



POVERTY AND CONFLICT

A Review of Literature

Varuni Ganepola and Prashan Thalayasingam
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National Library of Sri Lanka-Cataloguing-In-Publication Data

Ganepoala, Varuni

Poverty and conflict : a review of literature/Varuni

Ganepola and Prashan Thalayasingam -Colombo :

Centre for Poverty Analysis, 2004 36p ; 29 cm

ISBN 955-1040-01-5

Price :

i. 362.05 DDC 21

ii. Title

1. Poverty

ISBN 955-1040-01-5

ISBN 955-1040-01-5

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POVERTY AND CONFLICT - A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Physical and economic vulnerability drives people into poverty and prevents them from escaping it. Conflict and poverty go hand in hand Increased security is an important part of any poverty reduction strategy.”

(Department for International Development 2003)

Introduction

This paper provides a detailed examination of a selection of material about poverty and conflict and explores the relationship between poverty and conflict. The study will examine various elements of this relationship. The study will take an exploratory form, rather than attempting to reach a definitive conclusion. It will include comments on some of the material available and offer some analyses on poverty and conflict.

In order to place the relationship between conflict and poverty in perspective the two concepts must be defined. Examples from development practice will be provided to illustrate various salient points within this relationship. The paper begins with an examination of the concept of conflict and introduces a broader definition of the term. It puts poverty within a wider development

framework and attempts to place conflict also within this framework. Next, the review looks at certain themes underlying the relationship between poverty and conflict. These themes include ideas of external intervention, the debate between aid and ‘long-term development’ in conflict situations, development projects, and tools that have been developed to make such projects more ‘conflict sensitive’. The main subject of the second half of the paper is the human costs of conflict and poverty. The discussion covers conflict and migration caused by poverty, psychosocial coping, formation of industries related to conflict and migration, and how rural and family economies are changing because of money sent from abroad. The paper explores work on the conflict in Sri Lanka and the special circumstances of its relationship with poverty.

Unpacking 'Conflict'

The term 'conflict' usually refers to violent conflict but conflict can be non-violent. Beneficial social change arises from conflict in terms of competing, if not always incompatible, interests (Wallensteen 1994 in Hettne 2002). All parties lose in destructive, violent conflicts. Policy makers should not assume that the concept of conflict is limited to violent conflict. Such an assumption reduces the analytical potential of the concept of conflict. The distinction between violent and non-violent forms of conflict must be clear. Account must be taken of the fact that that all social transformation, be it negative or positive, is based on ideas competing within a social setting. Such competition can be referred to as conflict.

Conflict arising out of political beliefs, ethnic grievances, or access to and distribution of resources could exist in society and not become manifest and violent. Limitations are imposed on the concept of conflict because it is usually violent conflict that is relevant to development practice. It is usually violent conflict that draws a response from development actors. It is violent conflict that leads to post conflict reconstruction programmes and projects (described below). It is violent conflict that usually gives rise to development work and influences development policy or practice-focused work.

Conflict has been defined as a social situation in which two parties are competing for the same scarce resources (ibid.). This definition concentrates too much on material and economic factors. Social competition is not always competition for scarce resources. It could be the case that social competition is about civil rights, for recognition, or for various belief-based differences, each or all of which could have a elements of competition for resources competition dimension. The relevant point here is that conflict refers to the social situation, and not to overt conflict-behaviours. Conflict is not necessarily resolved because of the ending of overt conflict behaviour. Relapses to violence are common, unless basic problems are addressed and solved.

Other definitions of conflict take a more political form.

A conflict according to the definition used is a contested incompatibility between two parties, of which one is [usually] the government. (Hettne 2002)

Should a conflict between two parties - both of which had no formal political affiliations - be considered as conflict?

Wars arise out of social and historical contexts. In ever-changing societies, the nature and type of wars will also change. (Gantzel 1997). Some of the methods used in 'new wars' are ethnic cleansing, mass-rape, systematic killing of children and destruction of cultural monuments of symbolic value (Kaldor 1999). The analysis must take account of the changing nature of manifest conflict. Poverty and conflict are subject to change, and the manner in which they appear at particular times cannot be used to make sweeping generalisations.

The total number of conflicts during the period 1989-99 was 110, of which 37 were active in the year 1999 (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2000). Two conflicts were new for the year, four recommenced, and six (that had been listed in 1998) ceased to be active. The conflicts are subdivided into 'minor', 'intermediate' and 'wars', depending on the number of battle-related deaths per year, or during the course of the conflict. The empirical information presented above provides examples both of the particular nature of conflict, if examined at a given time and of the change it undergoes over time.

Of 110 conflicts over the stated period, 75 had been terminated before the end of 1999, but only 20% of those were terminated by peace agreements. Most conflicts simply cease being violent without a comprehensive resolution having been reached (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2000). Post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation is often based on the erroneous assumption that the most important grievances have been made explicit and systematically addressed. Lessening of tension or reduction in incidents of overt violence does not mean that any of the underlying causes of the conflict have been resolved. Initiatives for post-conflict reconstruction must take into account the particular nature of the conflict, its historical development, and its underlying causes.

Conflict means different things to different people. It can mean tensions at a national or international level; it could be individual, at family and group level; it could

involve inter/intra-personal violence, abuse and violations, physical and psychological affliction. The use of the term involves dealing with certain preconceptions associated with it. The use of the term invariably entails also having to contend with these associated meanings or views of conflict. It is too often used to speak of violent manifestations of conflict and this prevents the exploration of the idea of latent conflict, of grievances that exist within society which have not manifested themselves in violence. Existing conceptions of conflict make it difficult to speak of resentments and misunderstandings as 'conflict' until they lead to riots and civil disturbance and this limits its potential as an analytical concept. It is used as synonymous with violence. This prevents the exploration of non-violent forms of conflict and conflict is invariably seen as negative.

The negative associations of the term 'conflict' must be challenged particularly since most social changes including those that are seen as positive, involve the interaction between two competing ideas within a social framework. It is necessary to allow this idea of conflict to be included in the analysis when exploring the relationships between poverty and conflict. Social and political conflicts are not only normal but could also serve as constructive catalysts for effecting desirable change in society (Achodo 2000).

Conflict and Development

The concept 'participation' is integrated into various areas of development practice. The concept of 'conflict' seems to be acquiring a similar significance. Conflict must not be seen as a factor that is external to development practice. This is not a purely semantic or analytical distinction. Development practice must acknowledge that conflict is central to the development process.

The ideas of development that form the basis of current development practice were evolved originally as part of a vision for reconstruction after the Second World War. President Truman outlined his ideas for a post-Second World War society in his inaugural address. The speech challenged the prevailing structures of imperialism, which were seen largely to have caused the two World Wars and described a vision of a new era of social change.

Development, both as a theoretical construct and a strategy for practice, is largely the product of the last 55 years... Yet, al-

though it emerged from the aftermath of the last great global conflict (the Second World War), development has been pursued against the backdrop of a long catalogue of more or less continuous political and social conflicts throughout the world (Overton 2000).

It could be a coincidence that development has been pursued against a backdrop of conflict. However, the post-conflict agenda that came with the introduction of the concept of development was significant. It presented these linked concepts to the social sciences, to academic inquiry and practice. It is interesting, then, that with such an introduction ideas of development and conflict were not more fully developed until its present resurgence.

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat to both them and more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people... The old imperialism, exploitation for foreign profit has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a programme of development based on democratic fair dealing... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace (Inaugural address of President Harry S. Truman in Overton 2000)

The grandiose idea of ushering in a new era has little weight in terms of analysis. Nevertheless, the ideas that are linked in the above statement bear further consideration. It is not simply an idea of economic development that is presented. The programme of development that is envisaged is based on 'democratic fair dealing', an explicitly political idea. It is unfortunate that academic inquiry and social practice did not take up and pursue this line until recently.

What, then, explains the sudden growth of interest in conflict within the context of development? This paper posits that this is representative of wider political transformations rooted within the end of the Cold War.

Gone are the crisp concepts of the Cold War era. Everything seemed to make sense then and what did not could not be questioned: it was relatively easy to make stubborn facts conform to grand theory. In the space of half a decade the world has become a much more complicated place, and theory is sorely lacking (Donini 2001).

During the Cold War, the only 'conflict' that was relevant within the international system was that between the so-called great powers. They set the agenda and decided what 'made sense' and what could be questioned. The idea of conflict, and to a lesser extent the idea of development, was bound by these imposed restrictions. Other conflicts, even those that were manifestly violent, were subordinated to the over-arching super power competition. The end of the Cold War brought a renewed awareness of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of conflict. The end of the Cold War allowed other conflicts and their effects to be considered by socio-political scientists. The prevailing idea was that during the Cold War conflicts were simple and fitted neatly into the theories developed for them. Those that did not fit in this way, including the American interventions in Vietnam, in Grenada and Cuba, and the Soviet interventions in Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia were not questioned but were explained away as 'proxy wars' in the wider context of the Cold War.

The danger in accepting this view is that it also constitutes a tacit agreement that some conflicts are 'acceptable'. The use of this distinction in any analysis of conflict must be preceded by the acknowledgement of the circumstances and particular historical developments that led to its creation.

The Cold War had dictated the parameters of conflict: in a world political situation characterised by stalemate and confrontational "crises" were mainly mono-dimensional, either political/ military or humanitarian. The concept of "complex emergency" was not relevant and the UN and other international regimes of activities for dealing with peace keeping, humanitarian, human rights and development issues were kept in separate if not watertight compartments (Donini 2000).

Interest in conflict has renewed since the end of the Cold War. The more complex nature of conflict has encouraged social and political scientists to study it. Study of conflict falls within the permissible boundaries of 'development' work. It has been suggested that the end of the Cold War was what led to more civil strife and internal wars (Commins 1996). Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, over four million people have been killed in internal and regionalised forms of conflict. It is estimated that one third of the world's population is exposed to

armed conflict (Goodhand 2001). It could be argued that 1989 was the year in which the term Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHEs) was coined. It may be that the removal of super-power restraints on client states has been accompanied by growing awareness of the spread of such emergencies (ibid) Commins (1996) argues that these are characterised by the breakdown of political, economic and social orders, and by the targeting of violence on civilian populations. This paper will not examine the power relations that allowed conflicts to be categorised as 'acceptable' or 'non-acceptable'. The context of this separation and its super power bias must, at least, be acknowledged.

The concept of CHE allows conflict to be discussed in the context of development. This interpretation of development, however, is often narrowly conceived and is limited to 'relief'. It is difficult to conceive of an emergency that is simple or without humanitarian aspects. However, the establishment of a link between development and conflict is useful for the purposes of the paper. It provides a fitting starting point for a more detailed examination of this relationship. It represents the mainstream view of the interaction between development and conflict. This view sees conflict as defined by its violent military manifestations. Development is seen as limited to the relief operations that immediately follow such 'conflict'. This is not the only view of the relationship between development and conflict. It is one of the mainstream views particularly in relation to development practice.

