



## Poverty and Social Conflict in Sri Lanka

Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Poverty Analysis

Edited by

Ronnate Asirwatham  
Prashan Thalaysingam



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A Co-publication of the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)  
and the Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research  
(IMCAP) at the University of Colombo

Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka  
Series No. 2 – 2004



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## **ORGANISED BY**

Centre for Poverty Analysis  
IMCAP Program at the University of Colombo  
Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) – Section F

## **SPONSORED BY**

Department for International Development (DFID)  
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through German  
Technical Cooperation (GTZ)  
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

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National Library of Sri Lanka-Cataloguing-In-Publication-Data

Asirwatham, Ronnate

Poverty and Social Conflict in Sri Lanka: Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Poverty Analysis/Ronnate Asirwatham, Prashan Thalaysingam.- Colombo : Centre for Poverty Analysis, 2004. -262p.; 21cm

(Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka series)

ISBN 955-1040-06-6

Price:

i. 362. 5 DDC 22

ii. Title

iii. Prashan Thalaysingam jt.

1. Poverty

2. Conflict

ISBN: 955-1040-06-6

ISSN: 1800-0142

The views expressed in this volume are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the conference organisers or sponsors.

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Printed by Karunaratne & Sons

## **Acknowledgements**

Acknowledgment is due to a number of people who helped in organising the conference and preparing this publication.

Thanks are due to the administrative staff of CEPA and the IMCAP Program for their support in organising the conference and the Poverty and Conflict (PAC) programme team at CEPA for their efforts towards the conference and the publication process. The efforts of Hemanthi Dassanyake, and Sarah Wimaladharmasiri from PAC in overlooking the editorial process and in preparing the final manuscript deserves particular mention.

Special thanks are also due to the members of the Symposium steering committee, Professor Siri Hettige, University of Colombo, Dr. Markus Mayer, IMCAP Program and Mr. Christoph Feyen, GTZ for their active role in conceptualising the conference and the publication. The financial support provided by DFID, BMZ, GTZ and KAS is also gratefully acknowledged.



## Foreword

This volume comprises a selection of papers presented at the 4th Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, held from 23-25 November 2003, in Colombo. This symposium was organised by the Centre for Poverty Analysis, the IMCAP Program at the University of Colombo and Section F of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science.

Since its inception in 2000 by the GTZ supported Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) project, the Symposium on Poverty Research has developed into a much awaited annual opportunity for researchers to share ideas and identify knowledge gaps on poverty issues in Sri Lanka. Young researchers are especially encouraged to present their work and receive feedback and guidance from professionals in the field.

The overall theme of the 2003 symposium was Poverty and Social Conflict in Sri Lanka: Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Poverty Analysis. It is a pertinent topic at the present time. The relative peace in the country has given rise to a renewed focus on development and poverty alleviation, particularly in areas directly affected by the conflict. In the rush to implement programmes in areas long neglected or inaccessible, projects may be planned and implemented without sufficient knowledge or research on the prevailing ground situation. The danger with this type of unfettered development is the potential for these interventions to impact on conflict in some way or even create new conflicts. Therefore it is vital that both researchers and practitioners working in related areas share their ideas and insights in order to produce a conflict sensitive vision of development for Sri Lanka.

It is also important to acknowledge the vast amount of work being done on issues of poverty and conflict in Sri Lanka. While the papers in this publication cut a wide swathe through the current academic inquiry into these subject areas, many of them also reflect on the impact of development projects that are being implemented and make recommendations that would enable them to carry on their work in a more conflict sensitive manner.

It is my expectation that the Symposium on Poverty Research continues to provide a forum where such exchanges between development professionals could take place. I hope that this publication will continue to broaden and inform the debate concerning the relationship between poverty and conflict.

**Nimal Sanderatne**

Chairperson, Centre for Poverty Analysis





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## Introduction

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka was held on the theme, Poverty and Social Conflict in Sri Lanka: Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Poverty Analysis. It was an appropriate theme for the time given both the uncertainty about the level of interest on the peace process and the volume of work being done on post conflict reconstruction and development. The theme continues to be relevant both nationally and internationally.

