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## Methodological Issues Pertaining to the Application of Qualitative Techniques in Forced Migration Studies



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**Rev. Pinnawala Sangasumana**

*Department of Geography*  
*University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka*



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### ABSTRACT

There is increasing attention been placed on qualitative methodology in collecting social data, it greatly contributes to collect more realistic and insightful information, ethnographic data etc. This had been realized by anthropologists but is now increasingly been realized by geographers as well. Such methodologies are important not only for their own sake but also to supplement quantitative data. This study has presently been initiated on the process of internal displacement in Sri Lanka- is a multidimensional process, which covers various social and spatial movements, delimited by single or multiple, day and night or other secular displacements. Therefore, the emphasis on qualitative research in the study. Though different qualitative methods are readily available to social scientists, it is found difficult and problematic to use such methods without subjecting them to a scanning process. Hence the need to pay special attention to methodological issues. In this paper, qualitative methods used by social scientists such as formal and informal discussions, in-depth interviews, structured or semi structured interviews, collective reflections, observations, innovation assessments, case studies and life histories etc. are first identified. This is followed by focusing on methods relevant to the study of internal displacement of people in Sri Lanka. The methodological issues confronted in this qualitative research such as the problems of representativeness, ethical considerations, verification of events and information relating to informants, validity and reliability, organization of the research (access, timing and neutrality) and objectivity of the researcher, are highlighted and discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Forced migration, or population movement by force, impacts to the society in many ways. It is also related to various facets of critical social changes such as urbanization, industrialization, settlement policies, family structures etc. The recent history of Sri Lanka reveals empirical evidence that forced migration—both local and international—has been a dynamic force of social change derived from natural and anthropogenic reasons and need to be more attention by researchers.

Forced migration is a multidimensional process which covers different social and spatial movements, related to events such as evacuation, migration, refugee movement and internal displacement, which have their particular characteristics and patterns. On the other hand, it can be identified as a process or phenomenon that affects a steadily increasing number of people across the world with variable implications at global, regional and local levels. One dimension of the problem is when individuals, communities or ethnic groups have left their home areas involuntarily forced by external circumstances and have been compelled to settled down temporarily or permanently in new areas which may differ more or less in terms of climate, natural resources, social and cultural organization and practices from their familiar environment. The Internal displacement of people in Sri Lanka has become a highly complicated national problem because its political, socio-economic and environmental dimensions have been lost sight of in seeking solutions' The civil war that had dragged on thirty years was the main factor contributing to the displacement of people and it had caused as many as 800, 000 to become displaced from their homes by the end of 2010 (UNHCR 2010)' Even though the main cause of displacement – ethnic conflict- has no longer in the country, several other reasons such as Tsunami, flood, drought, landslide etc. have been producing thousands of displaced people over the country. However, a clear picture cannot be drawn about the problem of forced migration in Sri Lanka from the quantitative perspective based on the data provided by the Government or international agencies' Even though some people do not physically leave their places of origin due to any risk, they are being subject to severe social displacement' Therefore, it is important to make use of the qualitative techniques in methodology to study this kind of problem'

Knowledge of qualitative methodology helps in collecting and analyzing the wide variety of data that are used in social research' Although it is very difficult to give precise description of qualitative research, at the beginning level, we can say it is a special research process to

collect data and analyze and interpret social phenomena or human behaviour by applying concepts, techniques and qualitative research methods. The qualitative research aims at explaining why human beings behave in a certain way and/or how the social phenomena are related to their environments' If simply say, quantitative researcher mainly collects quantitative data that are expressed in numbers, while qualitative researcher collects qualitative data that are expressed in words, pictures, or objects. From the above meaning, although qualitative studies differ from quantitative studies in terms of method of data collection, modes of data analysis and data interpretation, both types are complementary' The quantitative study determine the magnitude, direction, patterns and nature of social phenomena correctly and reliably, but cannot explain why such phenomena happen, what relationships exist among factors' These are best obtained and understood through qualitative research' As Shank (2002) states, qualitative research is a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning. It is applied to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. Principally, qualitative research enables scholars to study real people in real situations, notably interaction on micro-level and thus mapping social worlds. This enables to produce an analytic description of a complex social organization or process rather than a test of theory.