'Complex political emergency' (Macrae and Zwi 1994) is an alternative concept to CHEs. Hettne (2002) uses the term 'complex emergencies': 'political' suggests concentration on one aspect of a complex crisis; humanitarian indicates an element of human suffering which is self-evident in a deep societal crisis. Complex political emergency does not really provide an alternative term of reference for conflict situations. It could be seen as more limited than the idea of CHE because of its one-dimensional aspect.

International efforts in societies emerging from war have grown into a peace-building industry like the aid industry. This has led to crusading zeal and accusations of hubris in equal measure (Pugh 1998). External

organisations have, in the spirit of ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘liberal internationalism’, assumed responsibility for building peace in war-torn societies with the aim of preventing further violent conflict (Pugh 2002). The livelihood approach, and the use of it by international actors, is an aspect of the interaction between conflict and development. This is a new approach and is perhaps a more enlightened kind of intervention. Its integration into the practice of peace-building can be seen as quite progressive. The idea that supporting people’s livelihoods will help create a peaceful environment is a recent positive development. It is different from humanitarian intervention, which has become militarised and has led to tragic situations such as the ‘humanitarian’ bombing of Kosovo.

Little study has been done on the relationship between development, peace, and security. There has been only a cursory appreciation of the links between them (Rioux and Hay 1998). In the past, political violence was usually considered no more than a hindrance to development, an inconvenience that would disappear once economic growth took root and removed the underlying causes of conflict (ibid., Goodhand 2001). Scholars and practitioners fail to challenge the distinction between these concepts (see for example Rioux and Hay 1998). Why is violence narrowly defined as political violence; why is development seen as a purely economic process. These two factors may explain the distinction between the terms. What happens if economic growth remains stalled? What happens if political violence continues in spite of such growth? Stimulated by a more sophisticated understanding of development, peace and security, analysts and policy makers have begun to explore the answers to these and other questions. Does development contribute to peace and security? Is peace absolutely necessary for development or can development take place even during periods of violence? Are there beneficial economic spin-offs from peace? (Rioux and Hay 1998).

Such distinctions have to be challenged if a truly sophisticated understanding of the ideas of development, peace and conflict and the relations between them is to be achieved. Peace and conflict must be part of the development process and not simply factors that may affect it from the outside. Is conflict an intrinsic part of development? Is conflict necessarily violent? Is the movement

away from conflict towards peace part of development? Sustainable development is a connection between these concepts. Some argue that development is sustainable only if it fulfils today’s needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to fulfil their own needs (Rioux and Hay 1998). The links between the environment, peace, security and development are also significant since environmental stress is both a cause and an effect of political tension and armed conflicts.

Unpacking ‘Poverty’

Some analytical distinctions are necessary before examining issues relating to poverty. Absolute poverty is usually related to minimum needs, expressed in quantitative terms. The UN definition (UN 1995) goes further: it is ‘a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also access to social services’. The distinction between absolute and relative poverty is harder to make. Relative poverty is defined in terms of its relation to standards that exist elsewhere in society. It links up with inequality and relative deprivation. Chronic poverty is defined as the state of being poor over an extended period of time. The time period over which poverty is being examined is also vital for defining transient poverty. The transient poor are those who have moved in and out of poverty during the period being investigated (Oduro 2003). A period of time has to be specified when addressing transient and chronic poverty. Marginalisation and social exclusion are other terms used to describe poverty. Marginalisation is a Marxist concept that sees poverty as based on social exclusion. It is based on Marx’s theory that increasing surplus labour ultimately leads to a breakdown of capitalism. In this sense, social exclusion usually refers to the ‘new poverty’ of post-industrial societies and the tendency of globalisation to include and exclude people from emerging networks (Castells 1996). The concepts describe social processes and the social structures in which social processes take place. This analysis introduces ideas of social discrimination. Social discrimination stems from poverty and could evolve into conflict.

These shifting theoretical positions about the meaning and causes of poverty raise issues such as mobilization

and forms of protest, and political measures taken to eradicate poverty. They also require different forms of analysis and social science approaches and methods. The general tendency in poverty research is to move beyond money-based definitions towards more complex, holistic theoretical approaches and comprehensive indicators (Lipton et al. 1992). The introduction of ideas of marginalisation is a move in this direction.

The World Bank Development Report (2002) notes that the share of the population in developing and transition economies living below one dollar a day fell from 29% to 24% between 1990 and 1998. The actual number of people living in poverty remained high because of population increase. It fell by 77 million. The improvement occurred in East Asia, mainly in (specific parts of) China, and to some extent in the Middle East and North Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean and in South Asia the number of poor grew moderately. In Europe (including the former Soviet Union) and Central Asia the increase was more dramatic. In Sub-Saharan Africa an already bad situation became markedly worse. This is the empirical view of poverty presented by large organisations and is based on indicators and relative values. It stands in contrast to the ideas Lipton et al (1992) express, of poverty research moving towards more holistic, theoretical approaches and comprehensive indicators. In terms of establishing links between poverty and conflict, the type of profile offered by the World Bank Development Report (2002) has limited uses. The need for a quantitative examination of poverty is beyond dispute. Nevertheless, it is prudent to exercise caution in making general statements from specific information about poverty.

Violent conflict and chronic poverty

While violent conflict is not confined to the global south, a disproportionate number of conflicts take place in poor countries. More than half the countries in Africa are affected by armed conflicts. These conflicts are not temporary emergencies but have systemic and enduring features. The chronically poor are chronically insecure. (Goodhand 2001). Violent conflicts have great development costs as well as direct effects. Development donors have set themselves ambitious global poverty targets but these are unlikely to be achieved where there is growing insecurity. Violent conflict is not a 'side issue'

that can be ignored by developmentalists. It needs to be better understood, accounted for and tackled if development goals are to be achieved. To date however, there has been limited empirical research into the nature of the relationship between poverty and conflict.

The relationship between violent conflict and poverty can take any of three forms of interaction: conflict causes chronic poverty, chronic insecurity increases chronic poverty, and poverty causes conflict (ibid.). It is usually these three levels of relationship that affect policy and development practice. Goodhand's modes of practice outlined above all concern outside actors such as NGOs. The ways of influencing or interacting with conflict that are listed below all relate actors external to the conflict, specifically to NGOs. It is important to develop guidelines for outside actors within conflict situations. It is also sometimes necessary to examine the actors themselves and how their very presence can exacerbate a conflict situation. Some critics argue that humanitarians are essentially all political, either inadvertently or by design (Pugh 2002). The political consequences of their actions and presence have to be taken into account. Duffield (1994) provides one of the first post-Cold War assessments of the connections between spreading political failures and complex emergencies. He criticises relief agencies and NGOs for their lack of political analysis of the causes of these emergencies, and argues that many are still locked in to a 'disaster' response mindset. The instinctive response of these agencies is to take a linear approach to relief with the assumption that there is a clear path back to development and normal times. Positive changes might be expected when intervention is planned. There may be disastrous consequences if they do not work responsibly in sensitive situations. Better understanding of the dynamics of conflict might reduce the number of failed interventions.

Chronic conflict is likely to produce chronic poverty. One might surmise that transient poverty is more likely to be a trigger for violent conflict than chronic poverty. The chronically poor do not usually take the lead in violent conflicts. In remote rural areas it is difficult to sustain effective organisations that involve poor people on a continuous basis. The transient poor might have grievances that could leave them vulnerable to mobilisation by conflict entrepreneurs. Chronic poverty by itself, it is

argued, is unlikely to lead to conflict - the chronically poor often lack political voice and organisation. (Goodhand 2001)

Research conducted by the Clingendael Institute argues that there is no clear and persistent relationship between poverty and violent conflict although it is recognised that economic factors constitute an important mobilising force (Vestegen 2001). The crucial factor, according to the Institute, is the degree to which socio-economic categories overlap with specific ethno-linguistic or regional boundaries. According to Duffield (1994), scarcity itself does not cause or determine conflict. Explanatory frameworks that see conflict as a result of internal development malaise neglect the political processes, at a national and global level, which cause inclusion and exclusion.

In situations where conflict causes chronic poverty, conflict has a more severe effect than other external shocks because of the deliberate destruction of livelihoods. Chronic insecurity increases chronic poverty, but the effects vary according to a range of factors including age, ethnicity, gender and region. Classic conceptualisations of vulnerability may not apply; conflict may reverse pre-existing power relations causing different groups to become politically vulnerable. Where poverty causes conflict, it is because poverty initially generates grievance and grievance leads to violent conflict. However, horizontal inequalities and social exclusion, particularly when they coincide with identity or regional boundaries, may increase a society's predisposition towards violent conflict. Political entrepreneurs can exploit such background conditions. Chronic poverty may also be a significant factor in sustaining wars, as violent crime and predation becomes the only viable livelihood strategy for the chronically poor. However, some critics argue that economic and social deprivation can cause violence (Moser and Lister 1999). Their research in Latin America identifies dimensions of poverty that are related to high community rates of violence, including high concentrations of poverty, transience of population, family disruption, crowded housing, weak social structures and presence of opportunities associated with violence.

It appears that the relationship between poverty and conflict is something that cannot be taken as a given (Hettne 2002). The concepts themselves are complex

and the relationship between them even more so. 'Common sense' might suggest a correlation between poverty and conflict-deprivation causes conflict, conflict causes poverty. This is not enough to get an idea of the potential of the relationship or of its limits. The concepts first need to be explored separately before the connections are accepted. The problem, then, is how to relate the two concepts, poverty and conflict, so that policy recommendations on development aid can be provided.

The Conflict Cycle

Economic-historical analysis shows that the pattern of development can result in structural imbalances and political tensions much later. A long-term development strategy must be made relevant for both development and for conflict prevention. Burton (1990) coined the term, *provention*. The concept combines the idea of promoting conditions conducive to peace with the idea of preventing conditions conducive to violence. *Provention* conveys the idea of promoting an environment conducive to harmonious relationships, and the prevention of undesirable events (Burton 1990).

Prevention brings differences that can be seen in terms of material costs and. Prevention maybe slow. Early warning systems have either not been effectively utilised or even developed appropriately (This aspect will be discussed in detail in a following section).

Conflict resolution refers to the stage at the 'end' of a conflict when the parties concerned reach a formal (peace) agreement. In accordance with the holistic approach recommended here, it is essential that the terms of the peace agreement, in order to be sustainable, should address the root causes and be preventive. The general conflict in the society must be addressed as part of the resolution of the conflict. Most peace agreements do not last because they concentrate on the termination of violence and neglect the root causes. There are other reasons why wars continue: the many vested interests, involving greed and corruption, which develop in the course of warfare (Collier et al 2003, and Miall et al. 1999).

'Post-conflict', or 'Post-crisis' reconstruction, comes after conflict-resolution in our conflict cycle. This extensive social engineering includes the rebuilding of the so-

cial, cultural and moral substance of society. This cannot be done by outside actors alone. Local actors could be hindered by mutual hostility and fear, and might lack the necessary resources because of wartime destruction. Combined efforts will be required. (Kaldor 1999).

