

Mrs. M.B.Lathina Been, Pottuvil district, Eastern province of Sri Lanka



Mrs. M.B. Lathina Been is a 40-year old Muslim woman. She was educated until 5th Grade. She has three daughters and two sons. Her husband is a fisherman.

She used to be employed by the day, doing domestic work, farm help, etc. She decided to go to the Middle East as a domestic worker in 1996 to make ends meet and to pay for the construction of her house. She found work in Abu Dhabi, the capital city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Three months after she started the job, she received a letter from her sister informing her that her land was taken over by government agents to build a big harbor – the Oluwil harbor. She was shocked and returned home as her family only had that land for their survival. It was granted by her father as a dowry for her wedding. The land was legally obtained and had 60 coconut trees. She is in possession of the legal documents issued by the government.

Lathina has been involved in the many protest actions against the construction of the Oluwil harbor together with other people who have been displaced. However, it is not easy. She is not entitled to the compensation provided by the government because of her major role in the lobby process and protests. The government is powerful and has already displaced 53 families.

Meanwhile, her husband lost his job as a small fisherman. He lost his access to the sea. There is no space anymore to enter the anchorage point for fishing. More than 200 fisherfolk including Lathina's husband are victims of the construction of the harbor. Lathina and her family became poorer and helpless because of the so called "development".