Qualitative research is concerned with no statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. Creswell (2007) outlines eight characteristics of qualitative research: (1) conducting the research in a natural setting; (b) using the researcher as a key instrument to the study; (2) studying multiple sources of data; (3) analyzing data inductively; (4) focusing on the participants' meaning; (5) establishing an emergent design; (6) applying a theoretical lens; (7) interpreting data subjectively; and (8) developing a holistic account. Qualitative researchers are willing to interpret the meanings hidden between and within the lines. In effect, qualitative researchers know what to expect; in other words, the researchers may only know roughly in advance what they are looking for. Metaphorically, the researchers gather data in order to plug them into the bigger picture (Tuner, 2013).

Qualitative research deeply rooted in social sciences that seek in-depth answers to human behavioral patterns and systems of understanding and it is also concerned as an art form which rests not only on the subjective insights of interviewees but also those of interviewers' It has been explained a process of producing new knowledge about the social world, that uses a scientific approach based on qualitative data collection and analysis, and involves in

particular the study of people- their believes, behavior, interactions, institutions, and so forth' Within the conceptual frame, qualitative researches can be the epistemology of quantitative research is deeply rooted in empiricism. Nevertheless, "empiricism is an inherently limited epistemology" (Slife & Melling, 2012). It deals with the observables and disregard non observables. However, no one denies that to understand unobservable construct such as love, it might be necessary to understand hugs, kisses, etc. Thus, the way of getting to the truth is rigid and narrow. Truth is obtained in an absolute sense if phenomena can be observed. This disadvantage in epistemology—ways of knowing— is "part of the reason that qualitative methods were formulated—they deal better with the important nonobservables of our experience" (Slife & Melling, 2012.). In addition, qualitative research has defined by several scholars as an intensive research involvement of the researcher in the social setting being studied, as observer and in varying degrees as a participant as well as the use of multiple intensive research techniques, with emphasis on participant observation and key informant interviewing etc.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Forced migration research can be conducted from the position of a negative perception of migration focusing on the costs of migration for social cohesion or welfare systems, or it can be deducted from the position of a positive perception of migration, for example, by emphasizing the economic and cultural benefits of migration Goubineau (1853) and Park (1928). Franck Düvell (2012) says that qualitative migration research is often identified with sociology, anthropology and ethnography, and with geography but also with market research. Originating in anthropology, qualitative field research traditionally refers to a practice in which researchers spend longer and sometimes repeated periods of time living within a culture in order to study it. Emphasizing the significance of using qualitative techniques in migration studies, Franck Düvell has further stated eight methodological considerations which have consequences for the research design and the choice of the research methods.

Qualitative research in the field of forced migration depends mainly on fieldwork which is a method by which researcher places himself into uncertain life of the displaced persons so that he can mix with and understand the community. Such fieldwork attempts to collect first-hand information on a qualitative basis, but it often does not totally overlook quantitative data' In order to get a more holistic and comprehensive picture about the displaced persons, qualitative techniques would be more appropriate' Furthermore, quantitative data gives

insights into the magnitude and extent of a certain case, while a qualitative study lends insight into the underlying processes and reasons for its existence' Consequently, any researcher can do better in explaining certain phenomena if he or she commands good knowledge and skills of in quantitative research' Contrary, researchers have emphasized several drawbacks with qualitative approach, particularly in the field of forced migration since such studies require thoughtful planning to ensure the obtained results accurate. On the other hand, as forced migration studies are mostly open-ended, the participants have more control over the content of the data collected. According to Bowen (2006), one of the potential problems with qualitative research is that a particular problem could go unnoticed. Sometimes the personal experience and knowledge influences the observations and conclusions related to the problem need to be studied. In this context, Sri Lanka has set up an appropriate platform to test the applicability of qualitative techniques in displacement studies on the one hand and limitations pertaining to the application of qualitative techniques on the other. In the light of foregoing, the present research has set few questions; which qualitative techniques are appropriate in the field of forced migration and which level can be addressed by particular methods? What are the advantages and limitations of depending on qualitative techniques particularly in forced migration studies? Hence, the present research focusses to highlight the possibility of using qualitative methods widely in forced migration field and to identify the methodological issues pertaining to the application of such qualitative techniques.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present research was organized based on the qualitative approach, and supported by empirical evidence or data, that has been carefully gathered using specific methods and according to a set of rules or established procedures' In order to achieve the objective of the research most popular qualitative technique conducting case studies was mainly asserted by the researchers in the field such as Yin (1993) and Stake (1995)' In addition, different methods were used such as focus group discussion, interviews, in-depth discussions, life histories and direct and participant observation' Interviews took one of several forms: open-ended, focused, or structured. In an open-ended interview, the researcher touched for the informant's opinion on events or facts. In focused interviews, the respondent was interviewed for only a short time, and the questions asked could have come from the case study protocol. The structured interviews were particularly useful in studies of displacement experience. In essence, the strengths of focus groups come from a compromise between the strengths found