NGOs have taken on a new role because of the 'new' wars. In the process of normalization, it is of utmost importance that the destroyed society must be reintegrated in the regional economy, communication network, and system of resources as part of the normalisation process. New forms of regional co-operation may be created. Cooperation must be used to avert tensions that may lead to renewed violence.

Relief is concerned with saving lives in post-conflict societies; development is concerned with preserving livelihoods (Pieterse 1998). What is required is not simply linking relief and development but redefining development (ibid.). This is a central idea that affects all the other guidelines for working in different stages of conflict. It is possible that the development process itself contributes to conflict. Development interventions can create imbalances of access to and distribution of resources across geographical and social boundaries. This element needs to be considered if a comprehensive account of the relationship between conflict and development were to be established.

There are three ways in which outside actors can translate the relationship between poverty and conflict into practice: working around conflict, working in conflict, and working on conflict (Goodhand 2001). Where working around conflict is concerned, donors avoid the issue of conflict or treat it as a negative externality. Macro-reform processes, therefore, adopt a 'one size fits all' approach irrespective of a country's vulnerability to conflict. In areas of open conflict, donors withdraw activities and put development on hold. Secondly, when working in conflict, donors recognise the need to be more sensitive to conflict dynamics and adapt policies and programmes accordingly. This may mean adapting Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and conditionalities according to an analysis of conflict-related risks. It might also involve greater experimentation with sustainable livelihood approaches in unstable contexts. Donors could develop more politically informed poverty programmes that address underlying sources of griev-

ance. These programmes may not address conflict in the short term but may decrease a country's predisposition to conflict in the long term. Conflict management and resolution must be given greater attention. 'Greed' must be dealt with as well as 'grievance'. Policies that limit the opportunities for greed need to be developed. These include international regulatory systems, targeted conditionalities or profitable alternatives for conflict profiteers. Some might argue that working around conflict is in the long run likely to be counterproductive. If chronic poverty is going to be more effectively addressed, donors need to develop approaches for working 'in' and 'on' conflict, drawing upon and adapting rural livelihoods approaches that were developed in more stable contexts.

Peace settlements are unlikely to end chronic conflicts. Post-conflict Liberia, for instance, continues to experience the same problems of political and economic exclusion that contributed to the conflict in the first place. Similarly, the end of Sudan's first civil war in 1972 did not produce a political system that remedied the underdevelopment of the south or the marginalisation of significant groups in the north (Keen 1998). If there were a peace agreement in Afghanistan tomorrow, the criminalised war economy would merely become a criminalised peace economy (Rubin 2000). The effects of conflict are therefore felt for many years after the fighting stops. Many of those who were chronically poor during the war are likely to remain so during the peace. As Green notes, 'the end of any war is not the end of its costs. In one sense the costs do not end until levels of output per capita, infant mortality, access to basic services, food security and poverty alleviation are achieved which correspond to those that would have been predicted in the absence of war' (Green 1994: 45). Societies that have experienced violent conflict are in a sense 'geared up' for war, and are more vulnerable to future violence than pre-conflict societies with similar risk factors (Collier 2000).

The Impacts of Conflict – Globally and Locally

In some respects, Sri Lanka is an anomaly in that its economy grew at a faster rate than the pre-war period. However, in the context of South and South East Asia, Sri Lanka's growth has been modest and the conflict has undoubtedly been a factor in its relatively poor performance. Military expenditure has risen from 4% of government expenditure in 1981 to 22% in 1997 crowding

out various civilian expenditures. It has been estimated that the total costs of the first two phases of the war in the north east was \$16 billion or 135% of 1997 GDP. Apart from the direct cost, the war has had important opportunity costs. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has not exceeded 1.3% of GDP compared to nearly 4.5% in Thailand, mainly because of the uncertain climate created by the war. It is not simply the economic effects of the war that are relevant for the purposes of this paper. The political and social effects of the war compound the economic effects. The militarisation of society and the state has undermined democratic institutions. It has created an enclave economy in the North East. Market based activities have declined because of the high transaction costs arising from inter-group tensions and there has been a retreat into subsistence activities. In spite of the obvious costs for the majority, for certain groups violence has become a means to attain legitimacy, wealth and protection. Vested political and economic interests have therefore developed around, and sustain the conflict.

The state may play a critical role in protecting its citizens from the various economic and social costs of conflict. Much depends on the capacity and commitment of the government to poverty alleviation. Mozambique, for instance, compares favourably with Angola in this respect (Green 1994). Government services and expenditure in rebel held areas are likely to decline, as for example in the Maoist occupied mid-West of Nepal. In Sri Lanka, however, the state continues to be an important source of public entitlements for the war-affected population in the north east. This has played an important role in mitigating some of the effects of the conflict on the chronically poor. Quasi governments may also emerge in rebel held areas and can play a role in upholding security and administering services, as has happened in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

These unofficial political structures are a feature of the war in Sri Lanka and their significance is underlined through the peace process that is currently underway. The existence of symbols of formal administration such as courts of law, police stations and structures for taxation are sources of disagreement and grievance. It is difficult to imagine a geographical area being controlled for a long period of time (over 20 years) by a particular group, whose stated aims included demand for a sepa-

rate state, without formal structures of administration arising there. The creation of such quasi-state structures was as much a part of the conflict as the military confrontations and their existence must be dealt with. The formalisation of political power must be addressed explicitly in the peace process.

The effects of war are, therefore, a product of the nature of the conflict itself and of government structures and capacity - which are themselves affected by conflict. The state is profoundly reshaped by conflict. In extreme cases, war leads to state collapse, as, for example, in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone. In other cases, democratic institutions and processes are corroded as a result of the systematic redistribution of power, wealth and status to military actors. Failing states may become increasingly criminalised. Rulers of 'shadow states' use patronage as a means of political control and, in fact, seek to make life less secure and more materially impoverished for subjects (Reno 2000).

Aid and intervention

External intervention also plays an important role and may aggravate or mitigate not only conflict but also chronic poverty. International market forces and intervention can have a great impact particularly on poor countries, which are critically dependent on external finance. Vulnerable economies tend to be highly indebted economies and aid flows tend to be volatile and unpredictable (Stewart and Fitzgerald 2000). Conflict leads to capital flight, and the loss of FDI. Growing insecurity encourages speculative activities rather than investment in production and employment. This may attract 'rogue companies' such as the diamond companies in Angola or Liberia, who have a high tolerance of risk. Aid policies and programmes are also a significant factor in affecting poverty and conflict. Stewart and Fitzgerald (2000) argue that orthodox SAPs may well have counterproductive results in chronically poor and vulnerable countries. Economic conditionalities can undermine the capacity and legitimacy of the state, which is forced to cut back on social services. Aid often fails to reach the chronically poor - a problem experienced in stable contexts but accentuated in areas of conflict because of problems of security, access, and empowerment. Research also points to the potential for aid to undermine social contracts between states and citizens (De Waal 1994) or inadvertently to 'do harm' by fuelling the war

economy (Anderson 1999). In Liberia warlords practiced 'people farming' to loot food aid (Atkinson 1997) while in Afghanistan, donors were willing to accept 'wastage levels' of up to 40%.

In Sri Lanka, aid in itself is becoming a point of contention in the peace process. The cessation of hostilities has resulted in large amounts of money being pledged for reconstruction work. The fact that a lot of these resources would then be concentrated on a particular geographical area (and perhaps more significantly the perception that in a large part the beneficiaries of the aid will be the minority Tamil community) is becoming a source of grievance and tension. The manner in which aid influences conflict situations even when, as in the case of Sri Lanka, significant moves towards peace are being made, must be acknowledged. Issues relating to intervention in conflict are further examined below.

Acting upon the relationship between poverty and conflict is mostly left to external parties. It is a feature of development work that influence or intervention in conflict is seen to come from outside. Such intervention may be necessary and, indeed, in some cases, the only hope of relief or reconstruction lies with outside actors. However, caution is called for in simply approving this form of *work in conflict*. Much of the writing on intervention takes the tone adopted by Anderson (1997).

Many people criticise international assistance, accurately citing examples of ways in which international aid has done harm rather than good. (We) note such examples, but we do not condemn aid for its failures. It is a moral and logical fallacy to conclude that because aid can do harm, a decision not to give aid would do no harm. In reality a decision to withhold aid from people in need would have unconscionable negative ramifications. (We) believe international aid is a good thing. (We) think the world is a better place because when some people suffer, other people who are able to take actions to help lessen the suffering do so. (Anderson 1997: 2)

The widely held view about outside intervention is unnecessarily emotive and dismissive about the obvious failings of such interventions. It seems that a simplistic moral position is adopted. Intervention is defended simply because a lack of such help to the suffering people would be unconscionable. It is strange that any argu-

ment for more progressive forms of intervention must first deal with arguments about not intervening at all. The process must be changed. Lessons need to be learnt from the instances where aid has done harm lest they be repeated.

Africa provides a good example of the intervention experience, particularly during the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s. Viewed from the point of view of the relationship between poverty and conflict, what was intended to alleviate suffering actually led to the prolonging and worsening of an existing conflict.

There have been some successes, particularly in emergency care in refugee camps but the sad truth is that the huge out pouring of relief aid into Africa over the last decade has contributed to the institutionalisation of violence. Ethiopia is the case in point. It is now no longer seriously disputed that the massive inflow of aid following Band-Aid contributed more to the survival of the Ethiopian Government, whose army was the main reason for the famine, than for the famine-stricken peasantry...most food aid into Africa, for over a decade, has contributed to the institutionalisation of violence (Anderson 1997: 2).

Despite negative practices and misguided programmes, non-governmental relief agencies have grown enormously in size in the last fifteen years (ibid). In Sri Lanka, estimates vary: the Asia Development Bank (ADB) reported that there were 25,000 NGOs in 1997 whereas the USAID estimated 50,000 (see Fernando 2003). They have become preferred conduits for emergency aid from western governments. This is for a variety of reasons. One is that donor governments have become tired of the inefficiency of host government bureaucracies. Secondly, donations to western NGOs gain them favourable publicity and can obscure the reality of declining aid budgets. Thirdly, grants through NGOs are much more discretionary than government grants and subject to much less formality. This gives more room for flexibility and rapid response, but it also removes a central component of accountability since there is no obligation for the donor to provide the resources (Anderson 1997, Wickramasinghe 2001).

Conflicts not only cause poverty but also divert essential resources away from poverty. Statistics on global trends of expenditure show that more resources are allocated

for arms purchase than for development. Last year the US alone spent in excess of \$300 billion a year on arms. This year it will spend nearly \$400 billion. Meanwhile the total spent in the entire world on fighting poverty last year was less than \$60 billion¹. This shows a great imbalance in global priorities.

Interventions in conflict are the 'practice' element of the relationship between poverty and conflict. It is apparent that many varying views exist of intervention, its role and the manner in which it is carried out. Intervention must be re-evaluated if it is exacerbating the conflict rather than contributing to eventual peace. The lack of accountability of NGOs allows such interventions to continue.

