaration of Emergency and Emergency Regulations Promulgated on the 28.11.2025*, 1st December 2025 https://www.cpalanka.org/statement-on-the-declaration-of-emergency-and-emergency-regulations-promulgated-on-the-28-11-2025/; Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, *Observations and Recommendations on the Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions and Powers) Regulations, No. 1 of 2025*, 5th December 2025 https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HRCSL-Letter-to-the-HE-President-on-05_12_2025-compressed.pdf.
See for an overview over legal and administrative measures with regard to Ditwah Law & Society Trust (LST), *Government Legal and Administrative Measures Following Cyclone Ditwah*, March 2026 https://lst.lk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Government-Measures-Post-Ditwah-2.pdf.

[8] Pitasanna Shanmugathas, *One of the World's Most Climate-Vulnerable Nations, One of the Least Prepared: Sri Lanka's Deadly Choice*, JURISTnews, 21st December 2025 https://www.jurist.org/features/2025/12/21/one-of-the-worlds-most-climate-vulnerable-nations-one-of-the-least-prepared-sri-lankas-deadly-choice/;
Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), *Key Short-Term and Long-Term Issues to Consider for Post-Cyclone Ditwah Recovery*, 16th December 2025 https://www.cpalanka.org/key-short-term-and-long-term-issues-to-consider-for-post-cyclone-ditwah-recovery/.

[9] Murali Krishnan, *Sri Lanka cyclone tragedy exposes government failures*, Deutsche Welle, 2nd December 2025 https://www.dw.com/en/sri-lanka-cyclone-tragedy-exposes-government-failures/a-74985337;
Lionel Bopage, *Ceylon Ditwah: A Preventable Tragedy*, Groundviews, 6th December 2025 https://groundviews.org/2025/12/06/cyclone-ditwah-a-preventable-tragedy/.

[10] Sanjana Hattotuwa, *Who gets warned? Language, discrimination, and disaster communication in Sri Lanka*, Sanjanah Blog, 29th November 2025; Tharushi Weerasinghe & Sandran Rubatheesan, *Lost in translation: How Sri Lanka's Tamils face repeated disaster warning failures*, The New Humanitarian, 18th December 2025 https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2025/12/18/lost-translation-how-sri-lankas-tamils-face-repeated-disaster-warning.

[11] Adayaalam Centre for Police Research, *Situation Brief No. 7: The Test: Chemmani and Sri Lanka's Accountability Crisis*, October 2025, p. 2 https://adayaalam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/The-Test-Chemmani-and-Sri-Lankas-Accountability-Crisis_16.10.2025.pdf.

May 2026 research in the Eastern Province. This executive summary of the brief compiles the major findings from the interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with war-affected women, people with disabilities, ex-combatants, civil society activists and government officers in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai Districts.

1. Normalising Vulnerability

The many affected by Ditwah in the East who were left on their own point to the gap between the aspiration of the NPP government, and the reality on the ground. What are the reasons for this gap? First, government officers normalized the disaster and vulnerability to it, and downplayed the hardships people underwent. Second, this resulted in a lack of preparation and diminished relief efforts. And third, military occupation and infrastructural issues in the East expose vulnerable groups to increased risks of hazards.

Government officers frequently drew comparisons to the Hill Country and diminished Ditwah's impacts in the East.[12] This widespread mindset led to a delayed and inadequate response. In addition, entire areas that were sweepingly declared on flimsily bases as "*not affected*", were omitted from relief delivery.[13] And areas that are frequently subjected to flooding were dismissed from relief on the base of that they are flood-prone and that people "*are used to it*".[14]

This normalisation also resulted in a lack of preparation.[15] In some places, the Disaster Management Unit was reported as not functioning at all.[16] In Kalmunai, not enough boats were available to transport and evacuate people and to supply aid.[17] In Batticaloa, it was only when a Minister came that disaster meetings were organized.[18] One of the most severe flaws was the failure to warn people in time.[19]

In several locations government officers drew moreover arbitrary lines to designate who should receive aid and who not, for example on the base whether water from the river had

[12] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[13] Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[14] Interview with an activist and family member of a forcibly disappeared person in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[15] Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[16] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.
[17] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.
[18] Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[19] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.

entered or not.[20] Government officers we spoke with in Batticaloa moreover justified relief to be only disbursed for Ditwah related damages but not for "normal flooding".[21]