The selection of papers in this volume underlines the relevance of this thematic area. They reflect the diversity of the Sri Lankan conflict environment and introduce various issue areas for action. The papers are written with a view to informing current development practice and contain valuable primary information from community level stakeholders and recommendations drawn from them. These recommendations would be useful for anyone wishing to get an overview of the Sri Lankan conflict environment, particularly with a view to engaging with it from the perspective of development practice. The papers also provide insights that may inform international debates on areas of relevance to poverty and conflict.

The first paper, by Ganepola and Thalayasingam, presents a general introduction to the themes of the conference. It presents the authors views on some of the ways in which the relationship between poverty and conflict is understood. It also contains ideas from practitioners concerning this relationship based on qualitative research conducted by the Poverty and Conflict (PAC) programme on institutions working on poverty and conflict issues outside Colombo. It is presented to contrast with more academic views on this relationship. The paper seeks to find a balance between these views, and set the context for the papers which appear later in the volume.

Liyanage in his paper analyzes the current scenario of vulnerability among the families of soldiers in order to assist in formulating a demobilization and reintegration programme. The field survey was conducted in the southern province. The study reveals that military families have severe psycho-social trauma and economic disabilities. These factors lead to increasing criminal tendencies among this community. The paper prescribes that in order for any demobilization and reintegration program to be successful the government should provide

alternate permanent jobs plus provide awareness about the necessity to change attitudinal and ideological patterns towards peace and normalcy.

Asirwatham in her contribution to this volume examines the possible impact of the re-integration of political prisoners into society, with a special focus on the impacts towards peace building. The study conducted in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara, provides insights into the impact of the conflict on a particularly vulnerable group. It also highlights how ignoring the special concerns and special needs of this group, could result in the wider peace building process being threatened and conflict recurring.

The paper by Ruwanpura is based on the perceptions of female household heads on their children's contribution to the work of the household. The research study was conducted in Eastern Sri Lanka in Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee districts and aimed to get the views of female heads from all three main ethnic groups. One of the interesting findings of this paper is the challenge to the commonly held view that female children are prevented from getting an education because they have to help with household work. Ruwanpura uses such insights to provide an informed, gender sensitive view of Poverty and Conflict.

E.M.S. Ekanayake begins with a macro economic analysis of the impacts of the ethnic conflict on Sri Lanka. He then refines his inquiry and examines the impacts of the conflict on three areas in the Seruvila Divisional secretariat division in Trincomalee district. The impact is examined on all three communities using perception based interviews. The paper is indicative of the wide ranging impact of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict at a community level.

Piyarathne looks at the impact of State poverty alleviation projects on the social integration of Tamil plantation workers and the surrounding Sinhala villages. The research was conducted in the Nuwara Eliya and Kalutara districts. The paper concludes that State poverty alleviation projects such as housing schemes in the plantation sectors has impacted the social integration of these two communities positively.

Niriella's contribution on 'Ethnic Relationships and Social Cohesion among Slum Dwellers in Colombo City' uses a multi-ethnic slum – Kirulapura as its case study to examine harmony and co-existence in a multi ethnic environment. The paper focuses on the way in which the community managed to survive during the ethnic

riots of 1983. The study found that the divisive factor in the community was socio-economic status and not ethnicity. Other contributory factors include the fact that most of the community is bi-lingual in the local languages aiding communication between the ethnic groups, and the fact that the community supports a single political party. It is a comprehensive study of ethnic harmony and community togetherness in Sri Lanka's main urban centre.

Senaratna-Sellamuttu and Clemett in their paper explore the type of conflict caused by resource competition. Their study based on fishermen and farmers using the water resources of Kalametiya lagoon, explores the link between resource competition, livelihood needs and conflict. The study is representational of other conflicts in Sri Lanka involving both livelihood competition and competition over scarce natural resources. The study also explores ways in which such competition could be better managed drawing lessons from the kalametiya lagoon conflict.

De Silva's paper makes an assessment of the concepts of human rights at the level of the community. The study was conducted in the Matara district. The research revealed that human rights awareness remains low in terms of both formal and informal knowledge of collective rights and that human rights are only understood in an individualistic sense. The paper concluded that such perceptions have the potential to fuel social unrest due to the lack of interest in collective and community upliftment and development.