Tools

A rapidly growing form of intervention, especially in poverty and conflict related work, is tools and implementing methodologies. Tools for assessment of conflict sensitivity and conflict impact must be based on as wide a definition of conflict as possible and must explicitly engage with the relationship between conflict and wider development issues. The need for examining the relationship between poverty and conflict grows more urgent with the creation of tools such as Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), their rapid translation into manuals and handbooks and their use in elements of development practice. The efficacy and usefulness of such tools can be questioned because of their lack of an adequate conceptual foundation. Anderson (1997), with her development of the 'Do No Harm' concept, attempts to introduce conflict sensitivity into development practice in a manner that addresses the relationship between these concepts rather than simply taking them as given starting points. The concept is tied closely to ideas about external intervention in conflict.

When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes part of that context and also of the conflict. Although aid agencies often seek to be neutral or non-partisan toward the winners and the losers of a war, the impact of their aid is not neutral regarding whether conflict worsens or abates. When given in conflict settings, aid can reinforce, exacerbate, and prolong the conflict; it can also help reduce tensions and strengthen people's capacities to disengage from fighting and find peaceful options for solving problems (Anderson 1997: 1).

The methodology developed by Anderson is based on the identification of 'connectors' or factors that bring communities together and create a favourable environment for peace and 'dividers' or factors that cause tension and increase the likelihood of war. The activities of the agencies are then assessed for their contribution to dividers or connectors and the conflict impact of particular interventions is gauged. It is less rigid and technical than Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) and allows for the conflict situation to be examined and evaluated in its wider social context.

PCIA is also a tool developed to measure the conflict sensitivity of projects. According to Bush (1998 and 2000), one of the principal creators of PCIA, researchers and development workers are well aware of the limitations imposed on their work by the ebb and flow of violence in regions prone to conflict. However, humanitarian attention towards the systematic consideration and measurement of the impact of development work on the dynamics of peace and conflict, have been slow (ibid). PCIA was developed to allow for such a systematic consideration of impacts.

However, the central weakness of the PCIA methodology is the lack of a strong conceptual foundation underpinning its translation into a tool for social research. PCIA as a tool, at the present stage of application, is not responsive enough to remove the negative connotation automatically associated with conflict. It is evident that the conflicts considered and evaluated using the tool were all negative. It does not take into account the fact that any social transformation, be it positive or negative, may be characterised as conflict. A definition of conflict should also take into account the developed taxonomy relating to the term, the categorisations and subdivisions including violent / non-violent, latent / manifest and structural elements such as race, class, caste, ecology and gender in the wider application of the term. When a working definition is established and certain conflicts identified, their examination must take into consideration both root causes and proximate causes. Such 'triggers' and 'catalysts' should be acknowledged separately.

The Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) provides a more developed tool for the analysis of conflict (Wam and Sardesai 2003). It is not intended simply to examine the

¹All statistics from www.waronwant.org (2003)

effect of conflict but also looks at causal factors with the aim of better targeting development assistance using the data provided by the framework. The probability of success of development assistance is improved by a complementary analytical framework that identifies sources of violent conflicts and opportunities for their outbreak and escalation. The Conflict Analysis Framework seeks to support country and regional efforts to analyse and address conflicts in the context of country assistance, poverty reduction and other development strategies. CAF aims to highlight key factors influencing conflict, focusing on six areas: social and ethnic relations; governance and political institutions; human rights and security; economic structure and performance; environment and natural resources; and external factors. A better understanding of what affects the level and dynamics of conflict can help operational teams ensure that development interventions do not instigate, exacerbate, or revive situations of violent conflict; but instead, if well designed, can help reduce conflict (ibid). It is significant that so many causal areas can be examined using this framework. The development of the framework is explicitly connected with the utility of the information it is intended to provide. Its purpose is to make development interventions more conflict-sensitive and to reduce adverse effects of development aid on conflict.

Conflict is present in all societies. Differences in interests and opinions between groups are natural. How differences are expressed and managed determines whether conflicts manifest themselves in primarily political (non-violent) or violent ways. When groups within a society, including the government, pursue their objectives in accordance with the laws and established norms of that society, conflict tends to be predominantly political. In other cases, groups turn to violence to pursue their goals, and the use of violence overrides the use of political means. Conflict prevention requires activities that can reduce the likelihood that conflicts will turn violent. CAF does not begin with a partial definition of conflict but acknowledges that it is a natural part of the social process. The main thrust of the analysis is to obtain information that would guide development interventions. It takes a broader view and does not limit its concept of conflict to forms that would guide the development process.

If a country is found to be at risk of violent conflict, or is already experiencing large-scale violence, a full conflict analysis should be conducted. CAF uses six categories of variables related to conflict. The categories consist of several variables, each with corresponding indicators on three levels of intensity (warning; increasing intensity; de-escalation) that reflect change in the level of violent conflict. These indicators are used to estimate the impact of a variable on a country's level of conflict and its link with poverty. As a consequence, sensitive issues are highlighted so that programmes can take them into account. The importance of the different variables differs from country to country, and from conflict to conflict. A factor that has a strong impact on conflict in country A might have less relevance in country B and none in country C. The framework attempts to be both comprehensive and flexible to guide analysis in very different country situations, each with unique characteristics.

Poverty and conflict in Sri Lanka

The relationship between poverty and conflict has not been much examined in Sri Lanka. Much of the available material looks at particular manifestations of conflict and particular effects on society. Silva (2000) explores the effect of the conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka on the movement of people within the country and the social effects of this movement. Using census data, information generated by relief agencies working in war-affected areas and results of recent ethnographic research, the author explores the effect of the war on emerging patterns of ethnic segregation in Sri Lanka. It is suggested that ethnic segregation gives rise to intensification of ethnic consciousness and formation of exclusive ethnic identities where identities were complex and fluid in the past (ibid.). Conflict between ethnic groups and ethnic segregation may be seen as mutually reinforcing processes. Attention is given to the rebuilding of mutual trust among ethnic groups, which has become a major challenge for social policy in Sri Lanka, particularly in the areas of relief, rehabilitation and resettlement.

The war in the north and east is seen as the main conflict within Sri Lanka's recent history. The roots of this conflict lie in the long-standing tensions between the

majority Sinhala and the minority Tamil population in the country. Perhaps more than actual grievances the conflict is based on the perceptions each group holds about the other, on socially constructed beliefs about marginalisation and discrimination. The Committee for Rational Development (CRD 1984) challenges these deeply held misconceptions but fails to develop ideas about the creation of such myths and the value that they are given in society. These are the perceptions held by the various ethnic communities in Sri Lanka that have been the cause of much strife and violence. History can be manipulated to convey different arguments or be used to substantiate different hypotheses. Study of perspectives of difference and the development of myths helps an understanding of deep-rooted perceptions held in society. There are many scholars who have written on political violence, social conflict, and identity (see studies by Hensman 1996, Perera 1992, Samarasinghe and Coughlan 1991, Silva 2000). Several Sri Lankan scholars, (such as Gunaratna, Hettige, K.M. de Silva, Obeysekere, Roberts, and Ratnapala) have written about contemporary social concerns and institutions. Work on the civil war has mainly concentrated on the political and economic upheaval. Writers such as Samaranayake and Coughlan (1991) and Peiris (1991) have concentrated on groups affected by under-development, especially the ethnically distinct enclave workers such as the plantation Tamils. Recent changes in the plantation sector have also been identified such as the increased integration of plantation workers into the national economy and recognition of their civil rights.

Historically, the Indian Tamil plantation workers have been targeted and have become victims of mob violence during eruptions of ethnic tension. Those who moved away from plantation employment to towns and villages (Peiris 1991) have suffered most. Estate Tamils have responded to insecurity by segregating themselves in the plantation areas. This has adversely affected the occupational mobility of this particular group. The connection between the ethnic conflict, its manifestation in ethnic riots, and the restriction of the mobility of employment of estate Tamils has not received enough attention.

The Kandyan peasantry has also been neglected by academics. The Kandyan peasantry was displaced and made landless by various British conventions and treaties. Their neglect is a significant oversight in political, economic,

and historical analyses. Their grievances and contributions need to be taken into account in contemporary dialogue and policy formulation.

Many of the studies mentioned in the section above centre on effects of conflict on the economic activities and livelihood strategies of afflicted societies. War-related population displacement, social dislocation and impoverishment affect each of the main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (Silva 2000). The insecurity and uncertainties associated with the war and the fear of further displacement as a result of fresh outbreak of violence are barriers to success of rehabilitation and resettlement efforts in the current geo-political setting (ibid). A non-violent resolution of the conflict is the only sure way to put an end to the impoverishment that continues to affect the war affected and other areas (ibid).

Social Cost of Conflict

There has been considerable interest in the economic aspects of conflict and poverty, with an underlying assumption of its greater importance. In this section we will explore material relevant to the human aspect of conflict and poverty. In the past decade, there has been an increased interest in the human cost of conflict, especially how people affected by forced migratory movements respond in difficult situations. However, the social and human costs of conflict are often neglected in research studies as well as humanitarian / development programmes. The war in Yugoslavia is considered the 'watershed' that changed the way researchers and development organizations approached the topic of conflict and its aftermath. Today, interventions seeking to mitigate the stresses of violent conflict have become popular in agency programmes, and even fashionable and lucrative. As a result, the psychosocial intervention industry grew in the 1990s, leading to the emergence of large numbers of non-governmental organizations claiming to provide programmes to improve psychological well-being. We are in a new era of 'post-conflict reconstruction', with examples such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sri Lanka (Ganepola 2003). The passionate psychosocial drive of the 1990s may be replaced with the advent of peace and post-conflict international expertise that is converging on certain war-affected nations.

Direct costs of war include defence expenditure, refugee assistance, damage to physical capital (public and

private property), and lost outputs in the country, especially the North and East (NPC 2001, Senanayake 2002). Indirect costs of war include: loss of foreign investments and foreign aid, reduction in tourism, overseas migration, emigration of skilled labour and capital flight, diversion of funds from domestic investment, and death and injury. It is interesting that death and injury have been categorized as an indirect cost of war, thereby showing money-based thinking in understanding conflict. For example, the NPC study (2001) looks at the effects of death or injury of a family member on the immediate family and on the economy of the country. The study argues that suffering will have a negative impact on productivity (productive capacity, potential output). Senanayake (2002) has identified a category of war related 'industries' that include drug smuggling, arms trade, prostitution, and money laundering. The aid and development industry could be added to this category. Other enterprises include provision by small or medium sized businesses or by individuals of uniforms, goods, food, catering, and transport to the armed forces. The largest employment by far is in the armed forces. This has increased household incomes and led to rural sector growth. There is a growing number of studies that suggest that the rural economic sector has grown with the militarisation of employment (Senanayake 2002, Van Hear 2000) but also that some parts of civil society have benefited by conflict (Ganepola 2002a).