People also mentioned infrastructural issues that compounded, and regularized, vulnerability. Among these issues are low-lying marshlands where people were resettled to following the 2004 tsunami, and inadequate drainage systems.[22]

Activists noted that the rampant militarization in the East significantly contributes to the shortage of land to where people from hazard-prone areas could be resettled.[23] There were also several examples for the danger to livestock and the livelihoods of local farmers resulting from the occupation of grazing lands by the military.[24] Uncurbed illegal activities such as sand mining further endanger people by exposing them to regular flooding.[25]

These examples point to the political production of seemingly natural calamities: by failing to prepare for annual flooding and disasters; by not resolutely prosecuting illegal activities such as sand mining that damage the environment; by leaving infrastructural issues such as drainage unaddressed; and by not releasing the vast hectares of paddy and grazing land and land where people living in hazard-prone areas could be resettled to, people, especially from minority communities and vulnerable groups, are exposed to a disproportionate risk for disasters. In all these cases, vulnerability is the result of policy decisions, land rights violations and non-accountability. Yet disasters, rather than dealt with as crises that require urgent action, are generalized as common, everyday phenomena and in this way normalized.

2. Equality vs. Equity – Letting People Fall through the Cracks

A central theme that was running through our research was the lack of equality in relief distribution. In addition, principles of equity – taking into account the vulnerability of particular groups of people, their specific needs and obstacles to access aid – were not followed, resulting in many people falling through the cracks.

There were no special provisions for vulnerable groups which aggravated structural barriers in accessing disaster relief. The circulars stipulated general criteria of eligibility and consequently, relief distribution took the shape of a one-fit-for-all approach.[26] The

[20] Interview with woman A with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[21] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[22] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.

[23] Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.

[24] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.

[25] Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.

[26] Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.

absence of any tailored policies or special provisions for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities aggravated their vulnerability.[27]

Such pre-existing vulnerabilities were also compounded by the tremendous rise in costs of living in the wake of Ditwah, which hit already marginalized groups brutally. [28] In addition to people with disabilities, these include also ex-combatants, people performing caste-based labour, Coastal Veddas (*Karaiyar*) and Telugu-speaking people (*Ahikuntaka*).[29]

Equity was also impeded by narrow measurements of impact on the one hand, and relief criteria that were highly generalized on the other. For example, accounts of small-scale businesses, informal labourers, small-scale farmers and those residing on unallocated lands falling through the cracks were rampant in our research. [30] In addition, compensation policies were restrictive and circulars arbitrarily implemented.[31] People were for instance required to stay in camps in order to be considered for relief despite a lack of proper venues to stay.[32]

Another severe issue was that the government response was often insufficient to cater to emergency needs and dangerously delayed, with government help failed to reach some victims even until a full week after the disaster.[33]

These structural failures and the lack of equality as well as equity in relief distribution by the state prompted grassroots organizations and activists to play an indispensable role in providing aid[34], and government officers relied heavily on NGOs to fill these logistical and institutional gaps, especially in taking care of vulnerable groups.[35] Yet they were often

[27] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.
[28] Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.
[29] Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[30] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[31] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.
[32] Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[33] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.
[34] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.
[35] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with

sidelined, and even met with hostility. Activists from grassroot organizations with long-standing work with vulnerable groups were for example excluded from disaster management and decision-making processes.[36] In other cases, government officers actively obstructed relief work by independent aid groups which compelled those to bypass state structures.[37] In addition, bureaucratic and political obstacles impeded the work of civil society organizations. For example, the constraints associations for people with disabilities faced hindered them to provide relief swiftly during Ditwah. [38]

Disaster management was painted with a broad brush and did neither adhere to principles of equality nor equity. This led to systematic failures to recognize the compounded vulnerability of particular groups, and to take into account their specific needs in relief orchestration. In addition, without individual assessments of damages and losses including livelihood losses, this resulted in the exclusion of affected people from relief schemes. To fill these gaps, state actors outsourced the responsibility to care for those who fell through the cracks to civil society organizations, yet they also severely constrained or even hindered their work.