This volume intends to provide an overview of Sri Lanka's conflict situation. It is indicative of its complexity and the diversity of conflict lines. The papers are written with a view to especially informing development practice that could address these issues. The volume provides a microcosmic view of Sri Lanka's social environment, and highlights areas where particularly outside intervention may have a positive transformative impact.

It is hoped that this publication will inform the debate at the national level and influence steps taken to contribute positively to address issues of poverty and conflict. It is hoped also that it will inform wider debates by those who seek to make a positive contribution to the countries social development.



# **I. Approaches to Understanding Poverty and Conflict: Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Development Practice**

*Varuni Ganepola and Prashan Thalaysingam*

## **Introduction**

This paper seeks to introduce two contrasting approaches to understanding the relationship between poverty and conflict. The contrast between the way the relationship is understood through research and the way it is worked out through development practice allows the paper to first highlight some of the difficulties encountered in trying to examine these complex concepts in combination with each other. It also allows the paper to examine ways in which conflict sensitivity can be integrated into development planning and implementation.

The other papers presented at the Symposium were largely based on varied examples of the interaction of the relationship between these two concepts, in practice. Through its work, the Poverty and Conflict (PAC) programme seeks to understand this relationship and to provide practical solutions to those working with these issues. Our contribution draws from both the examination of various published material on the topic and from a process of dialogue and exchange initiated by the programme to find out what the poverty and conflict relationship means to those who are directly engaging with it as academics, theoreticians and practitioners.

## **Unpacking ‘Conflict’**

Before examining the relationship between poverty and conflict in the manner outlined above, it is useful to first examine each concept separately. Although the term ‘conflict’ usually refers to violent conflict, conflict can also be manifest in other ways, hence it is misleading to assume that conflict is limited to violent conflict. Such an assumption reduces the analytical potential of the concept and limits its engagement with other concepts such as poverty. The distinction between violent and non-violent forms of conflict must be clear, but not necessarily represent the single most decisive factor in examining or analyzing conflict. It must be taken into account that all social transformation, be it negative or positive, is based on ideas competing within a social setting. Such a phenomenon can be referred to as conflict.



Conflict arising out of political beliefs, ethnic grievances, or access to and distribution of resources, exist in society and does not inevitably become manifest or violent. Conceptual limitations are imposed on this field of inquiry because it is usually violent conflict that is most immediately and directly relevant to development practice. It is usually violent conflict that draws a response from development actors, and leads to post conflict reconstruction programmes and development projects. Violent conflict usually gives rise to development work and also influences development policy. The danger is that development interventions will be blind to other types of conflict, especially those that exist and are latent within the communities in which they intervene. The danger of an external factor such as a development intervention creating new conflict and exacerbating new conflict will be discussed further below.

Conflict has been defined as a social situation in which two parties compete for the same scarce resources (Wallenstein 1994, cited in Hettne 2002). This definition is heavily economic and it is not necessary that the idea of social competition be limited to the issue of scarce resources. It could also be argued that people also compete for civil rights, for recognition, or because of various belief-based differences. The relevant point here is that conflict can refer to the social situation, and not only to overt conflict-behaviour. Furthermore, a conflict is not necessarily eliminated because of the cessation of overt conflict-behaviour. Unless basic problems are addressed and solved violence recurs and the threat of conflict affecting other social issues within the community increases.

Other definitions of conflict take a more political form. A conflict according to Hettne (2002) is a contested incompatibility between two parties, of which one is [usually] a government. In analyses, in terms of manifest conflict, it is the idea of war that is most potent and most central. War is a social phenomenon and takes place in societies that are constantly changing, and to understand the social phenomenon of war one must first look at its historical nature (Gantzel 1997). In contemporary wars or 'new wars', ethnic cleansing, mass-rape, systematic killing of children, destruction of cultural monuments of symbolic value are some of the methods used, which represent a qualitative change in the way conflicts are carried out (Kaldor 1999). This changing nature of manifest conflict must also be factored into the analysis. It is particularly valuable to emphasize that, as social phenomena, poverty and conflict are subject to change and the manner in which they appear at a specific historical instance cannot simply be used to make sweeping generalisations.