Economic costs merge with human loss when economic life years are lost through death and injury; when there is disruption to income earning activity; when there is loss of skills through outward migration; and when there is a huge cost of maintaining and rehabilitating the displaced. Poverty in relation to human cost of war can take the meaning of helplessness, dependency, and marginalisation.

Human Factor in the Conflict: The Hidden Aspect

Those who suffer the most in a conflict situation are usually those who are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many people who have no part in the decisions that create violent conflict suffer the consequences of them. The most immediate social effects of war are human fatalities and displacements. A change that is seen in modern conflicts is in the type of casualties. At the

start of the 20th century, about 90 % of casualties were soldiers, but by the end of the 20th century most were civilian. Rebel recruitment is largely forced. Many civilians who can escape, do so to avoid forcible conscription. Army and rebels alike deliberately target civilian populations for the purpose of forced evacuations or for political reasons - sympathy, wrath, information about the enemy, ethnic cleansing.

The National Peace Council (NPC, 2001) conducted one of the pioneering studies on the social cost of war in Sri Lanka. The study showed that human suffering cannot be measured in figures. It is best expressed in the stories people can tell which are testament to their experience of violence and understanding of conflict. One way that the magnitude and intensity of human cost of the war can be understood is by presenting certain indicators such as the following:

- Human fatalities (approx. 65,000 deaths of combatants and non-combatants)²
- Disabled soldiers
- Female household heads
- Displacement and homelessness
- Children affected by the war (girl and boy combatants, orphans, and those affected by brutal violence)
- Trauma caused by loss, separation, and disappearances
- Social and economic deprivation, drop in household incomes
- Decline in nutritional standards
- Increase in infant mortality
- Low standards of basic needs provision including health care, education, water and sanitation, and food supply.

Although case studies and indicators show a dimension of human misery, it is but a partial indicator of the magnitude of suffering.

The NPC study also outlines the socio-political and moral cost of the war. A democratic political system suffers when the country is in a state of emergency. There is proscription of political parties, banning of rallies and censorship of media. There is corruption, laxity in financial accountability and transparency, political assassinations, and firearms are issued for the protection of

² Statistics need to be approached with caution since all parties involved in conflicts and war manipulate figures for various reasons. On the other hand, accurate figures are extremely difficult to obtain, given the complex circumstances that conflicts create as well as constraints in data collection methods.

politicians. The last aspect has, in Sri Lanka's contemporary history, produced dangerous trends of violence and abuse by politicians. With a culture of war and conflict democratic rights and human rights are undermined. Detention and torture create abject human misery and an erosion of respect for human life. People can develop a moral callousness in order to survive and violence increases. Militarisation of society in Sri Lanka has also led to the problem of desertion, which carries with it a threat of violence.

How the conflict-afflicted are approached

Some researchers tend to forget that people trying to deal with the aftermath of conflict and subsequent poverty are ordinary people. Labelling individual people as refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, returnees, landmine or torture victims risks hiding their individuality in clinical categories. Governments, developmental organizations, and academics that put people into categories without granting them human dignity turn them into faceless, almost non-human entities. At the other extreme interventionists and scholars generalise and treat all the war-afflicted as helpless, voiceless victims. There are examples from Africa of therapists working with abducted children who insist on religious conversions. (Harrell-Bond 2000) There have been reports from Sri Lanka that arranged marriages for war widows have been advocated to overcome their distress. Generally, people affected by war and conflict are not treated as people having a problem, but as *constituting* the problem.

Victims and survivors interviewed for the NPC study appreciated the support that the government had offered. They were disappointed that little psychological support was given and pessimistic about what could be done to mitigate suffering. The report claims that they were 'left to bear the human cost of war for which there is little relief'. Sweeping and dramatic expressions and generalisations such as these are common in documented material and print media. The War Trauma and Psychosocial Programme in Colombo are currently conducting a desk study of material from the print media, spanning from 1994-2001 on conflict-related issues. An identifiable trend is that conflict-affected people are believed to suffer pathology.

Another concern is the way those conducting research studies and other programmes treat people who have lived through difficult circumstances. This is epitomised in the questionable methodology of the NPC study.

*Of all the stories that have been recorded, the stories which best depict the typology of the immiserisation that has occurred have been selected for analysis. These stories have been elicited through a sensitive process of questioning by investigators trained for this purpose. The victims were **encouraged** to recollect and **relive** [emphasis added] their experience and communicate, in as concrete a manner as possible, the deprivation and stress they experienced. The methodology attempts to recreate the state of misery as it is lived by the victim...(NPC 2001: 49)*

It is good that the NPC listens to survivors and is sensitive to the individualistic nature of experiencing violence. However, the above paragraph is testimony to the insensitive and controversial methods that researchers use in conflict studies. Survivors are encouraged by interviewers to 'relive' the distressing memories of the past and to 'recreate the state of misery... by recalling the context and significant details.' It is ethically objectionable that survivors are urged by outsiders to relive misery so they can gather material for research. 'Talking therapies' do not always help individuals overcome their distressing past. Other techniques, such as active forgetting, avoidance learning, and even repression, which work for some people (Ganepola 2003, Slater 2003, Summerfield 1999). It is one thing to publish narratives that give a voice to neglected communities, but it is deplorable to extract sad details from people so that this material becomes 'authentic expressions of their states of mind'. Were the interviewers trained to de-brief interviewees at the end of sessions? What did interviewers do when 'emotive outpourings' were too much for the speakers and the interviewers to bear?

Every published narrative has been chosen for some reason. Generally, it is to feed a public taste for the consumption of human suffering. Selected excerpts and narratives tend to be graphic and horrendous testimonies of distress and violence. There are arguments for and against using examples of human misery. If human testimony is to be published, ethical questions about its purpose, effect, and outcome need to be considered.

How conflict affects people – is there a North-South divide?

Some of the possible consequences of conflict are outlined below:

- Families that have lost a combat member to the war
- Families that have lost a non-combatant member to the war
- Families with members unaccounted for (i.e. disappearances)
- Disability
- Enforced displacement and subsequent losses (material, livelihoods, health etc.)
- Living in a war zone or vulnerable area
- Living in a high security zone

Some argue that most people in Sri Lanka have suffered, directly or indirectly, because of the country's conflict (Bush 2002, INPACT 2003). People face different problems in different areas but the entire country has suffered the consequences of a protracted conflict. According to Bush (2002) it is an island-wide problem that requires an island-wide solution.

The human cost of war has been vividly sketched by writers from different disciplines 1996, Thornton and Niththyanathan 1985, Somasundaram 1998, Kanapathipillai 1992, Brun 2000, Schrijvers 1999, Rajasingham 1999). Many resource centres of NGOs supply articles, conference papers, and reports about the conflict. However, there is a dearth of material on the effects of conflict in the areas outside the North East or the 'new South' (incidents such as the bombings at the Central Bank, Maradana, Dehiwela etc).

A study (ADB / PIMU 2001) describes the effects of war. A sense of 'pervasive tragedy' is conveyed. There are people, particularly in the conflict zones, who have lived through chronic violence and anxiety. The continuous fear, insecurity, helplessness and desensitisation are vividly demonstrated. Excerpts of narratives show the complete breakdown of a community's social fabric. A Sinhalese man, abducted by the LTTE, managed to escape and return to his village. Fellow-villagers and the police regarded him with suspicion because it was possible that he made a deal with the LTTE in order to escape. Guns were given to villagers living in vulnerable areas on the border of the north east. Instead of help-

ing them, this made them more vulnerable because the LTTE raided them to steal the guns.

The report shows that poverty is the main cause of enlistment to both sides. Families worry about relatives in the front line. Moving excerpts show the distress of those who have suffered losses in the war. The report describes the effect of loss of a parent on children. Cultural differences, expressed in attitudes to widowhood, power shifts, re-marriage, and social standing in village and community, can add to the distress. In Tamil families especially, widowhood has negative cultural connotations (issues of pollution, social exclusion, stigma, and loss of status).

Violence has been identified by villagers in districts that have been directly affected by the armed conflict as a cause of poverty (ADB / PIMU 2001). War-related distress worsens family economies. It places a burden on human capacities as well as accruing a financial cost. It causes problems in relation to travel, health, religious and cultural activities. The conflict is also perceived as having given one ethnic group greater political representation and benefits than another. Members of all ethnic groups wanted the conflict to end.

Multiple displacements and long-term effects of armed conflict have prevented villagers from working. The war has taken their livelihoods, such as cattle breeding and land-cultivation. They cannot plan a future because they do not know when there will be another attack or long-term conflict. Some of those who relocate lose not only their livelihoods but also their limbs due to landmine injuries.

The study categorizes aspects of the conflict, which have a grave impact on family life, particularly on the education of children. It is difficult to get children into school without birth certificates. Children drop out of school because they have to work to contribute to the family finances. Children are vulnerable to forced recruitment. There are worries about the insecurity of travelling to or from school, lack of school implements and proper clothing. Other studies have shown that the education of girls is neglected because of gender role expectations, early marriage, lack of school facilities, and perceived pointlessness in further education (McCallin 1999). There are approximately 65,000 children in the north and east who

do not attend school. The annual national drop out rate is 4% whereas in the north and east it is 16%.

In the north and east, livelihoods are affected by many factors. There are restrictions to fishing. Landmines in fields, lack of property rights, LTTE and government restrictions, lack of homes, tools, and livestock limit cultivation. Mobility is limited because of poor roads and the pass system. Restrictions on movement affect access to markets and sale of produce. Scarcity of food leads to malnourishment, which affects ability to work. Lack of income-generating opportunities causes indebtedness and pawning of jewellery. Poverty leads to alcohol misuse and unwanted pregnancies (ADB / PIMU 2001). Poverty levels are greater in some un-cleared areas. Effects of southern violence on people and their livelihoods can be discerned from research conducted in districts such as Moneragala, Hambantota and Badulla (ibid.). Moneragala emerges as the poorest district in Sri Lanka, outside the north and east, in terms of consumption, expenditure and poverty levels. Job availability is an important factor in determining the level of poverty. Hambantota district offers not only the opportunity for military options and going to the Middle East, but also paddy cultivation, home garden crops, inland fisheries, salt manufacturing, industrial employment (such as work in garment factories), and skilled craft work.

The interviewees in the ADB / PIMU study describe their feelings about poverty. Their perceptions concern fate and feelings of suffering and shame. Some people are poor because the limited work that is available to them is vulnerable to the seasons. Poverty can arise from the lack of assets such as income, infrastructure, and food. This supports Sen's concept of poverty as a state of deprivation rather than the concept arising out of conventional indicator-related investigations (nutrition, income) (ADB / PIMU 2001). Primary causes of poverty are: lack of infrastructure, water, employment and income, access to markets, lack of access to cultivable land and titles, housing, medical care, and education. Children do not attend school on days that parents need help with their income generating activities, such as going to the market, carrying produce for sale. There is a view that villagers must be united to overcome poverty. There needs to be group work and action, such as buying a tractor to transport sugar cane directly to the Palewatte factory rather than going through middlemen. Some

NGOs helped to mobilise community participation through mobilization. The study shows that although poverty takes different forms, people's needs can be similar. This echoes findings (such as Bush 2002 and INPACT 2003) that indicate an entire country is affected by war but with differences in type and degree.