in other qualitative methods. Like in-depth interviewing, they allowed access to the attitudes and experiences of informants. Direct observation in a case study occurred when the investigator makes a site visit to gather data. Using multiple observers is one way to guard against this problem. Participant observation is a unique mode of observation in which the researcher may actually participate in the events being studied. While the information may not be available in any other way, the drawbacks had to be carefully considered by the researcher. In addition to the above major techniques, rarely used techniques such as event recording, life history recording, mental maps, documentary sources, archival records and physical artifacts etc. were used in the research'

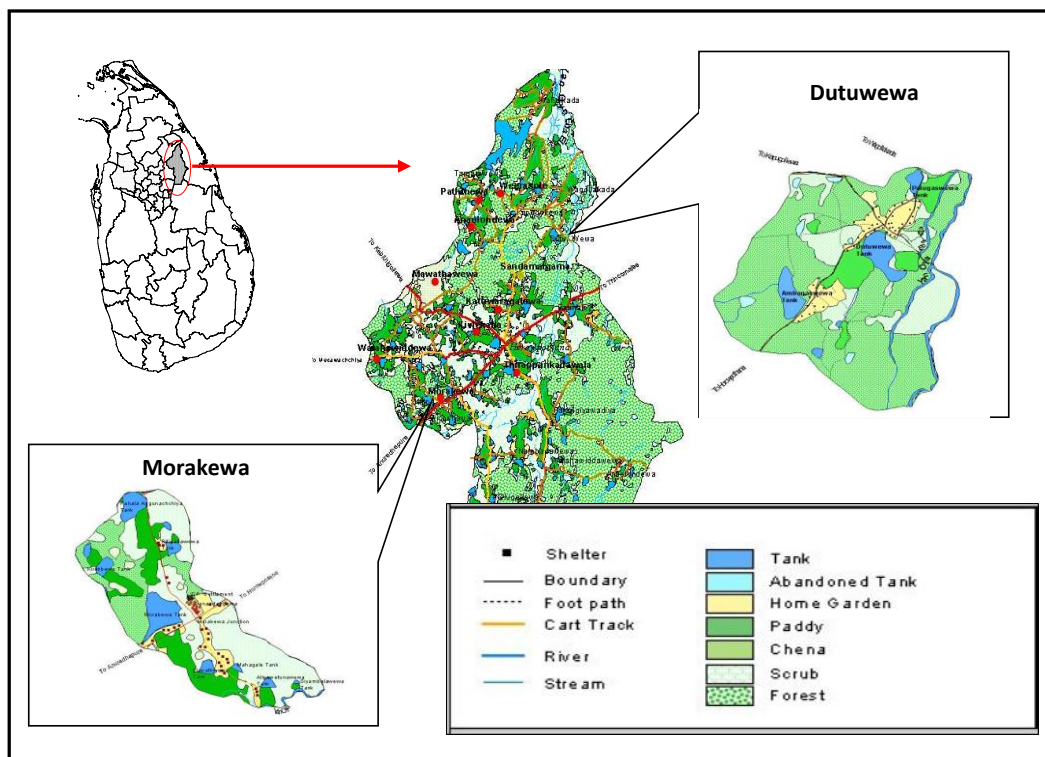


Figure No. 01: Location of Research Sites

Two villages; Morakewa and Dutuwewa located in the Horowpothana Divisional Secretariat Division belong to Anuradhapura District of North Central Sri Lanka are shown.