Conflict carries diverse meanings to different people. While it can mean tensions at a national or international or community level, conflict is manifest also at the individual, family and group levels, and also includes aspects such as interpersonal and inter-group violence, abuse and violations, physical and psychological affliction. The term conflict, therefore, is a complex one which can take different meanings in different contexts.

### 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. According to a more comprehensive definition, it is 'a condition characterized 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' (UN 1995). It is harder to make a distinction between absolute and relative poverty. Relative poverty defines poverty in terms of its relation to standards which exist elsewhere in society. It is linked to inequality and relative deprivation. Chronic poverty is defined as the state of being poor over an extended period of time. The time period during which poverty is examined is also vital for defining transient poverty. The transient poor are those who have moved in and out of poverty during a definite period that is under investigation (Oduro, 2003). Both transient and chronic poverty cannot be distinguished without referring to a specific time period.

Other related terms such as marginalization and social exclusion are also used when describing poverty. Marginalization is a Marxist concept which presents a view of poverty that is based on social exclusion. It is based on the theory of increasing surplus labour, ultimately leading to a breakdown of capitalism. In this sense, '*social exclusion*' usually refers to the '*new poverty*' of post-industrial societies and at the same time the nature of globalisation to include and exclude people in, or from, emerging networks (Castells, 1996). These concepts describe social processes and also portray an image about the social structure in which these processes take place. The idea of poverty as social exclusion comes closest to given definitions. It introduces ideas of social discrimination which stem from poverty and could transform into one of the root causes of conflict.

It is interesting to contrast these more academic definitions of poverty with those held by practitioners as revealed through interviews for the PAC dialogue and exchange process.

*'The definition of poverty is based upon monthly income, employment and consumption / expenditure patterns.'* (Representative of an International NGO, Anuradhapura)

This reflects the view of a project officer in an organisation whose work addresses poverty, chiefly through revolving loan schemes and infrastructure development projects. It indicates that poverty is defined by the operational capacity of the organization and its areas of work. It is a reasonably wide definition which may be criticized by poverty researchers or other professionals for its failing to reveal the multi-dimensionality of poverty. Seen from a practitioner's point of view however it encompasses the areas of poverty that their work impacts upon and that suffices for a definition.

*I think poverty refers to the poor or those who lack basic needs. The general explanation is those who have no hopes.'* (Representative of a Local NGO, Anuradhapura)

The definition of poverty as a lack of hope is interesting, as it comes from a project that deals with children's rights and the protection of children. It is a very general view of poverty and reflects a less professional, more colloquial understanding of the concept. Its definition as lack of hope however is interesting given the particular area in which the interviewee works. It is likely that this view stems from their experience of working with impoverished young people and reflects their lack of hope for the future.

*'The general definition of poverty is the poor innocent masses - "duppath abinsaka janathawa" but I see it more as 'those who lack resources to satisfy their needs, those who lack knowledge and are disempowered.'* (Government Medical Officer, Anuradhapura)

The views of the Provincial Health Officer present perhaps the most multi-dimensional view of poverty, which could be attributed to the fact that he is required to deal with poverty in its many dimensions through his work. It is also significant that his definition also contains an idea of the scale of poverty in the

given area. It is also quite a colloquial definition of the group rather than the concept in itself but again reflects the practitioner's particular understanding.

### Understanding Poverty and Conflict through research

This paper seeks to bring out and contrast two approaches to understanding the relationship between poverty and conflict. The first is through research and the second is through development practice. In the section on development practice we offer insights obtained from development practitioners about the poverty-conflict nexus. The paper takes the view that the first approach, that of understanding poverty through research, while having its own uses, is most useful when integrated into development practice.

Before going on to the area of development practice, the paper seeks to provide some information of use to researchers on this area as based on the ideas and experiences of the poverty and conflict programme. A common question in academic research and development practice is *'why do we need either or both, in situations of war?'* The answer is simply that we need valid data if informed and sensitive intervention is to be made. This is augmented by the fact that a growing number of chronically poor live in geographic areas of unceasing instability. Where possible, some form of study needs to precede development practice. Understanding through research and support through intervention, are two mutually inclusive and complementary processes. They should not be seen as segregated or competing components.

