

SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL REFUGEES IN TRONDHEIM, NORWAY

M. Varnagulasingam

Head/ Department of Geography
Eastern University, Sri Lanka

Abstract

In the last three decades, the Tamil migration is largely made up of refugees and homeland less people. According to UNHCR, during the period of 1980 – 1999, there are 256, 307 Sri Lankan origin applied for asylum in Europe. Tamils is one of the top ten groups of asylum seekers during this period (Cheran, 2003). Large numbers of Tamils have been granted some form of residence status in their host country. Tamil migration consists of an estimated 700,000 settled in Canada, Europe, India and Australia (Cheran, 2003) in which, some of them (7,128 People as at 01st April 2008) have migrated to Norway. Most of them live in Oslo, (capital city of Norway) and other small cities like Trondheim. The main objective of this study is to explore the settlement experiences of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Trondheim, Norway and considered aspects of their integration into Norwegian society. However, this paper focuses primarily on the social and cultural aspects of this phenomenon. Further, this study discussed four topics related to their refugee status: restrictions on family reunification and mobility access to postsecondary education, access to employment, Concerns about children's education Cultural Norms and Differences in Childrearing Practices and their perspectives on the regulations.

Based on the collected primary and secondary data most of the Tamil refugees are still feeling the effects of stress due to the disturbance of the war in Sri Lanka, their flight out of the country, and their detention in refugee camps before their arrival in Norway. Many were sorrowful over the break up of their families and their inability to reunite with them. The Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were the loss of their homes, culture, country, lifestyle, friends, and family, and their need to mourn these losses. Beside with this grieving process were the stresses of learning a new language and adapting to a culture with values that were, in some instances, in indirect conflict with traditional values, attitudes and norms. Difficulties with Norwegian language (Norsk) and problems with intercultural communication disadvantaged the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in their daily life. In addition, the Problem of getting proper employment and constant worries about the well being of their families were other significant factors. Poor language proficiency in Norsk the obstacles on secondary and higher education and limited employment opportunities made it hard for the refugees to get jobs and integrate into the economic sphere.