Political misgivings

In the ADB / PIMU Study (2001), many villagers complained that they were not entitled to welfare benefits like Samurdhi because they did not have the appropriate political affiliations. Some mentioned ethnic affiliations. Benefits have been allocated on the basis of party politics. People do not expect the government to deliver. 'Whoever rules is the same. They earn, sit around and do nothing for us'. The politicisation of welfare, exploitation of the voter, dependency on the political system for welfare and development, and powerlessness to wielding influence, are clearly depicted in this study.

People in all districts distrusted politicians. There was also dissatisfaction with the NGO. Sector. There were complaints about broken promises, time wasted at numerous meetings which did not lead to any result or tangible change, and misguided projects such as distributing seeds and plants during the dry season which subsequently destroyed them.

Local people and a German NGO collaborated on a 6-month study in Trincomalee on land and livelihood management (SLE 2001) The study demonstrated changes to traditional society (poorer members of society may have reaped the benefit of obtaining an important place in society); lack of leadership at village level; psychosocial health concerns; dependence on outside support for survival; undermining of trust and confidence in structures such as the state for protection (due to bad governance, political bias etc); an uneven distribution of political capital (civilian and military power-holders); and creation of a political economy of violence, threats, harassment and acts of intimidation have reinforced a system of bribery.

It is important to understand political vulnerability and the perceptions of excluded groups. The potential for violent conflict depends, to an extent, on poor people's perceptions of economic justice. Their expectations are influenced by rate of economic change; distribution of

benefits; accentuation of income disparities; exploitation of one group by another. Powerful groups may shift resource distribution in their favour and create scarcity for other groups as in some cases of famine. The level of organisation of groups with grievances determines whether grievance turns into violence. We should attempt to understand the interactions and synergies 'greed' and 'grievance' (Keen 2000). We need to examine the processes through which greed often generates grievance and rebellion. In Nepal, for instance, abuses of power and corruption in the face of rising democratic expectations helped generate widespread grievance, which led to rebellion. There are signs now that the conflict is beginning to generate vested interests so that economic agendas or 'greed' may play a role in sustaining the violence. One of the weaknesses of analysis based on political economy is that it tends to miss the importance of the *meanings* which people attribute to events, institutions, policies, motives and appeals for public support. As Richards (1996) emphasises, we need to consider the extent to which war makes sociological sense and to understand how actors attach social meaning to acts of violence and rebellion.

Gender dimensions of conflict

Many writers including, Ahearn et al. (1999), Boyden (1999), Brun (1999), Callamard (1999), Harrell-Bond (2000), Nordstrom (1999), and Turner (1999) have conducted research on the experiences of refugee children, men and women. In patriarchal societies, it may be unnerving for men who have enjoyed a position of power, authority, and control to lose their sense of self-worth. For women who have lost their partner, and are left with decision-making processes, economic burdens in addition to child-rearing activities, the new situation may seem threatening. A study of displaced single-parent families in southern Sri Lanka indicated that in situations bereft of social and domestic support or loss of authority and control, men were more likely than women to resort to 'escapist' methods, such as flight, abandonment and even suicide (Samarasinghe 1999). This demonstrates how some displaced persons strive to handle their situation by taking or exercising control in an attempt to 'cope'. Whereas some cope negatively as in the case of suicide, others attempt to manage their situation and adjust to new conditions (Ganepola 2002a).

The conflict in Sri Lanka has created an environment where there is gross violation of women's human rights, mainly in terms of violence against women. Sri Lanka is not alone in this sphere. Violence against women in forms of sexual abuse, intimidation, and exploitation have been reported from many refugee-producing countries in the African continent, the Mediterranean, Latin America, and Asia. Women are susceptible to these types of violence during their flight from conflict regions, from military personnel at checkpoints, border-guards, in camp situations, and from raids and riots. The survivor's experience is strongly influenced by social class, gender, kinship networks, and past history (Kanapathipillai 1992). In one study of survivors of the 1983 ethnic struggle in Sri Lanka, many were mainly concerned about re-organisation of the family and economic life, the future of offspring, and safety (ibid.). Moreover, it is often reported that women are usually considered as either protected dependants of men or as encumbered with children (Giles 1999). But studies show that men are also a vulnerable and often excluded group (Brun 1999 Turner 2000), that children can be an asset during difficult times of forced migration and displacement (Boyden 1999), and that some refugee children cope just as well as local children (Loughry and Nguyen 2000). In a recent study among two hundred and eighty seven Palestinian refugee children living in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, there was no evidence of psychological trauma or dysfunctional behaviour (MacMullin and Loughry 2000). Researchers need to approach the refugee experience in a holistic manner, moving away from a pathological model of the refugee or displaced person.

In Sri Lanka, rape and sexual abuse have been reported from camps (Wijayatilake 1995) and camp structures could make female children a vulnerable target of physical or sexual abuse. Because of the stigma and humiliation attached to rape, and the insensitive treatment of victims, many suffer in silence and do not report the rape. (This is despite the operation of a women's and children's unit in a number of police stations). Rape during ethnic strife may get subsumed under more *pressing* or *important* issues (ibid.). Women are in a subordinate position even in the refugee camp and are vulnerable to physical trauma. Rape no matter who the perpetrator (state, LTTE or other) is a violation of human rights.

Another study looked at changes that Tamil women experienced after displacement (Institute of Agriculture and Women in Development 1995). Women who have held traditional roles as wives and mothers in a male-dominated Tamil social structure were now playing leading roles in family life as educators and decision-makers (ibid.). Women who have lost husbands, fathers and brothers to the separatist conflict have had to embrace new roles such as household head (Rajasingham-Senanayake 1999). Schrijvers' study (1999) on Tamil women in the North of Sri Lanka supports the image of strong refugee women. The traditional notions of gender have not, however, been eliminated. Schrijvers has shown that displaced women are placed into three categories: as promiscuous, vulnerable and as exceptionally strong and emancipated. Even though the dominant refugee image was that of a vulnerable woman, this study has highlighted the fact that some women survived their difficult situation with remarkable physical and mental strength. Another category of Tamil women is that of the female LTTE cadre, one which represents an 'extreme' and aggressive image. Although it is tempting to perceive such representations as empowering or even liberating, feminist critique argues that the LTTE ideal celebrates only masculine qualities (thereby negating constructions of femininity) (Schrijvers 1999) and that LTTE women are not independent, autonomous agents but subjects (in most cases forcibly conscripted) in a male-led nationalist movement (Rajasingham-Senanayake 1999). This can be taken further where self-destruction as suicide bombers is perceived to be the ultimate sacrifice for the nation and also a salvation from the impurities of womanhood.

It is clear that women create new identities in times of conflict. Interesting questions have been asked: do female-headed households cope better when the male is absent because of the lack of domestic violence, and because money is not wasted on alcohol, tobacco, and gambling? These aspects have been recorded in the case research such as the ADB / PIMU (2001) indicating that men and their habitual tendencies have caused households to lose whatever savings or assets they possessed.

About half of those affected by war in Sri Lanka are children (William 2003). Children are deprived of an education and other basic facilities such as health, nutri-

tion, and information because of the effects of the war such as forcible recruitment and war-induced poverty displacement. It is estimated that more than half of students in the north east have left school to join the LTTE or have been forced to enlist. There is no doubt that children living in the North and East are exposed to direct and indirect effects of militarised and gendered violence.

People are affected by conflict in many ways including being forced to leave their homelands and familiar structures and beginning new lives in unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environments, for example, where paddy farmers are compelled to become fisher folk. This is one of the main difficulties faced by men who have had to cope with loss of traditional livelihoods. Restrictions imposed by the LTTE and government have caused hardship to the ordinary civilian, making certain livelihoods inaccessible or impossible.

Conflict and Poverty-Induced Migration

This section looks at trends in world migration and explores the determinants of movements of people. It explores migration against the backdrop of poverty and conflict. In the last decade, there has been a large increase in migration from less developed countries to countries in North America, Western Europe and Australasia. With the increase in immigration and asylum applications to popular destination countries, illegal immigration has also grown. There is a variety of triggers for movements of populations. Different variables cause different types of migration (Stark and Taylor 1991). Broadly there are two types of migrant groups: voluntary migrants and forced migrants. Voluntary migration is usually fuelled by well-developed networks that link labour supplies with the demands of businesses for both skilled and unskilled migrants. This category migrates for greater income benefits, availability of employment, and generally to enhance living standards. Forced migrants become displaced because of political upheaval, man-made disasters, and environmental catastrophes. However, these distinctions are not clear cut. Where voluntary migrants may feel compelled to seek new homes because of difficult circumstances, forced migrants may choose a particular refuge because of family ties, social networks, and economic opportunities (ibid.).

Asylum migration to other destinations, particularly in Europe or North America, has become increasingly costly. In Sri Lanka it has become, largely, the preserve of well-to-do and well-connected Tamils, who have both the incentive and resources to pursue it (Van Hear 2000). As for the displaced Muslims and Sinhalese, it has been temporary labour migrations to the Middle East that have sustained families in Sri Lanka, as they have few or no connections in asylum countries (*ibid.*). This is where Emanuel Marx's conceptual framework of the 'social world' of refugees comes into effect. This explains the forces that coerce people to migrate. Countries that have produced large numbers of migrants because of violence and political instability, may continue to initiate migration even after the source of persecution is no more. It is hypothesised that migration continues after an exodus, or that expulsion stimulates later migration (Massey 1990 and Van Hear 1998). Reasons behind this phenomenon include family reunion, family formation, and dependent migration (Van Hear 1998). There may be other reasons outside traditional ones. The presence of relatives and friends represent a positive factor in migrant decision-making because it reduces economic and psychosocial costs.

Does poverty constrain migration or does poverty propel migrations? Is migration driven by socio-economic deficiencies? There is a global trend that shows that an increase in income in a Western European country would reduce migration whereas an increase in income in a typical African country would increase outward migration (Hatton and Williamson 2002). There is a notion that emigration rates out of poor countries are very low while they are much higher out of moderately poor countries. Africa is, by far, the poorest continent and has generated remarkably few migrants to countries where labour is scarce. But now, Africa's refugees account for more than a third of the world's refugees living in foreign countries (*ibid.*). Most displaced Africans return to their homelands they experience greater deprivation than at home.

One possible explanation for this is that structural and demographic changes coincident with industrialisation generate more migration in early stages than later on (*ibid.*). Another explanation is that poverty constrains migration since financing investment in a long-distance move is difficult for the very poor. There could be other

reasons such as lack of previous migrant contacts in destination countries, thereby having no social networks or social capital to tap into. Strict immigration controls could raise the cost of migration since it affects the composition of migrants within and between countries. Also, the likelihood of migration will decline with the increase in age of an individual. Research, especially from Africa, shows that poverty constraints affect migration: i.e., the poorer the family, the more likely they would remain in Africa. In France it has been shown that previous migration experiences contribute to future departures, suggesting that social capital influences migration. The trend in Sri Lanka has been that the 'absolute poor' do not migrate. This is evident in research conducted among conflict-affected people living in 'refugee camps' (Ganepola 2002a). This study showed that overseas migrants especially, belonged to a socio-economic group that had the capital for mobility. This may explain why Sri Lanka's displaced population remains displaced within the country since they lack the resources and connections to move further.