Developing an understanding of poverty and conflict through research involves facing and overcoming certain challenges. We will present these challenges succinctly given that concentrating on each at length would be beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>1</sup> These challenges are set out in this manner to inform future researchers of the degree of sensitivity required when examining this area and to make them aware of the inherent complexities of the issues involved.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account, see Goodhand (2001).

## Methodological challenges

Practical challenges may involve such factors as location and timing of research, gaining access, finding local research partners, researcher skills and prior technical and historical knowledge. The research must strive to be neutral in sensitive conflict situations, even as questions arise about whether outside researchers are really neutral or apolitical by virtue of their externality.

Researchers need to be conscious of the potential to inadvertently cause harm to the participants or their communities. This is why potential ethical dilemmas need to be considered prior to research. Of primary importance is not endangering lives of participants and researchers. Other issues include who is selected to participate in research (such as certain children and not others). Some categories may negatively internalise exclusion – hence a wrong message may be conveyed. It may also cause stress and grief, feelings of resentment, harassment, guilt and superiority among selected as well as excluded groups.

Some ethical concerns that arise out of doing research in conflict or post-conflict settings are; endangering the participant community as well as researchers, raising false expectations, and triggering memories of unpleasant and traumatic past events. No matter how noble research intentions maybe, if they cause conflict, even indirectly, immediate measures need to be taken to control the situation. Some initial steps that may prevent suspicion and misunderstanding are increasing transparency and involvement. The purpose and objectives of research need to be conveyed to other important stakeholders in the community. This is important if such programmes are to be effective, especially given the culture of family and village life in Sri Lanka. This will prevent misunderstanding and allay fears of suspicion.

The challenges sketched out above can be addressed by developing appropriate skills and careful preparation prior to research. They are not offered as reasons to avoid research in conflict settings, but rather as recommendations for the research that will be carried out. It is important to acknowledge that although researchers try to be neutral and objective and try to remain outside the conflict process, in practice all work done on conflict, in some way, becomes part of the conflict. The descriptions of the challenges are offered then as considerations for minimising adverse impacts of conflict research.

## Development practice

As outlined above, research is one of the ways in which the poverty-conflict nexus can be worked out. Another way in which the relationship between poverty and conflict is understood is through development practice. As an introduction to the next section on understanding development practice, the paper presents some theoretical concerns about humanitarianism. It is hoped that the following would illustrate some of the ways in which the areas of poverty and conflict are linked.

The topic of objectivity and neutrality in humanitarian work, as in research, is a contentious debate. Some humanitarians no longer accept the concept of neutrality in circumstances where they would have to remain silent in the face of gross abuse of human rights. Others have embraced political advocacy to protect those who require humanitarian assistance in conflict-based emergencies, despite some critics, such as Michael Pugh (2002), who argues that *all* humanitarian workers are political whether inadvertently or by design. They lobby for funds and their actions have political consequences that can fuel or sustain conflict. According to Pugh, the key question is not whether humanitarians are political but rather *'what kind of politics'* they adhere to.

A working hypothesis called the *'dependency syndrome'* has emerged out of humanitarian efforts. It is a dilemma that relief agencies face - that giving increases dependence and not giving increases need and also reproach from all corners. The difficult solution seems to be not to give 'too much' or too little and not more than what local hosts possess.

In the Sri Lankan experience, for example, years of giving and receiving have trained displacees to believe that they should continue to receive benefits from the government. They have learned to be dependent on handouts, even if it means exploiting the system. Too much welfare given for too long has encouraged some displacees not to work for themselves or to seek to support their livelihoods through other means. Whilst some may learn to depend on humanitarian aid, for others dependence on aid may be a humiliating or stigmatising experience. Some displacees conceal, or are reluctant to, admit their displaced status. Rather than perceiving themselves as persons who have rights under international law, many feel obligated for any help they receive. We need to move beyond the usual packaging of conflict-affected people as helpless masses. Refugees and displacees should not be treated as people in need of long-term welfare. Instead, the

responsibility of adapting to their new conditions should be placed on them, in a sensitive and realistic way of recovery that enables them to act on their environment. We must not make survivors of conflict see themselves as passive victims incapable of helping themselves. This ignores their strengths, capabilities and priorities.