3. The Triple Burden of Women Affected by the Cyclone

The neglect of vulnerable groups, especially those who have endured years if not decades of marginalization due to disability or political violence, was widely perceived as major shortcoming in relief distribution. This shortcoming harshly hit women in the East – among them many women with disabilities, family members of the disappeared, female headed households and women struggling with poverty[39] – in three major ways: as care-givers, as being war-affected, and as those who often engage in informal and precarious labour and/or depend on home gardens or small patches of land for subsistence.[40]

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disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.

[36] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[37] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.

[38] Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with an activist for people with disabilities in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[39] In Batticaloa and Ampara Districts, the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) lies significantly above the national MVI. UNDP, *Understanding Multidimensional Vulnerabilities: Impact on People of Sri Lanka*, District Profiles, 2023
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-03/mvi_district_profiles_eng_final.pdf

[40] Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

Many war-affected women engage in precarious und unstable labour yet they fell through the cracks of disaster relief, and Ditwah pushed them further into poverty.[41] For example, women were frequently denied allowances as many of their small-scale businesses are not registered.[42] Many women also rely on home gardens to feed their families and/or cultivate small patches of land yet the government had mainly large-scale farmers in mind when providing relief.[43]

For family members of the disappeared, this gendered vulnerability is aggravated by the trauma of not knowing what happened to their loved ones on the one hand, and by the economic burdens placed on their shoulders on the other hand. Women whose husbands, brothers, sons or fathers were forcibly disappeared are often forced into informal labour as they had to assume over night the role of the breadwinners. An activist whose husband was forcibly disappeared when their son was not even 2 years old, compellingly articulated these two agonizing issues: "*…a mother or a woman who has survived 30 years of war, managed daily needs, navigated a patriarchal society, endured sexual harassment or social stigma, protected her children, earned a living, and engaged with complex legal systems…now, they are exhausted. They have searched for years with no solution. They face economic crises, no prioritization in state services, and no special concessions*".[44] This statement powerfully makes the point that in addition to human rights being violated in the act of enforced disappearance, also social rights, e.g. having to navigate a patriarchal society, the burden of finding out what happened and holding the state accountable, as well as economic rights are infringed.

Apart from non-accountability for the crime, there are other serious systemic failures exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerabilities of family members of the disappeared that weighted heavily on their shoulders during Ditwah. For example, the inadequacy of the Certificate of Absence[45] hinders women to e.g. access bank accounts, and retrieve insurance money or pawned jewellery.[46] This pushes family members of the disappeared into the agonizing situation where they are forced to either get a death certificate that may

[41] Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with an activist and family member of a forcibly disappeared person in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[42] Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[43] Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[44] Interview with an activist and family member of a forcibly disappeared person in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[45] The Certificate of Absence was introduced in 2016 after many years of lobbying by family members of the disappeared and human rights groups. Stopped by the Gotabaya Rajapaksa government and then resumed under the NPP government. In its current form, it has several shortcomings. Faizer Shaheid. 2025. *Certificate of Absence: OMP's certificate not accepted by banks*? The Morning, 26th January 2025 https://www.themorning.lk/articles/2k9HNPitbz4FJpRkVt60

[46] Interview with an activist and family member of a forcibly disappeared person in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

provide more financial stability but forgo accountability and the search for their loved ones, or remain trapped within economic precarity.[47]

Another particular vulnerable group were women with disabilities who are often rendered invisible by existing structures that impeded their access to relief.[48] For example, it is especially for ex-combatants challenging to obtain the necessary medical records for getting registered.[49] Women with disabilities also shared stories of everyday marginalization that came to bear during Ditwah, for example economic hardships due to husbands who do not pay maintenance in combination with not having received relief for occupational losses, or physical challenges to access government services.[50]

Women's unpaid care work, and the burden of bearing the responsibility for the household, adds another layer of vulnerability during disasters. This is compounded in the East by the high number of female-headed households.[51] Many women shared their worries about their children's education and struggles to feed their families during the disaster.[52]

Bearing the responsibility for the entire household together with women's precarious, informal work arrangements, especially in combination with living with a disability or having to exhaust resources in the search for their loved ones, often force them to take loans.[53] Women's activists shared that even at the height of the disaster, debt collectors put women under pressure.[54] With regard to loans, the same women's rights activist also

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[47] Interview with an activist and family member of a forcibly disappeared person in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[48] Sarala Emmanuel, Ponni Arasu, and Vijayaletchumi Sekar, *Collective Organizing Among Women Living with Disabilities (WLD) to Address and Ensure Their Right to Health in Eastern Sri Lanka*, in Handbook on Sex, Gender and Health: Perspectives from South Asia (edited by TK Sundari Ravindran et al.), Springer Singapore, 2025.