What are the initial intentions of the migrants when they leave the country of origin? Why do they prefer to seek asylum in an industrialized country rather than a country closer to home? As indicated above, studies indicate emphasis on networks based on common affiliations such as ethnicity, kinship and religion (Chatelard 2002). What are the dynamics of various networks that sustain their move? Another set of questions points to the various means migrants have at their disposal to undertake long distance travel. How does poverty fit into decision-making? Poor socio-economic and security conditions can prompt people to migrate towards western, industrialised states, where they expect better protection and opportunities. International departures generally occur along familiar avenues, circumscribed by strong linkages within or evolving within migration systems and by examples set by earlier travellers and support structures established by them (*ibid.*).

Migration, then, can be placed in a resource allocation framework (Sjaastad 1962). It is an activity that requires some sort of resource. This means that migration can be treated as a means of promoting efficient resource allocation. In the past, people migrated primarily to maximise economic opportunities. Even today, those

who do not fall within the refugee category may do so for this reason and it is no secret that some persons who claim refugee status and hence asylum in countries of refuge, may well do so to pursue an economic motive. There is empirical evidence that, more frequently, migrants are people of reasonable economic and social status and rarely the poorest in their countries (Castles and Miller 1998 and Van Hear 2000).

Internal migration was traditionally viewed as a desirable process and socially beneficent. In terms of economic development, this was mainly because surplus rural labour could be utilised to improve growing industries in the urban sector. Internal migration today is blamed as the catalyst of urban surplus labour. Associated with it are issues of urban unemployment, homelessness, urban violence, exhaustion of social welfare and other resources, and structural and economic imbalances between the rural and urban sector. Contemporary migration represents a sharp break from the patterns of the past. Countries that previously sent out people, today receive large numbers of immigrants. The numbers and variety of both sending and receiving nations have increased. The types of migration and reasons for migrating have also become diverse. Today, internal movements of population have gained greater momentum, and a significant sending factor is violence and conflict.

A pertinent question that arises is whether the increasingly restrictive migration policies of countries of asylum have induced illegal migration and human smuggling. Not all migrants are refugees who have genuine or substantial claims to asylum in foreign countries. It is recognized that genuine asylum seekers, in order to escape persecution in home countries owing to strict refugee migration policies and increased border control, are forced to resort to the services of human traffickers. It appears that market demands for illegal migration is high. If one were to take a commodity approach, one could ask if illegal migration provides a solution to filling gaps, for example, in employment structures (especially those that require cheap, unskilled labour). Apart from analytical and other merits of this approach, questions remain about the illegal and exploitative nature of human trafficking leading to human rights violations. It also overlooks conditions that encourage illegal departures.

Why does illegal and asylum migration from Sri Lanka continue now the war has stopped? Research has begun to indicate that poverty and lack of opportunities are salient reasons that compel some people to seek a better life in other countries. But there is much scope for detailed and in depth studies to examine the realities and experiences of asylum seekers using irregular channels to migrate. This is especially the case where clandestine departures have taken an increasingly dangerous form where people illegally use various modes of transport in life-threatening conditions. In Sri Lanka, there have been numerous media reports about people undertaking perilous sea journeys in dilapidated and over-crowded vessels. Global examples include the Indian brothers who clung to the wheels of an air plane, the mostly Eastern European and Middle Eastern asylum seekers who hide under the carriages of the Euro-Star, those who cram themselves in container lorries carrying goods and products, and many others who embark on perilous sea journeys on over-crowded and unsafe vessels. Studies of why people decide to undertake risky and potentially fatal enterprises are vital to understanding issues of migration. Other related questions that need to be addressed are, to what extent can 'would-be migrants' exercise their choice of destination, how much information is available to them before they leave their home countries, and the methods of financing departures. It can be hypothesized that clandestine departures epitomize combined elements of choice, chance, and force. Also the more expensive asylum departure is, the safer it becomes. In a study conducted in Denmark on Sri Lankan Tamil and Somali refugees, it was discovered that there is a wide range of different, well-organized migration services (Lisborg 2002). The cheap methods involved slow and risky routes (minimum U\$800 for a Sri Lankan) whereas the expensive methods were fast and relatively safe (minimum U\$6500 for a Sri Lankan). Stricter controls do not necessarily mean fewer illegal immigrants. What is certain is that it makes border crossings riskier and costlier.

Returning to the relationship between poverty and conflict, it is useful to examine whether poverty fuels conflict when outward livelihood migration leads to stricter migration control in receiving countries and blacklisting of certain nations in a broader migratory context. To what extent does political conflict fuel migration and who

can actually decide and carry out departure, and to what extent do both poverty and conflict lead to organized crime as in the commodification of illegal immigration?

As several case studies have shown, trying to manage livelihood migration has triggered other trades such as smuggling, trafficking, and prostitution, sometimes forcing genuine refugees to resort to services of these illegal networks (Castles and Loughna 2002, Koser 1997, McDowell 1996, Van Hear 1998). Policies of receiving countries are important especially in shaping asylum migration. Britain, which is perceived as being a 'soft' country where immigration and refugee policies are concerned, has been at the receiving end of not only asylum seekers but also politicians and policy makers who criticize the country's border controls.

It appears that simple connections between poverty and migration cannot be made. It may be more prudent to examine relative deprivation rather than absolute income levels as a reason for outward migration. Every migratory movement is the result of a dynamic interaction between a multitude of factors. The interaction between conflict and development indicators also needs to be examined if connections are to be understood between inequality and movement.

Conflict – poverty – illegal industries

Poverty and conflict, as described above, lead to migratory movements. Linked to this is a burgeoning activity that has taken the form of an industry in modern times. Human smuggling is linked to other activities such as prostitution and child labour. There is evidence that traffickers cheat their 'customers' by abandoning them in strange countries (Vayrynen 2002). Without money, documents, or contacts, stranded people resort to organized 'gangs', often linked to the trafficking network. Eventually, these 'agents' decide the nature of employment and the migrant has no choice. Exploitation of migrants in this manner has led the UN to work towards protection of migrants from traffickers. It also has led to conceptual clarifications. Smuggling refers to illegal immigration in which an agent is involved for payment to enable a migrant to cross borders illegally. Trafficking specifically refers to an exploitative and coercive situation in which the migrant, who has no intention of entering such an industry, becomes the victim (ibid.). Sex trafficking is most common in Europe and South-East Asia:

for example, trafficking of women from the Dominican Republic to the Netherlands and women from Russia and the former Soviet Union to Britain and Germany is well-established. About 1.2 million children are trafficked each year (UNICEF 2003): in Europe alone, some 500,000 women and young girls are trafficked each year from all over the world. UNICEF estimates that there are 800,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, about 400,000 in Indonesia and India each, and some 250,000 women and child victims of trafficking. Most children forced into prostitution remain within their own countries after they have been sold by parents because poverty or abducted from rural villages to work in urban centres (Vayrynen 2002).

In Sri Lanka, there are certain structural changes especially in the rural economies with the onset of the conflict. In Anuradhapura, for example, prostitution is a well-organized industry involving agents, army personnel, three-wheelers, and housing agents. The connection between the four is obvious: agents have contacts, especially in the army, which has many bases in the Anuradhapura district, and since Anuradhapura is also the transit point from the north and east of the country, it is the most strategic location for army personnel who are on leave of absence from their field bases. Most soldiers have spare cash because expenditure on the front lines is limited. It has become a popular practice among the forces to use prostitutes. The three-wheelers are closely networked with the agents so that transportation of client to the prostitutes at selected locations can take place with minimum suspicion and inconvenience.

Socio-economic studies need to be done on prostitutes, their families, and communities. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the sex industry lures women from the garment sector, for example, since they can earn more money and work more flexible hours. The rural economy of Anuradhapura has changed because of the growth of trades that arise out of the sex industry. Aspects of potential concern such as health and human rights should be considered among other social issues that stem from prostitution. There are psychosocial issues about women who may work in the industry out of poverty, lack of choice, or exploitation.

In literature about global migration arising out of conflict, the patterns of departure at the initial stage have

not been studied systematically. In the case of families left behind by conflict-related migration, even fewer studies have been done. There has been some pioneering work (Van Hear 2000, Ganepola 2002b) that has looked at the socio-economic status and psychosocial effects on families left behind by asylum migration.

Conflict – poverty – migration – remittances

Households in Sri Lanka and many other countries around the world have been sustained by remittances from migrant workers. Remittances from migrants have helped to sustain Tamil households displaced and affected by the war, in and out of camps, and assisted some in the long haul to reconstruction after displacement or return (Van Hear 2000). Annual remittances to Sri Lanka in 1998 amounted to some 25 billion Rupees as estimated by the National Peace Council (2001).

Poorer households found refuge in South India and some sought asylum in the west. The cost of asylum migration and the fading of the South India option now means that poorer households remain displaced within Sri Lanka. An alternative method that internally displaced families have opted for has been seeking employment abroad. Remittances from temporary labour migrants to the Middle East and Southeast Asia have helped to sustain displaced Muslim and Sinhalese households who have few if any members abroad, and are not in a position to seek asylum.

Investment of remittances in housing and particularly schooling are encouraging trends among displaced and conflict-affected households, as among those outside the areas of conflict. It has been suggested that those in receipt of money sent by refugee or asylum seeker relatives abroad live a comfortable life in Sri Lanka-or at least one considerably more comfortable than it might otherwise be. There has not been enough work done on the effect of remittances on the national economy as well as on family survival. Just as much as soldiers' wages and compensation packages have changed the rural economy, it seems probable that remittances from migrants have made considerable changes in the lives of families left behind.

However, there are also socially corrosive aspects of the relations between those outside and those inside the country (Van Hear 2000). As Van Hear claims, the most

serious charge is that migration and remittances have helped to perpetuate the conflict in Sri Lanka (2000). Most obviously, exactions from Tamil migrants and their families by the LTTE have been a lucrative source of income for the organisation. The LTTE regulates and taxes movement out of the areas they control, and is also said to be involved in migrant trafficking itself (ibid). The study also reveals that forcible exactions continue once the migrant is abroad, through taxation of incomes from work and businesses. Migration and remittances may also help to perpetuate the conflict in ways such as providing finance for arms. A recent World Bank study by Collier et al (May 2003) has highlighted diaspora links as a major factor in signalling a break in confidence leading to renewed violence. Existence of a large diaspora in rich countries especially, is perceived as a 'risk factor' in post-conflict societies. The underlying notion is that they can finance violence.