Research and humanitarian agencies have two key functions within the poverty and conflict relationship: One is to recognize distress; the other is to attend to what the distressed people are signalling by it. People living in welfare centres or refugee camps may not generally point to their psychological conditions but rather to their devastated socio-economic worlds. Poverty does not affect only the poor, and conflict does not affect only the participants. Through disruption, violence, spill-overs, through drugs, disease and terrorism, many others can be affected. Sometimes protagonists of war are not directly affected by it, and when it comes to suffering caused by poverty, people whose decisions determine events are not the ones who generally suffer. No matter where one's work is situated within the poverty and conflict relationship, it is important to acknowledge and be sensitive to their interconnectedness and to work towards not exacerbating either component.

## **Lessons from Dialogue and Exchange**

The Dialogue and Exchange process initiated by the Poverty and Conflict Programme allowed members of the team to speak to many people whose views on conflict and poverty and the relationship between these concepts influenced the subsequent work of the programme. The type of information received was qualitatively different from the information given by people who worked on conflict from a more academic or theoretical perspective.

This distinction is not made to give rise to the assumption that practitioners working within the areas of poverty and conflict do not have a theoretical understanding of the relationship between them. It is made, rather, to highlight that for practitioners, it is particular manifestations of the poverty-conflict relationship that are most useful.

The interview extracts have been chosen in order to reveal the variety of understanding of the poverty and conflict relationship. We have presented them in the following ways to highlight these contrasts.

Poverty and conflict are definitely strongly interrelated. Conflict is the cause of poverty and vice versa.

*Trincomalee is very well endowed in natural resources [...]. Fertile lands, fishing, gems, minerals [...], but the war has hindered development. 50% of productive land falls under no man's land. Fishing is restricted; there are no large industries apart from Prima and the cement factory [...]. During the war people had no access to markets, therefore, they had to sell to the Muslim middlemen at a very low price. Most of the upper and middle class left Trinco. Those who are left are those with nothing. (Representative of a Local NGO- Trincomalee)*

The extract of the interview details the way in which poverty and conflict have directly affected the locale in which the project does its work. It is an example of the reduction of the relationship into its local manifestations.

*Most youth join the LTTE out of desperation [...]. They are from very poor homes, with no other option of employment. They feel that there is no support from the government and no concrete plans for resettlement. Resettlement and poverty reduction should be the government's priority, if they fail to address such issues the peace process would be a failure [...] and conflicts are bound to recur. Great amount of inequality between these areas and the rest of the country, as a fair share of the population reside in refugee camps. When these people return everything is destroyed, neighbouring villagers loot whatever they left behind. (Representative of a Local NGO, Trincomalee)*

For practitioners it is the particular manifestation of the relationship that their work most closely deals with, which is most valuable and which they see as most important. The extract above is included to substantiate this. It gives rise to a range of responses to questions about the nature of poverty and conflict. It is not the pure academic views of causality, but rather their correlation with tangible events and changes that are most valuable in these excerpts.

Particular aspects of conflict related poverty such as the growing dependence on outside aid were also revealed through the interviews as is evidenced by the extract below.

*In the 1990s the existence of NGOs was essential for the survival of refugees, they provided relief packages and also in some instances were the only avenues by which assistance reached those in the areas that were under LTTE control.*



*Now these relief packages (both financial and material) have become a problem as they have become any easy way out for the IDPs, some of whom have been benefiting from this aid over the last 10-15 years. They have become downright lazy and are content to wait for things to come to them. They do not possess job skills/ training and find it difficult to re-enter the job market. Weaning these people from the relief packages is currently our biggest task. (Representative of a large, donor-supported, post-conflict reconstruction and restoration project, Trincomalee)*

The issues and ideas these practitioners bring out do not question the conceptual validity of the poverty-conflict relationship. They simply shift the focus to some of the ways in which this is manifest and deal with them in practice. It is this, which many of the people to whom we spoke, see as valuable.