[49] Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[50] Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[51] 27,1 % of households in the Eastern Province are headed by women, with Batticaloa District having the highest percentage (32,3 %) island-wide. Department of Census and Statistics, *Household, Income and Expenditure Survey*, 2019 https://www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/en/GenderStatistics/Special_Concerns/FemaleHeadedHouseholdsBySector,ProvinceAndDistrict2016.pdf.

[52] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Interview with woman A with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[53] Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
Such accumulated household debt is among the highest in the Eastern Province with predatory micro-finance companies especially targeting female-headed households in former war zones:
UNDP, *Addressing Household Debt Induced Vulnerability in Sri Lanka*, September 2024 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-11/household_debt_brief.pdf; Nathan Legrand, *In Sri Lanka, Resistance to Private Indebtedness is a Strategic Issue*, CADTM, 3rd March 2020 https://www.cadtm.org/In-Sri-Lanka-Resistance-to-Private-Indebtedness-Is-a-Strategic-Issue.

[54] Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

criticized the policy change from providing dry rations and food for people outside of camps, to depositing monetary relief in bank accounts.[55]

In all these examples, heightened vulnerability during Ditwah is the accumulated result of state neglect and the violation of human, social and economic rights of women, especially of women with disabilities and family members of the disappeared. The overlooking of such groups and with it, the intersectional dimensions of vulnerability during disaster relief, compounded their already dire living conditions. In their stories, many women also conveyed the exhaustion accrued through shouldering the triple burden of having to fight for their and their families' survival, the struggle for justice for themselves and for others, and through having to navigate patriarchal structures. Yet disaster management lacked any form of gender sensitivity.[56]

4. Politicizing Aid, Mistrusting the State

Relief distribution was widely perceived to be politicized in that it was hindered, blocked and unfairly distributed due to favoritism, ethnic bias and discrimination. This was in particular the case in areas with ethnic polarization and long-standing conflicts over local governance and administration. With regard to Praja Shakti, the latest initiative by the NPP government, people spoke about the undemocratic selection of members, the party-political orientation of the initiative and the sidestepping of government officers. Especially among vulnerable groups such as ex-combatants, there was in addition a discernible mistrust, suspicion and fear towards the state in general, and towards local administration in particular sparked by experiences of harassment and political persecution.

Unresolved administrative conflicts in the polarized, multi-ethnic environments in the East were frequently identified as impediments to relief distribution. In Sampur, Trincomalee and Kalmunai, interlocutors discussed the systematic marginalization of Tamil areas and ensuing deep-seated administrative problems as one of the main drivers for inadequate disaster management. In Kalmunai, the long-standing conflict over the Kalmunai North DS office[57] has severely affected relief distribution.[58] In Sampor and Trincomalee, people likewise described discrimination on the base of ethnicity, citing issues ranging from compiling aid lists with predominantly Muslim persons to declaring

[55] Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[56] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.
[57] Wasantha Chandrapala and S. Rubatheesan, *Give Kalmunai North Division its Due Status, Protesters Demand*, Sunday Times, 31st March 2024 https://www.sundaytimes.lk/240331/news/give-kalmunai-north-division-its-due-status-protesters-demand-553546.html; Tamil Guardian,*Tamils in Kalmunai protest against move to subjugate local division*, 26th March 2026 https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamils-kalmunai-protest-against-move-subjugate-local-division; Tamil Guardian*, Tamils in Kalmunai continue protest calling for funds for development*, 3rd April 2024 https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamils-kalmunai-continue-protest-calling-funds-development.
[58] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.

Tamil areas as "not affected.[59] Even organizations who wanted to provide humanitarian aid were blocked.[60] In several places, the Disabled People's Organization is not functioning which was ascribed to ethnic discrimination in the administration. [61]

Activists also observed caste-based discrimination in Tamil GN divisions.[62] The excessive power that local government officers hold in deciding on relief distribution has hence further exacerbated marginalization based on ethnicity and caste.