*Dutuwewa* and *Morakewa* Villages located in the D'S' division of Horowpothana belonging to the Anuradhapura district were selected as the two research sites for understanding the possibility of applying qualitative techniques in forced migration studies as well as their methodological implications as shown in figure 01. Due to the brutal attack launched by the LTTE against Dutuwewa village on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1989 people lost their lives, property and the rights to their lands and the rest of the people moved by forced into the surrounded safer areas' Dutuwewa village had undergone much suffering since then traumatic stress and

various transformations that have taken place in the aftermath of the attack' Because many Sinhala villages in the North and East and in bordering areas were systematically attacked by the LTTE, many people left those areas as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) sought refuge in other parts of the country' A large number of people who were displaced from Sinhala and Muslim villages had come to the Horowpothana Division in Anuradhapura district by 1990s. Many IDPs who had thus come since 1985 resided in the village of Morakewa' Even though their numbers had declined over the time several issues were fueled by the uncertain situation. This social conflict has been seen even after the 2009- the year of terrorism was defeated.

### **Findings: Setting the Stage with Empirical Evidence**

Despite the pre-defined definite quantitative methods, the above mentioned study has attempted to use the appropriate qualitative research techniques and multiple sources of data for obtaining the relevant data and information. The method of event recording which is still rarely used in geographical research, in collecting data was extensively utilized in the study' This method was very successful for obtaining correct information in respect of both the situation and the time' Other important research methods such as in-depth interviews, life histories, case studies and observation have been used in the study'

As one of the main techniques for qualitative data collection, In-depth discussions were used in the study with different themes focusing female leaders of the welfare centres in Morakewa village, Horowpothana DSD as well as with selected male and female elders, youngsters and children, a few others representing the local community and with the Gramaniladaries (village heads) in both research sites' This technique provided an opportunity to understand in depth, how people have experienced the displacement process' Group discussions allowed facts to be elicited on (a) how people settled in new areas after leaving their original lands (sometimes displaced persons of a village or several villages got together and shifted to new areas), (b) problems that the local community had to face because of the arrival of IDPs and (c) identifying the efforts being made to protect their community identity etc. Group discussions also helped to identify the manner in which the internal displacement process contributed to the collective experience of the displaced and also influenced them in adapting to a new environment' The IDP community informants as well as local community informants were selected with reference to elders, youngsters and children, both as individuals and as groups' In addition group discussions were considered as an

effective means of evoking the collective memory of people who were subject to the trauma of displacement' It was a relative means of collecting information as all information was collectively reflected and agreed upon by the respondents'

Recording life histories is another technique that can be used to generate more information relating to the central theme. This technique was so successful since some life histories revealed quite a lot of information on the impact of the ethnic conflict from its early beginnings up to displacement' Indeed some life histories provided a profile of the IDP problem' The recordings were conducted in such a manner as to understand the way in which the individuals responded to the traumatic situation created by the ethnic conflict' Even though participant observation was not used in the study, much information was obtained through observation' Table 01 shows the method used in the study for collecting data through field observations' The objects of observation are shown in the first column and the facts revealed through the experience appears in the last column'

**Table No. 01 Method of collecting data through observation**

Actor	Place	Situation	Time	Findings
IDPs living in an IDP settlement	IDP settlement	Amicable occasion	Evening	Broken expectations
School children	School	Occasions of flocking together	Day time	IDP and local children do not mix together
IDPs and local villagers	Tank	Bathing time	Afternoon	IDP children excrete along the bund' A local villager seeing this goes without taking a bath' IDPs and locals use different places for bathing'



Case Studies are another important technique of collecting qualitative data were carried out at the community and individual level'

1' Case studies were conducted regarding a community living in a village and had been displaced due to the unexpected attacks' Case studies were also recorded of communities, that had completed the displacement circle and returned to the places of origin.

2' The experiences gained on displacement at individual level were also very important' Therefore, persons with such experience in the displacement process were considered as special cases' The different stages in their displacement history up to the present were recorded'

Mental maps were also very useful in reconstructing the picture of the destroyed village' The information was collected through the technique of developing a mental map by giving an opportunity to the elderly males and females and also the youngsters to piece together spatial information on the village that they had known' Finding evidence of the attack, date records, visual evidence such as photographs and other related materials to the incident were very useful for the study' Although some researchers perform data analysis as a one shot exercise at the conclusion fieldwork, in the present study, data analysis had been undertaken as a two stage exercise' One was while fieldwork was ongoing and the other on conclusion of fieldwork' Table 02 shows the manner in which the main research questions were presented to the respondents' The second column shows a breakdown of the main research question while the last column indicates the question content' Field data analysis apart from dealing with sorting, coding and organizing of data was also a strategy to check and remove errors and omissions'

