

4. Land market, land administration and land related conflicts

4.1 Land prices

In almost all GNDs land inside the buffer zone has collapsed in value, while value of land outside the buffer zone has increased – by as much as 5-10 times in some cases. This rise in prices has created problems for NGOs who want to purchase land outside the buffer zone. It has been triggered by the desire for people to move away from the sea through fear or the government mandated buffer zone.

Rising land prices in Uppaweli, Trincomalee

“Earlier people came looking for seashore lands but now nobody wants them. Lands which were worth Rs. 100,000 is not even wanted for Rs. 10,000. Now values of lands outside are increasing. For example a land, about 5 miles from the sea, which was valued at Rs. 5000 is now being quoted Rs. 40,000. Many NGOs are unable to purchase land because of this increase in value.”

Focus group Uppaweli near Trincomalee town

There are also cases where people would like to move away from the sea but cannot afford the higher prices. This is the situation both in parts of Dewata Galle and Koggala, Galle (see below).

Rising land prices outside buffer zone in Koggala

“The land within 100 metres has no value. . The land value beyond the buffer zone has increased. The price increases as we go away from the sea. We have no money to purchase this land and depend on government assistance”

focus group participants, Koggala, Habaraduwa (Galle District)

4.2 Problem of lost documentation

Lost deeds, IDs etc have prevented access to loans in several GNs (see earlier sections) according to the focus group participants.

4.3 Lack of conflicts over boundary markings

None of the 14 GNs reported disputes over boundaries as a result of the tsunami

- In Thiruchendoor “in some lands boundaries cannot be identified. We collectively came to an understanding that at present we will demarcate our lands as they are and later we will properly measure them and demarcate them”

4.4 Ownership and tenure

In parts of Galle and Hambantota there are large numbers of people who have never had deeds, but they have paid taxes and service bills to the relevant authorities.

Lack of deeds in Muslim section of Galle

“The government gave the CGR estate to us but no deeds were given. In this regard this estate is an unauthorized occupation. But the council collects assessment rates from us. Electric supply is also given. Nearly one thousand people are living in these unauthorized houses.”

Muslim focus group in Dewata Galle

There are a few accounts of land conflicts post tsunami particularly in the Eastern Province. In Ninthavur and Thambiluvil in Ampara District and Onthachimadam there are some reports of disputes over land ownership.

Government policy according to TAFREN is to provide “ownership” to the land given for pre-built houses with “sale allowed”, but it is not clear what their exact legal status will be. If sale and other transactions (eg mortgages) legally require government permission, this has caused delays in other places in Sri Lanka where such procedures exist.