Though several research participants told us that the situation has improved under the current government, many ex-combatants are still "visited" and surveilled by the CID.[63] Most ex-combatants therefore expressed a deep-seated fear and suspicion to engage with the state, whether it is claiming their rights or accessing relief.[64] This vulnerability is aggravated in the case of female ex-combatants.[65] We also heard of ex-combatants who faced targeted discrimination concerning compensation because they are involved in protests regarding land conflicts.[66]

Another issue that frequently came up was favouritism and corruption in selecting people for relief.[67] The intransparency with regard to relief registration and provision, and arbitrary assessments by GS, sparked off protests in different places.[68]

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[59] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.

[60] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.

[61] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Interview with war-affected woman A in Amparai District in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.

[62] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.

[63] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.

[64] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.

[65] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.

[66] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.

[67] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

[68] Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026.

Praja Shakti added to the mistrust towards the state. There was consensus in our research that Praja Shakti is a highly politicized initiative with non-transparent structures.[69] For example, research participants in all 3 Districts spoke about the undemocratic processes through which chairmen and members were selected, with 'NPP people' being favoured.[70] Praja Shakti was also viewed as co-opting local activists and youth federations and as sidestepping government officers.[71] People also reported cases where Praja Shakti members got involved in relief work and in some places, there were rumours of corruption.[72]

These instances of administrative bias and ethnic discrimination have impeded relief delivery and resulted in unfair aid distribution. Aid distribution was politicized in that administrative bias in ethnically polarized contexts could be acted out due to the far-reaching decision-making power of government officers and the lack of accountability for systematic failures. The lack of transparency, favouritism and corruption led to protests in different areas, and Praja Shakti was widely perceived as contributing to the politicization of structures for relief distribution and development work.

5. Accumulated Suffering

"*We ate by taking out loans*."[73]
---War-Affected Woman---

"*After the cyclone, I have reached a state where I can't do anything*".[74]
---War-Affected Woman---

The stories of war-affected people in the East we have heard expose the suffering and trauma that has accumulated over decades in their lives, and that compound their vulnerability during Ditwah. They also reveal the emotional toll and exhaustion of continuous struggles for survival. Out of them speaks vividly the urgency to link social justice with disaster management to address the violations of social, economic and human rights not just with regard to disasters but also in the past.

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[69] See also Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), *Statement on Praja Shakthi, Clean Sri Lanka, and the Constitutional Integrity of the Sri Lankan State*, 2nd May 2026 https://www.cpalanka.org/statement-by-the-centre-for-policy-alternatives-on-praja-shakthi-clean-sri-lanka-and-the-constitutional-integrity-of-the-sri-lankan-state/.

[70] Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; Interview with war-affected woman A in Amparai District in February 2026; FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[71] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026.

[72] Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026.

[73] Interview with war-affected woman B in Amparai District in February 2026.

[74] Interview with war-affected woman C in Amparai District in February 2026.

In many cases, the desperate situation people found themselves in emerged as a result of the injustices they had experienced during and after the war that came to bear during the cyclone. Those whose loved ones have been killed or were forcibly disappeared have received neither accountability nor compensation for their losses, and political violence often plunged them into extreme poverty. Many war-affected people in the East were not displaced once, but multiple times, forcing them into inadequate housing. All that made war-affected people more vulnerable to the impacts of Ditwah.

Throughout the war and its aftermath, people stated that there were left on their own, without any state support except for, in several cases only temporarily, Samurdhi or Aswesuma. They also described gut-wrenchingly situations in which government officers were asking for bribes for being considered for housing schemes or for relief that they could not afford to pay. Those who have experienced political violence also spoke about a profound fear, not only of the security forces but of the state more broadly.

Family members of LTTE combatants for example told us about exclusion and state abandonment. Regular harassment by the army and the CID had forced some to flee several times during the war, and the continuing persecution by the state also often left them bereft of any social support networks which made them more vulnerable during Ditwah and impeded their access to relief.

Many of those affected by the war are still tormented by memories of their often multiple trauma. Traumatic and painful experiences of loved ones being injured, killed or forcibly disappeared, of displacement or of having survived massacres against civilians also catapulted people into economic hardships. Survivors often had no other way to earn a living than by plucking greens, selling food from home and other precarious, small-scale livelihoods that they could not pursue during Ditwah. Many war-affected families also rely on home gardens that were destroyed in the wake of the disaster and/or held chicken that died, adding to their economic hardships. Such households also often depend on daily wage labour that was interrupted by Ditwah.