**Table No. 02 Framework for asking the main research questions**

Research Question	Sub Categories	Question Content
1' Process of Internal Displacement	1' Nature of Displacement (Physical and social displacement) 2' Displacement circle	1.1 Why was the place of origin abandoned? 1.2 Did the family members arrive together with the villagers? 1.3 Did they ever think of leaving? 1.4 How did they decide on the destination'? 2.1 Where did they go first? 2.2 Where else did they go subsequently? 2.3 What do they think about returning'?
2' Life as a displaced person	1' Resettling 2' Assistance from Government or others 3' Future expectations	2.1 How many times did you change settlement? 2.2 Do you like to go back? 3.4 Do you think of going elsewhere to live?

Field notes can be maintained during the period of field study in a systematic manner' It would also be a good guidance for data analysis' The notes entered in the field book can be indexed at various stages and it is helpful for sorting out important points as 1,2,3''' in the analysis of data'

**Table No. 03 Sorting field notes**

<b>Field Notes</b>	<b>Indexing - Category</b>
Person A is presently living at the Morakewa IDP settlement' Had to leave Gomarankadawala village in Trincomalee District due to LTTE attacks in 1990'	1' Present residence 2' Earlier residence 3' Reason for displacement
A's wife died in the tiger attack in 1989' He has terrific experience of witnessing how almost half of the village was massacred by that attack on his village' Even though he stayed at a temple for about five months and then returned to his village, he had to stay with others as IDPs in the navy camp for several weeks after the 1994 attack on the village' All the villagers had gone to live there because of the presence their relatives and adequate security at the navy camp'	4' Stress of displacement 5' Displacement circle 6' Decision making on new place of living
"This life is like a spent shell' How responsible we live in the village? Now even to get a grain of rice we have to go after various people and beg' These guys are young and are not yet well aware of the outside world' We can perhaps buy a sarong if there is sufficient work for labourers during the harvesting season'	7' Perception of displacement 8' Other livelihood strategies 9' Their feelings about present social status

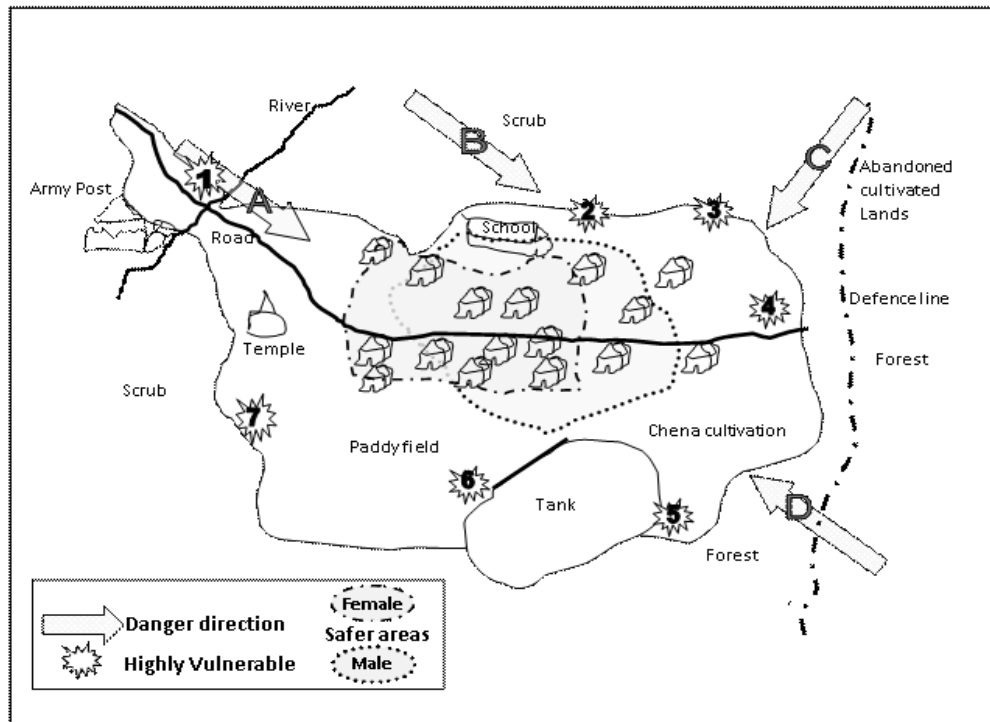
Field notes can be recorded in direct or indirect speech. Table 03 shows that only facts directly associated with the objectives of the study were extracted from them' The second column shows how data was categorized to help in the qualitative analysis' While conducting the on field analysis of data, a very important procedure would be to encode them systematically' Data encoding tables were prepared for Dutuwewa and Morakewa following Miles and Huberman (1984)' As Table 04 indicates provision is made for the main themes, content and structure and an index' Because all facts could not be shown in the content column, an index is included in the notebook' The formation of a link between techniques was used in the collection of data' The relevant number and the page number of the notebook enabled quick access to information when analyzing data' (as an example Life History 01 on pages 23-31 is shown as LH 01 23-31)' This was found to be a very useful method in tabulating descriptive information'