*[We] place a great emphasis on transforming the conflict situation by education at the grassroots. Much of the focus is directed at youth. [He] says that when he bears about the peace process he does not understand why it is going ahead in this manner. If peace is to come it must come from below, from the grassroots. If you speak to people at a community level they all want peace. They want to interact with everyone. They don't want to see the conflict continue. These must be strengthened and developed.*

*What is necessary is peace education at the grassroots levels and that is what we are engaged in, in the Trincomalee district. (Representative of a local church-based NGO – Trincomalee)*

The views presented above are also significant in the varied points of action they emphasise. Many different ideas were presented, of what priority actions should be, and where existing capabilities and resources must be focused on. It serves to underline the multi-dimensionality of the concepts of Poverty and Conflict and the various ways in which elements of it are addressed.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Dialogue and Exchange process is the realisation of the limitations to the usefulness of the conceptual development of the relationship between poverty and conflict. This is particularly significant in relation to integrating conflict sensitivity into development practice. It is inaccurate to assume that the inclusion of conflict sensitivity into development practice involves a deliberate process. Speaking to people who have worked in the area of poverty and conflict, particularly those who worked during the conflict period presents a different view. Practitioners integrated conflict sensitivity in

such a complete manner that it could not be separated from the rest of their activities. While academics and theoreticians try to work out the relationship between poverty and conflict it is important to acknowledge that practitioners have already been integrating these areas into their work for years. It is integrated to the extent that they cannot separate their work from the conflict sensitivity that is, and has been, an essential pre-requisite for the work to continue.

It calls into question the value of developing these concepts and their relationship from a purely theoretical perspective. Rather, what may be useful would be the systematic documentation of the lessons learned by those for whom integrating conflict sensitivity was a real operational consideration. Instead of developing tools and methodologies for conflict and poverty analysis in a cozy intellectual vacuum, we would do well to make our analysis and our information base more inclusive. It would be useful for the methodologies to be developed based on lessons learned through such processes instead of developing methodologies and experimenting with them in an environment where conflict sensitivity may have different implications, and where conflict sensitivity cannot be separated from the day-to-day operationalisation of programmes.

## Tools

One of the ways in which the transition between the theoretical examination of poverty and conflict, and the practical applications of the implications of this relationship is made, is through the development of tools and methodologies for conflict and peace impact assessment.

There is a plethora of methodologies developed by academics and research institutions, some of which are being continually developed through haphazard processes of consultation. The development of these tools and the amount of resources being utilised in other similar efforts reveals the extent to which conflict sensitivity has become mainstreamed in development practice. Conflict is in danger of being relegated to one of the cross cutting issues that development projects have to be sensitive to. These tools address the need for prescriptive methodologies for projects that now have to be 'conflict sensitive' as well as being participatory, inclusive, gender sensitive and environmentally sensitive.

While not seeking to turn every project into a peace-building one, the development of these methodologies highlight the potential of projects of

various types to be contribute positively to the social situation in which they operate.

The most popular such methodology of this type is the so-called Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA). This was developed initially by Kenneth Bush in an often-quoted article written in 1998. It was developed at a time when development practice acquired a focus on conflict sensitivity. PCIA has spawned a host of like-sounding methodologies which attempt the same thing.

One of the significant problems with the methodology which is highlighted by practitioners who attempt to apply it is the fact that Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment means so many different things to actors that it is quite hard to pin down as a useful methodology. This leads to the development of various methodologies carrying much the same label but with different theoretical backgrounds and with different uses. Particularly problematic in this regard are the differentiations between assessing impacts of projects on conflicts and assessing impacts of conflicts on projects. These tasks require separate methodologies and entail very different processes of analysis.

Another concern surrounding the methodology is its relevance for practice. Feyen and Gsaenger (2001) argue that *'PCIA is far from being a useful tool as the gap between the conceptual design and the practice has not yet been adequately addressed.'*

How far the methodology is from closing this gap is revealed through practice and the following concerns stem from an attempt to apply PCIA methodology to two existing projects in Sri Lanka.