Yet in many cases, they have not received any relief. As the first quote above illustrates, the inadequacy of relief distribution in combination with systematic failures to address past violence and ensuing economic hardship, rendered those who have experienced violence during the war susceptible to hunger in the aftermath of Ditwah, and forced some to take loans to eat.

Resignation and hopelessness, as illustrated by the second quote, due to relentless struggles for survival and a lack of support, came out in many accounts. War-affected people in the East also poignantly shared their worries to provide for their children, and desperation that had trickled down to the next generation.

The plight of war-affected people point to a range of injustices and systematic failures that haunted them in the aftermath of the cyclone: accumulated trauma and economic hardships that made them extremely vulnerable; non-accountability for crimes committed against them and their families; corruption in the distribution of relief and registration for welfare schemes; the harassment of families' of combatants; and a

general neglect by the state. The experiences shared with us piercingly recount that survivors were in addition to the multiple trauma that they have been subjected to, also often brought into dire economic situations. They hence show the necessity to adopt a social justice-oriented approach to disaster management with relief schemes that target war-affected people.

6. Of Not Being Seen and Heard

Systemic failures and marginalization of vulnerable groups in disaster management came out in the many poignant accounts of not being seen, and heard, by the state. People were rendered invisible by GS who did not come and see losses as well as by government officers' insensitivity and the lack of data on vulnerable groups. This set up barriers for accessing relief, which were compounded by obstacles in the registration process. Vulnerable groups were also rendered inaudible through the exclusion of grassroots activists and organizations from disaster management meetings and decision making processes.

People shared poignant stories of how they desperately appealed to DS staff or GS "to come and see" but "no one came to see" was a frequent experience.[75] Being left out manifested also in desperate and often futile attempts of getting registered for relief.[76] Common statements that people heard when approaching government officers to register were: *"We have finished the registration*" or "*The time is up.*"[77] Vulnerable groups were moreover outrightly told that no aid would be available for them.[78] In general, many had to rely on others to fill in forms, to approach a particular GS, to write letters, to channel their needs through a group etc. in order to have a chance to access relief. [79] People also spoke of bribes government officers demanded to put people on relief lists.[80]

Another recurring topic was insensitivity and a rude if not aggressive attitude displayed by government officers that left them humiliated, scared and resulted in resignation.[81] Experiences of GS officers acting authoritatively and abusing their power in blocking

[75] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities, war-affected women and activists in April 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[76] Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[77] Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026.
[78] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[79] Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[80] Interview with women's activist B in Batticaloa District in January 2026.
[81] Interview with war-affected woman D in Amparai District in February 2026; FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026.

access to relief were common,[82] and ex-combatants in particular were discriminated against and intentionally overlooked during aid distribution.[83]

In addition, a disproportionate burden of proof was placed on affected people with government officers demanding photos or even videos as evidence.[84] Yet even if people managed to bring photos or videos this did by no means guarantee that they would receive relief.[85]

Serious information and communication gaps further impeded vulnerable groups' access to relief.[86] Crucial information was in many cases solely distributed through WhatsApp groups.[87] Activists in Batticaloa also criticized that most circulars came in English.[88]

The state's failure to collect and update data on vulnerable groups added to their structural invisibility in disaster management[89], which resulted in a lack of basic relief including access to food.[90]

Vulnerable people were also rendered inaudible in disaster management. For example, women, civil society actors and representatives from vulnerable communities were excluded from disaster related meetings and the meetings often failed to address the needs of vulnerable groups.[91]

The state's negligence in taking care of its citizens is indicated by the shifting of responsibility from ensuring adequate relief distribution to having to fight to access it. Relief was rendered inaccessible for a large number of affected people due to the state's

[82] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.
[83] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026.
[84] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[85] Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026.
[86] Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026.
[87] FGD in Trincomalee District with ex-combatants, people with disabilities and staff from an association for people with disabilities in February 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.
[88] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.
[89] Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.
[90] Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026; Interview with two human rights activists who work in Trincomalee District in February 2026; Interview with women's activist A in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Trincomalee District in May 2026; Interview with woman B with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with woman A with a disability who is also an activist in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with war-affected woman B in Amparai District in February 2026.
[91] Interview with women's activist D in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Interview with women's activist C in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with a female former combatant with a disability in Batticaloa District in January 2026; Stakeholder meeting with activists in Batticaloa District in May 2026.

failure to recognize people and their losses, structural barriers to register damages, insensitivity and arbitrary decision-making of government officers, and structures that rendered vulnerable people invisible and inaudible.

7. Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Frontline Government Officers

Government officers highlighted a range of serious issues that they, as frontline workers, faced. They had to deal with systemic pressures such as changing and unclear instructions, and the vagueness of categories that brought them in the difficult position to ultimately decide on relief distribution. In addition, tight reporting schedules, insufficient staff and systemic failures before the disaster such as the lack of data on vulnerable groups compounded these pressures.

Government officers identified the ambiguous stipulations in the circulars as a major challenge to relief work.[92] Changes such as from estimating actual damages and case-based allocation to fixed amounts required moreover modifications in practice and complicated the auditing process.[93] The vagueness of the criteria to measure impact left them moreover with the burden to ultimately decide on the distribution of funds.[94]

As the circulars did not specify particular vulnerable groups to whom relief should be given,[95] the GS were the ones who had to deliver the data for relief distribution and their situation reports formed the base for official figures. Government officers spoke about the gruelling reporting schedule that they had to follow thereby and the pressure this placed on them.[96]

GS in particular, as those working on the frontlines of disaster management, directly faced the anger and desperation of people and were frequently verbally attacked and even threatened.[97] Distress, exhaustion and a strong sense of being left alone was rampant among frontline workers.[98]

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[92] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.

[93] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, *Budget Circular 08/2025* (5th December 2025).

[94] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026.

[95] Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[96] Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[97] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

[98] Interview with GS A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

Government communication further complicated their work. Government officers shared for example that the spreading of information via social media by the government raised people's expectations and provoked conflicts with affected people.[99]

Frontline government officers hence found themselves in a difficult place as they had to deal with bureaucratic and administrative constraints, and with the expectations, desperation and anger of the public. Government officers faced many challenges due to disaster management on the national level such as the number of circulars that compelled them to constantly adjust their work, and the vagueness of criteria that forced them to take decisions who would get relief and who not. They were burdened with the pressure to prepare reports that informed disaster management and relief allocation, yet lacked sufficient support.

8. Rights Violations and the Human-Made Dimension of Natural Disasters

Natural disasters reveal glaring inequalities, lay bare systemic failures and expose rights violations as our research brief shows. They have therefore always also a human-made component and are intrinsically connected with questions of social justice. Our research has shown the following:

First, the violation of social, economic and human rights produces vulnerability that renders certain people more susceptible to hazards, and aggravates their impacts. This socially and politically produced vulnerability explains the unevenness with which disasters affect people: who bears the brunt of climate change and has to live in flood-prone areas; who has to reside in an area with inadequate infrastructure that aggravates flooding; whose environment is affected by illegal sand mining; who is unable to flee due to a disability caused by the war; who is stranded without food in a remote area; who is forced over night to assume the role of the breadwinner because of the killing or enforced disappearance of a loved one; who has to graze cattle in dangerous places due to the militarization of land; who has to depend on home gardens to have enough to eat; who has to raise chicken, cultivate a small plot of land, or perform daily wage labor to survive; whose house is leaking without any means to repair it; who doesn't have resources to fall back on due to the war; who has to live on land without a deed; who has been violated by the state and carries a deep trauma. At the same time, structural barriers that hinder access to relief increase vulnerability.

Second, disaster management exposes state-citizen-relations and lays bare present and past discrimination, exclusion and state neglect. It reveals how and where aid is politicized; which groups are overlooked and excluded in relief efforts; state based discrimination; whose losses are rendered invisible and whose needs inaudible; mistrust or even fear towards the state based on previous experiences; who receives life-saving information and who not; in how far the state fulfils its duties to protect its citizens

[99] FGD with DS officers in Kalmunai in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer A in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with leading government officer B in Batticaloa District in February 2026; Interview with GS B in Batticaloa District in February 2026.

by adequately planning and preparing for disasters; and whether relief processes are thought through from marginalized members of society or not.