**Table No. 04 Indexing table for systematic organization of data**

Main theme	Sub-themes	Content and structure	Link	
			Index	Page no'
1. Setting the Stage	1.Evolution of settlement	Settling down at Dutuwewa as compound groups having come from several villages in the eastern province some 500 years back	<b>ID 01</b>	<b>23-31</b>
			<b>GD 02</b>	<b>26-32</b>
	2. Land use	There are three tanks and in association with each tank' acres of paddy land were cultivated' Behind each house there were scrublands ""	<b>RF/OB</b>	<b>3-5</b> <b>6-7</b>
			<b>OB 02</b>	<b>06</b>
3.Demographic facts	Population structure is based on ""	<b>RF</b>	<b>10</b>	
2. Defining the situation	1. Physical displacement	The attack on 11 <sup>th</sup> February 1989 was planned with the intention of massacring the whole village' If this village was eliminated all the villages up to Horowpothana would ""	<b>ID 04</b>	<b>08-12</b>
	2. Social displacement	Because of the carnage that took place at the centre of the village many elders of our generation ""	<b>GD 01</b>	<b>22-39</b>
3. Events or specific happenings	1. At the time of attack	Wife got so excited and forgot to check where the daughter is' Then.....	<b>ER 03</b>	<b>54</b>
	2 After the attack	One day I crept into the jungle with child and husband and proceeded about one mile""	<b>LH 03</b>	<b>44</b>

(LH= Life history, ID= In-depth discussions, GD= Group discussions OB= Observation  
RF= Resource Profile)

The method of cognitive mapping plays a very distinct role in forced displacement studies. A cognitive map clearly presents the concept of place preference has played a vital role in relation to displaced people perception of security related vulnerability at the pre-displacement stage. As a collective reflection method, cognitive mapping techniques explores subjective realities of the situation. As shown in Fig. 01, this cognitive map is a spatial expression of individual respondents who considered being vulnerable to possible terrorist attacks during the stage of at risk displacement. The respondents have expressed their perceptions of safety and security by identifying the spatial points that would be of serious concern to their well-being and peaceful cohabitation. Each respondent has identified both the directions of possible attacks (Potential Danger Directions: PDD) as well as the particular locations in their neighbourhood that are vulnerable for such incidents (Highly Vulnerable Zones: HVZ). When analyzing the final Collective Cognitive Map of Fear, it was revealed that the respondents of both the gender groups have identified their vulnerabilities for possible attacks and atrocities including their directions and locations. However, there was difference in demarcating the safer zone within the village. The women respondents have marked the innermost centre but favoured the left side as the safest zone of their village while the men have identified it with larger zone extending to the right side of the village centre. The reason for this difference is obvious. The men, who normally associate with the society outside of their own, have better access to information and the security situation in the area. Hence, they consider an extended area as the safer zone when comparing to that of the women. Before the conflict, a lot of places were bonded with their livelihood system in terms of feeding cattle, chena cultivation, collecting firewood, bathing and laundering and religious practices etc. For the women, the relationship between the Highly Vulnerable Zones (HVZ) and the place preference is much stronger than the men. Every female respondent had considered the higher part of the tank (HVZ 05) and bathing place of the tank nearby the sluice gate (HVZ 06) where they collected firewood, having a bath and do the laundering respectively. Male respondents who plotted HVZ 06 said that not the bathing place but the sluice gate could be considered as the heart of the village because it drains the water into the paddy fields. Since the whole village depends on paddy farming, this place was at risk of terrorist attack. The mean in the HVZ 06 again proved that place preference of people essentially caused their cognition of the security situation.