There are many other countries like Sri Lanka that are under strain and rely heavily on remittances (Narayan 2000, Van Hear 2000). For example, money sent from Palestinians in the Gulf and elsewhere in the diaspora has helped sustain extended families in the Occupied Territories (particularly when access to the Israeli labour market was cut off) and displaced households in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The mass exodus of Palestinians from the Gulf in the course of the Gulf crisis drastically reduced such families' incomes.

There are serious policy dilemmas for countries that host refugees and other migrants. Expatriates may well be fuelling conflict and host governments might want to discourage that. The host countries should also be aware of far-reaching consequences if such people are repatriated, or indeed if harsh restrictions are put on immigration. The consequences include the possibility that a diminution of remittances may lead to hardship, instability, socio-economic or political upheaval, and even the provocation of renewed conflict – and then quite likely renewed out-migration (Van Hear 2000).

In the longer term, remittances have the potential to be harnessed for the reconstruction and development of societies recovering from the distress of war or economic collapse. The diaspora can play a constructive role especially in economic growth in areas such as business, trade, and investment. The diminution of such transfers

through repatriation will undermine such potential. The Sri Lankan government has used the conflict as a means of managing youth unemployment and poverty reduction by large-scale national recruitment to the armed forces (Bush 2002). The rural southern economy is highly dependent on recruitment and compensation. This is a temporary, and not a sustainable way of managing poverty.

Poverty – conflict – social violence

Theories of civil violence focus on enduring conflicts among interest groups across society. It is seen as one kind of collective action in pursuit of or in defence of shared interests (Nelson 1998). Like all collective action, these conflicts require organization and other resources (ibid.). Conflict research indicates that 'economic dislocations will not automatically generate civil unrest and violence' (Nelson 1998: 27). When political and social institutions are geared to handle social conflict, the risk of violent conflict is reduced.

Conflict has also triggered militarised violence, which has reached an almost unbearable level in modern society. The extent to which the Sri Lankan economy is militarised is seen in the 32% of income transfers to rural areas from army recruitment and compensation (Bush 2000). It also has the second highest military expenditure as a percentage of GDP of all Asian countries and which sustains a government military force of over 250,000 cadres (ibid.).

In a post-ceasefire context, the direct militarised violence includes the abduction of children to the LTTE, forcing them to take part in rebel campaigns such as the 'Pongu Thamil' events and protest marches, and landmine injuries. In a study of civilian landmine injuries carried out at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital from 1996 to 1997 reported a high number of injured children and women. Approximately 20% of the victims were children under 15 years of age (Meade and Mirocha 1999 in Bush 2000). Approximately 40% of those fitted with artificial limbs are under 20 years of age (Bush 2000). These figures do not include those in active combat who have subsequently lost a limb or been physically injured.

Economic hardship could be one catalyst in conflict. Other concerns or grievances, such as preservation of

language, religion, ethnic identity, may play a fundamental part. Some argue that conventional economic explanations of causes of conflict are weak and outdated (Horowitz in Nelson 1998). Aspirations to political power are cited as a cause of conflict. It appears that conflict erupts because of complex interactions between economic hardship and an array of other factors, such as policies, and ethnic tensions. Economic or social welfare outcomes could also lead to conflict (ibid.). Public policies that limit opportunities, group solidarity, leaders' tactics, state willingness to use repression and external encouragement or support could all be factors that influence conflict. The effectiveness of policy cannot be disentangled from the question of who is it effective for? Poverty and conflict-related migration have different effects on different groups such as those in need of protection, families and communities in countries of origin, the government, and host countries and host communities.

This review suggests a few implications regarding research priorities. A primary need is to get a better understanding of the causes of social conflict, of which poverty and inequality may only be part of the explanation. Some suggest that inquiry into the effects of economic trends and globalisation is not a useful starting point. There is a dearth of systematic knowledge of the full range of effects. There is a gap between those involved in civil violence and those most affected by globalisation trends (Nelson 1998). In the case of Sri Lanka, a research strategy would be to identify different kinds of conflict and then to explore reasons for each case. Trends to be examined should include historical, institutional, attitudinal contexts.

Conflict – poverty – coping with distress

The final section of this paper focuses on less palpable injuries of conflict, i.e. psychosocial stresses. Important contributions have been made in this field (see Somasundaram 1998, Bush 2000). As Somasundaram (1998) has outlined, some of the conflict-related stresses include loss and bereavement caused by separation from or death of parents, witnessing brutal violence especially towards family or friends, witnessing the aftermath of physical violence such as mutilated bodies, experiencing conflict in the context of bombing, forced evacuation, hiding in 'safe' places and so on, and being compelled to

commit violence including murder as child soldiers. Most NGOs working in areas of conflict design programmes for children to tell stories that reveal the magnitude of the effects of violent conflict on children's lives (for example, see ZOA 2002). What is questionable in such enterprises, apart from commodifying suffering, is the methodology of such studies (for example, how children are selected, approached, given instructions, the type of instructions etc) and their broader objective.

Sri Lanka has a high rate of suicide, reportedly more than 7000 a year, which is higher than the numbers of people killed by the civil war. These figures exclude the north and east and it will be useful to examine the rates of deliberate self-harm and suicide in these regions, given its political and socio-economic history of the recent past. Domestic violence and alcohol misuse are two other pernicious and prevalent aspects that have almost become a cultural trait at all levels of Sri Lankan society. It is important to study the dynamics between conflict, poverty, and suicide and their impact on children at a micro level, and family and community at a macro level.

The conflict has also had pervasive effects on health and nutrition especially on the overall development of children. Reasons include scarcity of food, fears over safety, curtailed mobility, deprivation of access to and lack of health services, government embargoes on food and medicine, and LTTE restrictions and manipulations. The conflict has left many children internally displaced, orphaned or with a single parent, or recruited forcibly into the LTTE. There are children living outside the north east region who are conflict-affected: for example, children living in border areas to the north east, children all over the country having education and health care facilities damaged by the war, and children (and youth) in the plantation sector who may be harassed because of their ethnic identity³. There are also children who have endured JVP violence (1987-1990) who tend to be overlooked in discussions about conflict. Useful research could be done on the effect of conflict on the lives of children growing up in various parts of the country. There is an increased awareness and interest in providing psychological assistance to war-affected people. Studies of this nature should explore fully the effects of war on long-term adjustment and poverty, and whether there

is a compelling need for services such as outside psychological intervention.

In some cultures, it is normal for children to undertake domestic chores, looking after siblings, and other activities that may be outside the family economy. But there may be certain situations of severe poverty and hardship that compel children to take on non-traditional work simply for family survival. Then there are situations where children work for their own consumption as seen frequently in developed ('western') societies. Policy and humanitarian programmes need to take into account not only the structural causes of problems and inequalities, but also concerns and suggestions of children themselves.

Many studies carried out in the Jaffna peninsula indicate that poverty and economic hardship form the major stress factor associated with the war, with a prevalence rate higher than stressors such as torture, physical assault, bombing and gunfire (Galappatti and Salih 2002, Reppesgard 1993, Sivashanmugarajah et al 1994, and Somasundaram and Sivayokan 1994 in Galappatti and Salih 2002). In the south, studies have shown that in the aftermath of JVP violence, the main concern of most families was to cope with financial difficulties (Samarasinghe 1999). It appears that war-affected people see their distress as mainly economical rather than psychological. As prominent scholars in the field of mental health argue, the most important support to these communities is in the form of community reorganization with the emphasis on improving the economy (Summerfield 1999). Raising psychological awareness alone is insufficient where the more immediate needs may be economical. A social development or rehabilitation approach is encouraged to complement other activities.

All studies demonstrate the feelings of material deprivation that precede psychosocial distress (see Narayan 2000 for a detailed account). Poverty and forced dependency generate feelings of humiliation, helplessness, hopelessness and powerlessness (*ibid.*). This indicates that poverty is a factor that leads to psychosocial suffering. Dependency is an aspect worthy of study, especially among people affected by conflict who may have been subject

³ For a detailed account see Bush (2002)

to sudden poverty. The study emphasises that there is a difference in how people cope when confronted with sudden poverty as opposed to long-term poverty. Although both cause insecurity and material deprivation, long-term poverty generates a fatalistic acceptance, making people almost give up their efforts. In general, poverty induces social isolation and marginalisation, almost creating a category of its own.

Galappatti and Salih (2002) raise an interesting point about poverty reduction strategies. Many humanitarian programmes employ micro-finance projects and revolving loan funds as popular interventions. Their success is measured by how many loans are recovered. These programmes fail to understand how people manage to pay back loans.

This in some cases have placed the client in more distressing circumstances (e.g. not having recourse to the assets previously owned/ having pawned jewellery with sentimental or symbolic value) or even in more difficult circumstances (where the money loaned from a third party may have a higher interest rate). (Galappathi and Salih 2002)

Narrow poverty reduction interventions are one reason for this type of misguided effort (ibid.). A more holistic study of an individual's or family's situation, including psychosocial aspects, should be undertaken before initiating programmes aimed to tackle poverty.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to examine critically ideas about the relationship between poverty and conflict as found in already published work. It is part of the wider research the Poverty and Conflict programme will undertake to develop this relationship. Areas considered in the paper will be developed further through the programme. Many questions have been addressed above and many theoretical standpoints examined. It is not the intention of this paper to provide a definitive conclusion. It is hoped that demonstrating the complexity of this relationship, will encourage an awareness of the continual need to both examine and develop it.

There is much debate about poverty, and no lack of statistics. What is lacking is effective and systematic action to manage poverty. Poverty has many faces. Different kinds of indicators such as levels of income and consumption, social indicators, vulnerability to risks, and indicators of socio-political access have to be used to address it. As the foregoing discussion indicates, the links between poverty and conflict are complex. There is clearly no single explanatory framework and simple explanations have limited value. Most balanced assessments argue for a two-way causality: poor countries have a greater disposition to conflict and poverty is also a probable outcome of conflict. Therefore, poverty, inequality, scarcity of non-renewable resources and external economic forces can have a disruptive effect on political stability in certain conditions.

It may be narrow and misleading to consider the civil conflict in Sri Lanka as a result of poverty trends but it may be worthy of investigation nevertheless. The key is to unravel what poverty and conflict mean, and distinguish the impacts of poverty on varied socio-economic and political contexts. In situations of economic growth, is there a visible lack of conflict? In order to explore this, certain 'vulnerable' groups such as unemployed youth or unemployed graduates or army deserters could be absorbed into a programme although there may not be automatic links.

There are important insights to be drawn from the wide range of material documented in this paper. It is clear that poverty is multifaceted. Poverty consists of inter-

connected, inter-locking dimensions: inequality, vulnerability, and inability. This paper highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of those who have little power, little voice, and limited capacities. It is of critical importance to harness the strengths of the poor. The paper considered conflict as both a catalyst in poverty as well as an outcome. This link needs to be examined analytically in specific contexts, since conflict may not always be disadvantageous. Finally, reviews of accounts of the poor and compelling research material need to be carefully studied from a developmental and policy perspective in order to improve the quality of life of beneficiaries.

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