Third, inadequate disaster management takes an emotional toll, and accumulated trauma and hardships aggravate the impact of disasters. In our interviews, we have heard and seen resignation and exhaustion that resulted from the normalization of vulnerability by state actors; insensitivity and hostility experienced at the hands of government officers; neglect by the state; being overlooked in relief efforts and falling through the cracks; and a constant, unrelenting struggle for survival. This is exacerbated in the case of women, especially war-affected women including women with disabilities, family members of the forcibly disappeared and those heading households, who often carry a triple burden as care-givers to others, bearing the responsibility for the entire household during disasters; as those who more often engage in informal and precarious labour and/or depend on home gardens or small patches of land for subsistence – livelihoods that were severely impacted by Ditwah; and as carrying the trauma and socio-economic brunt of having lost homes, loved ones or limbs as a result of the war.

Fourth, structural barriers, systemic failures and inequity in relief provision constitute structural violence. Consequently, disaster management is intrinsically linked with questions of social justice that also have to be seen in a larger historical perspective. Deeply ingrained inequalities, systemic patterns of discrimination and structural barriers for vulnerable groups to assert their rights and access state services come to bear during disasters. They hence disclose patterns of injustice and a lack of accountability in both past and present. Structural violence is hence compounded by disasters if intersecting vulnerabilities are ignored and past violations are left unaccounted for.

9. From Reaction and Band-Aid to Prevention and Structural Reform: Recommendations

Adopt a social justice approach to disaster management

- Stipulate special provisions for vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, women, ex-combatants, family members of victims of enforced disappearance, workers in the informal economy and oppressed caste communities
- Adopt bottom-up approaches for need assessments
- Devise relief based on the input of stakeholders including women, people with disabilities and economic as well as socially marginalized groups
- Revise relief categories to explicitly include people working in the informal sector and remove administrative obstacles to receive aid
- Integrate activists and grassroots organizations in planning, decision-making and disaster management
- Ensure the representation of women and people with disabilities in disaster management

- Remove bureaucratic obstacles to relief delivery
- Ensure the immediate provision of dry rations and food to people whose houses were flooded
- Collect and update data on vulnerable groups on the GS division level throughout the year
- Improve the system for real-time situational updates
- Set up camps that are accessible for people with disabilities and cater to needs of women
- Offer people in flood-prone areas alternative plots of land to resettle
- Rigorously implement national language policy and ensure the parallel release of circulars, information, weather forecasts etc. in Sinhala, Tamil and English
- Draft disaster management plans that address the needs of vulnerable groups
- Analyze and reckon with the failures of the Ditwah response

Address discrimination, exclusion and state neglect

- Guarantee the functioning of associations for people with disabilities
- Remove barriers for people with disabilities to obtain ID cards
- Ensure the recognition of the Certificate of Absence and expand its validity
- Strengthen women's independence by rectifying their socio-economic vulnerability (e.g. expedite maintenance cases and enforce payment, reform the MMDA, set up support schemes for women's small-scale businesses, revise the Microfinance Bill, address civil society criticism of Aswesuma, establish more safe houses…)
- Implement universal social security schemes
- Enable tax-free registration of small-scale businesses
- Issue land deeds to marginalized people
- Safeguard the rights of ex-combatants and stop surveillance
- Cooperate with NGOs and CSOs to address rights violations of vulnerable groups
- Address administrative issues and discrimination in Muthur DS Division
- Counter favouritism and discrimination in governance by implementing and upholding execution of state services in an equitable and equal manner
- Enforce the constitutionally guaranteed language rights of Tamil speakers

Rectify structural barriers, systemic failures and inequity

- Release land occupied by security forces and state agencies (e.g. Forest Department, Department of Archaeology, Mahaweli Authority, Ministry of Buddhasasana, Cultural and Religious Affairs)
- Roll back militarization and gradually close military camps in the East
- De-politicize Praja Shakti: ensure democratic processes to select members and chairwo*men, integrate it into existing governance structures to ensure

accountability and avoid parallel structures, fully subordinate it under Divisional Secretariats and stop political interference
- Convert Kalmunai North into a full-fledged DS Office and guarantee its independent functioning
- Ensure transparency of relief schemes, registration process etc. and improve information flows
- Strengthen government officers' accountability by overseeing and regulating local actors and structures (e.g. external monitoring of relief work through e.g. independent Divisional or District Monitoring Committees)
- Strictly prosecute illegal sand mining
- Ensure the functioning and regular meetings of Disaster Management Committees also outside of a crisis
- Establish support systems for GS in disaster situations (e.g. dividing GS Divisions during disaster and integrate SSOs etc. in reaching out to affected people)