**Figure No. 02: Cognitive Map of Fear**

*The cognitive map of the terrorist attacked village in Anuradhapura District is shown. This was a result of focused group discussion and mental mapping exercise. The way in which male and female perceive the security in relation to their experience is represented by this figure.*

### **Methodological Issues**

As internal displacement is a multidimensional process which can be studied from global to local level as well as from macro to micro level using qualitative techniques, the study had to face a few specific methodological problems normally not confronted in social research' They are categorized and presented in brief as follows;

### ***Ethical considerations***

People gain various types of experience at the individual and community level in the process of displacement' In inquiring about sensitive information the researcher as well as the respondent found themselves on uneasy ground and the researcher had to arrive at judgmental decisions on such occasions' Several examples of this can be pinpointed' While being interviewed about her two children who were burnt to death (in front of her own eyes) and the ordeal she had to subsequently undergo, the mother started to weep and lament over the incident' Is it ethical to continue with the interview about the incident from a person who has already been subject to psycho-traumatic stress? Even though there were occasions during temporary displacement when young girls who had spent the night in the jungle had to suffer

sexual harassment, they were very reluctant to comment on them' Married couples had sometimes satisfied their sexual needs by hiding themselves for privacy or by recourse to deviant sexual behaviour' Because the opportunities for sexual contacts were limited, in some cases it had also resulted in conflicts within the household' Even though these were the most suitable occasions for studying the forms of mental stress undergone by people in displacement, care had to be taken when questioning about such incidents' Judgmental decisions had to be taken not only in collecting information but also in reporting them in written form so that the self-respect of the respondents was not disturbed' Some incidents were secrets, confined only to the village or to a few families and therefore while dealing with them, a huge responsibility befalls on the researcher to safeguard confidentiality'

### ***Verification of events***

A main problem which occurred in case studies, in-depth discussions and event recording was the verification of events or incidents reported by respondents' The respondents were at sometimes in the habit of explaining some past events as if they themselves had experienced them' Therefore time was wasted in verifying whether these events or specific happenings took place in this context, for which specific methods had to be adopted' As they were explaining incidents that had happened in the distant past as if they were recent, problems surfaced in relating these facts to the real context' In this study, as in many other studies dealing with social research, the interviewees mentioned about time in a manner that was personal to them' (as during J'R''s period, red crisis period, when the letter 'Shri' was introduced etc') This meant that the researcher had to become familiar with the expressions and usages of the respondents in undertaking the study'

### ***Problem of representativeness***

As social and spatial dimensions of internal displacement are of a complex nature, representativeness is very important in the collection of data' Even though the challenges faced by different people who were affected by the situation were meant to be the focus of the study, it is not clear whether this goal had been achieved to the extent desirable in this study' For example, in the Dutuwewa case study some officers and key informants who were there at that time were not available nor were the LTTE Terrorists' Since the study was in part conducted during the harvesting season, there were difficulties in spending time with some respondents to the extent desirable'

### ***Information relating to informants***

IDPs have a good experience of dealing with officers and information seekers' Some respondents while answering a question came up with an answer even before the full question was put to them' However, they have so far being asked similar questions of a routine nature' Since this study was conducted in-depth and on a different plan and since this required more time on their part, the respondents were not really happy to collaborate' They expected the researcher to leave after getting the necessary information' The fact that the researcher had no 'aid' to distribute also acted as a disincentive and this created many problems. At the initial stage, it became a problem to access them, not only as an outsider but also as a Buddhist priest' As a Buddhist priest has a revered position in Sri Lankan culture, at the beginning, the respondents were not ready to accept the another (a Buddhist monk) as a researcher. The IDPs were somewhat ashamed to explain certain experiences which they had gained because of the reverence in which a monk is held' They also found it uncomfortable as they thought it is against the culture to discuss such matters, while sitting face to face with a Buddhist priest' But in course of time the researcher was able to win over their confidence and obtain more information than even a lay researcher could have done, because of the advantages offered to the respondents by way of confidentiality, leadership, ability to offer mental and spiritual consolation and impartiality' As a result within a short time the respondents opened their heart and soul to the researcher'

