

**Voices of Tsunami: stories from communities affected by the Tsunami.
The scars still remain: Walawatta Resettlement Camp, Galle, Sri Lanka.**



I am the Chief in the camp. We have all lost our houses and belongings. We were resettled here 1 month after the Tsunami. The tents were pitched on this land right next to the sea. People are still afraid of the sea. During the day it is not so bad as we can see it, but at night, in the tents we can only hear it. Can you imagine this; the first warning of something happening was the sound of the sea, then the wave hit. The nights are very difficult for people.

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The other thing for us is the trauma of it all. A lot of people have recovered but there are still many who have problems. Although there has been much clearing of debris, there is still a lot of damaged houses with gaping holes and piles of damaged things stacked up by the side of the road and on the land. Seeing these everyday is difficult. It is a permanent physical reminder of what happened and it re-enforces the trauma for those still affected. They are like open wounds and scars on the landscape that are imprinted in the minds of people.

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The Municipality is responsible for the camp. They have given us the tents. We were grateful for this and in the beginning it was all we had. But little by little people have left the camp and in fact, no one lives here permanently now.

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When I walk down the road, everyday I see the school and these chairs, all mangled and stacked up in the corner. It reminds too much of what happened here. They should clear this away as soon as possible.

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In the daytime, the tents are like a sauna. It is impossibly hot inside. Then when it rains, the noise is incredible and there are leaks. And now with the rainy season coming, people just don't want to live here.

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There are still a lot of buildings that are falling down. The rubble is just sitting there. It is dangerous for people, especially the children who use the buildings for playing in. These broken walls, they look like open wounds.

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There is also a security issue. Before, we had some surveillance by the police and the army but they have gone. We don't feel safe here any more.

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They have left the train as a monument. Many died here. But I am not so sure. It keeps reminding me of what happened. Maybe they should keep it, but take it away and put it in a museum.

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Now, people come back during the day to do their washing, have a bath or shower as there is water here and it is free. Not so many use the toilets as they are next to the sea. Once inside you can only hear it and not see it.

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I have a friend who was in the hospital when the Tsunami hit. Luckily, she survived. These empty bed bays with just the number left, it is a sad reminder. It is like the person has disappeared and just a number remains to describe them.

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Even though we don't live here permanently, we won't take the tents down for a while. Perhaps we can keep the land afterwards.

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At the hospital, there is still much equipment that was damaged that is just laying around. This fridge, lying here as if it's insides have been ripped out. It reminds me of the force of what happened.

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But after 6 months, we expected more. The 100m boundary rule is worrying some people. What will happen to their land if they have to leave? Will they get a new house quickly or will they have to spend even more time in the camp?

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Lots of things have happened since that fateful day. At the hospital they are rebuilding the outer wall. It is a comfort for us to see this new wall joining the old and closing us off from the sea again. We feel protected once more.

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There are still problems with unemployment, sending children to school. We can't see how things are going to improve in the near future.

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The graveyards by the sea were smashed up by the wave. For those of us who want to visit our relatives graves, sometimes we can't find them anymore. It is a like a double loss for us.