

# Everyone in Kilinochchi has a story

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Every house in Kilinochchi has a story to tell. Everyone has seen something so out of this world in the last two years. But Kilinochchi can be normal, so normal that even the macabre can be normal.

People describe losing loved ones, family members while they fled the fighting as if describing bad traffic day. It is as if they have resigned themselves to their really bad fate. That it was something that they had to endure.

The relief is palpable. No matter what others would say, everyone in Kilinochchi is happy about today rather than mope over yesterday.

The people who faced a traumatic experience just a year ago and who have now been resettled in Kilinochchi seem to go ahead with their lives after being resettled. Everything seems normal on the surface. Kilinochchi town is somewhat busy, with many people on the move, on their bicycles, a familiar site in the north.

Though one year has passed since the end of the war, the scars seem to be still afresh in the hearts of the people and stopping to think for a moment will most probably rekindle the memories.

The war has changed the lives of all the people in Kilinochchi. Those who had a little bit of money have put up boutiques. Many have started cultivation – the cornerstone of the Vanni economy. Economist Muttukrishna Sarvananthan estimates that at least 35% of the Vanni economy is dependent on agriculture and fisheries. The dependency may increase as people return what they know best to do or what they can start easily.

It is never easy to get used to normalcy, more so after 30 years of constant bang-bang.

Kanthasamy Piratheepan, 18, has to look after his family after his father's death during the fighting. His eyes look at a distance as he recollects his experience one year ago. "I'm not in a position to go to school. I have to look after my family." He wants to go to school, but cant.

His voice breaks and continues to stare into space, as his emotions prevents him from speaking further.

There are those who look at life in a more positive manner despite the environment they are in.

Janaki, 28 runs a small boutique alongside the A9 road in Kanagarayankulam. There are about four kids inside the boutique holding their exercise books. "I give tuition classes to these kids free of charge. Their father cannot work, as he was injured."

She earns about Rs. 150 to 200 per day, which was enough to support her family. "At the moment it is enough for the three of us."

Janaki however said she wanted to go for a proper job that could enable her to earn a steady income. Vocational training programmes have been started in certain places. I have done my A/Levels. I am looking out for whatever I could get. We have come back to our own place now. I hope things will change in the future. Let's see," she said.

The biggest difference in Kilinochchi from then and now is hope. The ordinary people can hope, that things will be better. Whether they will be, ever, is different matter. For now those in Kilinochchi are just happy to hope in peace.