

The international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia  
ABN 86 619 970 188

**ACT FOR PEACE**  
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER  
THROUGH THE COALITION



**PEACEMAIL**  
BRINGING YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE FIELD

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### LOCAL PARTNER PROFILE

Following large-scale violence in Sri Lanka against the Tamil community in 1983 and the subsequent civil war, over 100,000 Tamils were forced to seek safety in India. They have been living as refugees for decades. While the Tamil Nadu government provides people with some basic services, refugees still struggle to survive. Conditions in the camp are often poor and crowded, their freedom of movement is restricted and their access to jobs and livelihoods are limited.

The war ended over a decade ago but around 50,000 refugees remain spread across 107 camps. For many, the concerns of safety, lack of documentation, how they will earn a living and where they will live, and access education has been a barrier to return. To overcome these issues, the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) in India helps refugees prepare to return home by providing a 'Preparedness Passport'. This passport contains all the information about how to get the correct documentation and a checklist of what they need to do before returning.

**YOUR SUPPORT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE:**

In July, 935 Act for Peace Partners like you came together and raised **\$45,229** to support people uprooted by conflict and disaster around the world, including refugee families in India, who can access vital health services while they prepare to return to their homeland. *Thank you.*

This project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs and Act for Peace. Act for Peace gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Home Affairs**

### PLEASE PRAY:

- For increased confidence for refugees who wish to return to Sri Lanka, with the support of OfERR.
- For refugees still facing limited freedoms in India's refugee camps.
- For the staff at OfERR to continue to guide and support refugees on their journey home to Sri Lanka.
- For the politicians to make the right decision about refugee return.



Dear friends,

My name is Florina Xavier and I have been working in the refugee space for over 20 years. It all started when I was completing my Master's in Social Work; living in India and observing Sri Lankan refugees living in the state I was in.

When I visited the camps, the first thing I witnessed was that these families were without a country, without citizenship and not belonging. I think it really struck me and ever since, I think at some level, I've been associated with them.

I began work as a volunteer with the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) around that time. All these years later, I am still supporting this incredible local, refugee-led organisation in my role as Regional Return and Reintegration Advisor with Act for Peace.



Sisters and Sri Lankan refugees, Srinidhi\* and Mahira\*, sit outside their home in Thumbulaballi refugee camp with Florina, Regional Return and Reintegration Advisor at Act for Peace.

With your backing, OfERR helps Sri Lankan refugees living in camps across Tamil Nadu to prepare to return home. This involves helping them get the documents they need to prove their identity, reclaim their land, and access essential government services like hospitals and schools.

On returning to Sri Lanka, OfERR Ceylon continue to assist returnees with accessing their land and providing building materials for temporary shelters. They're also helping with securing livelihoods in agriculture, fishing and animal husbandry as well as helping them access government services such as health and education.

As you know, the global food crisis is making many communities around the world vulnerable to food insecurity and famine. In Sri Lanka, there is a food shortage, fuel shortage and a price hike. Particularly for people living in the capital, Colombo, the cost of cooking gas has become a big problem. Locals took to the streets to protest, but they are still awaiting long-term solutions.

The Government of Tamil Nadu said they could provide some relief packs to returned Sri Lankans but didn't have the resources to carry out the transportation and distribution. Given OfERR's work with the government over the years, they were asked to help with the delivery process. For OfERR Ceylon, this partnership meant they could help more people than if they were operating alone. They delivered food packages to about 25,000 people, including many returnees who would be more vulnerable to job and food insecurity.

There's no denying that challenges lie ahead for this refugee community, but what keeps me going is the joy of seeing people return home and settle down in their own home.

It feels like together, we have really done something.

Warmly,

Florina