### ***Organizational arrangements for research***

There were difficulties to conduct the study according to a definite time table, as it was highly time consuming to carry out intensive fieldwork using a qualitative methodology, on an issue such as displacement' While answering questions about the LTTE attack that led to displacement, the Dutuwewa villagers went to great lengths in their explanations providing much supplementary information' Because the related incidents have been subject to discussions for several years at various times and with different people, the respondents were able to explain in detail even the experiences of others' The researcher had to face this situation while recording the life histories of IDPs'

Another problem regarding the drawing up of the time table for the research programme was the lack of time needed to gather information from the respondents' Rational information about displacement process could only be obtained through collective reflections done over a



long time, on related themes' The research got disturbed in many aspects because the respondents were busy engaged in different types of work' Part of the fieldwork at Dutuwewa was scheduled for the harvesting season and hence it became difficult to interview the villagers as the researcher had wanted' It was not possible to conduct interviews by night as villagers did not go out of their houses in fear of LTTE attacks' At times, the researcher had to spend several days before meeting specific informants'

Difficulty in accessing interviewees as well as reaching particular areas were also problems that constrained field research' For example, in Dutuwewa it was impossible to be at the right place at appointed times not only due to lack of transport facilities but also because of the possibility of facing attacks by the LTTE after the onset of darkness' Similarly it may not be possible to use the path used today, on the following day, because of the presence of wild elephants' Because of the threat of LTTE attacks it was dangerous to visit certain areas of the village located close to the border of Trincomalee district' However, these problems were avoided by extending the time divided to fieldwork' Therefore, on some occasions it was not rational to do any pre-planning for conducting qualitative studies on the IDPs'

### *Other problems*

There were several other issues faced during the study in addition to the ones explained earlier' First, the parents and elders did not allow the IDP children to be interviewed because they (the parents) feared that they would be too outspoken' As many problems cropped up in conducting group discussions with IDP children, it was necessary to interview them individually' Secondly, as methods such as event recording, time budgets and cognitive maps which were used in the study were not familiar to the respondents there was some difficulty in extracting information by employing such techniques' Holding individual discussions with the IDP community also proved difficult' When the researcher after having a discussion with a father wanted to continue the discussion with his son, the father expected the son to corroborate what he had said' When conducting in-depth discussions, several IDPs from outside the camp disturbed interviews conducted within the camp by answering questions directed at interviewees' An example of this was the interference of two elderly women, when a young woman was being questioned about her attitudes to reproductive health' Similarly a parent intervened in improvising the son's rating scale used in the development of a cognitive map' When such situations were unavoidable the results proved futile as the attitudes of two elderly women on reproductive health had to be recorded, in place of the

attitude of the young female being interviewed, and the father's cognitive map was drawn instead of the son's' In addition to Morakewa where the in-depth study was carried out, basic information on all other IDP settlements was also collected during the course of the study, but a main problem faced here was the inability of most of Muslim IDPs to converse in Sinhala' Even though the researcher adopted the strategy of making use of assistants fluent in both Tamil and Sinhalese, there were instances when the Muslim respondents shied away claiming poor knowledge of Sinhala, or ventured to suggest that the researcher go to somebody else (at whom they even sometimes pointed out) who could converse in Sinhala' Therefore, this was taking in time, effort and money' Finally data overloading could be shown as a special problem which had to be faced in the study' As a result of the success of intensive field work conducted through a qualitative approach, an unexpected amount of data and information relating to the process of displacement was gathered'

## **CONCLUSION**

As the validity acceptability, legitimacy, scope, breadth, depth of qualitative research increasingly expands, qualitative research writing becomes more and more important in research and academic areas' Qualitative research writing requires the qualitative researcher's unique experiences in this area. There are some limitations inherent in both qualitative and quantitative techniques' Each is good for studying certain kinds of problems which call for certain kind of data, but not for others' Good command of both methodological domains is desirable for it allows the researcher to choose methods appropriate to the research problem' This paper highlighted the importance of using wide array of qualitative techniques in the field of forced migration. Some techniques which have been hardly ever utilized by qualitative researchers such as event recording and life histories are confirmed as more reliable data collection methods. Finally, the research has identified specific methodological problems normally not confronted in social research such as ethical considerations, verification of events, problem of representativeness, information relating to informants, organizational arrangements for research and objectivity of the researcher.

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