One such problem was the inability to translate the term *'conflict'* into a local language, retaining the full conceptual potential of the term. It was found that in the local languages translations of conflict reflected particular manifestations of conflict (wars, riots, clashes...) and these are not sufficient to capture latent conflict, or potential conflict, and further, does not adequately capture other non-violent forms of conflict. A recommendation was made that a working group be established to arrive at a working definition of conflict in all three languages that would be useful for such exercises as PCIA and also would be invaluable for the Poverty and Conflict Programme.

Another problem identified was the over-determination of the exercise on conflict and the lack of exploration of peace impacts and peace-building aspects

of the projects. It must be remembered that the 'P' component in PCIA is equally valuable, especially when examining the components of the project that intend to 'do some good' (Anderson 1997). This refers to one of the ideas developed by Anderson in her work on the 'Do No Harm / Do Some Good' principles and will be discussed further below.

These are two significant shortcomings which were apparent after the application of the PCIA methodology in Sri Lanka. The exercise also produced some general recommendations which have a bearing on the continued application of the methodology.

General recommendations were made with direct bearing on the application of PCIA studies in the field.

- That a PCIA team must include an expert on the area, or at least that efforts be made to obtain a general knowledge of the area using academic and non academic resources already in place.
- To look at existing data on the area in question including secondary data and available case studies and indigenous methods of peace-building and conflict management.
- To map social relationships before conflicts (obtain a larger picture of the social relations in the area and use for the PCIA such a tool as a conflict map or a social relationships map).

The peace and conflict impact must be integrated as a component of a project. PCIA cannot be treated as an environmental impact assessment or some such other assessment that is done initially at the start of a project which could subsequently be ignored. The impact of the project on peace and conflict must be taken into account for the workings of the project. It must influence its decision-making procedures and must be developed over time.

The development of such tools, however, 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. It cannot simply be another form that must be filled out before, after or during development practice. 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:p. 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 examined in the context of whether they contribute more to dividers or connectors and the conflict impact of particular interventions is gauged. In addition, project implementation is then geared to enhancing the peace building aspects of the programmes' activities and reducing those which have a potential to cause or exacerbate conflict. It is less rigid and technical than the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) and allows for the conflict situation to be examined and evaluated in its wider social context.

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 impact 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 analyze 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. It is created for the purpose of making development interventions more conflict sensitive and as described above, also intends to reduce the possible adverse impact of development aid on conflict and, instead move towards a positive impact by focusing interventions appropriately.

Conflict is inherent to all societies. Differences in interests and opinions between groups are natural, but how such differences are expressed and managed determines if 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 outweighs the use of political means. These violent conflicts are of concern to poverty reduction and development, and are addressed by CAF. In this context, conflict prevention would entail 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 and while the focus of the analysis is to obtain information that would guide development interventions it does not limit conflict to forms which would be useful or necessary for this purpose and takes a broader view.

## Conclusion

The theme of the symposium was *Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Development Practice*. Despite its significance within development circles this is simply one of the dimensions of the relationship between poverty and conflict. It is one of the aspects of the relationship that this paper has examined. It is hoped that this paper provided some insights to some of the key ways in which this relationship is worked out and an introduction to what type of work is being done on it at present. The ideas that we presented, especially those provided to us through the *Dialogue and Exchange Process* serve to underline both the complexity of this relationship and the need to unpack it and engage with it in a creative and useful way. It shows in particular the need to bridge the gap between theoretical understandings of the relationship and the understanding held by practitioners. It also underscores the need for the creative and sensitive development of

methodologies to increase the conflict sensitivity and peace building potential of development interventions.

It is our hope then that through the ideas presented in this forum and the ensuing discussion, ideas will be developed that will be useful -not only to those who seek to unravel the theoretical implications of the relationship between poverty and conflict, but also importantly, to those who engage with this in various practical ways through the course of their everyday work.

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## II. Coping with Vulnerability among the Families of Soldiers in a Context of Demobilization: Perspectives on Post-Conflict Peace Building

*Shamalie Liyanage*

### 1. Introduction

Peace building, especially in a post-conflict context, is needed to support the post-conflict structures that are being transformed from conflict to peace. It is a practical concept implying a broad spectrum of actions that aims to identify and prevent existing and potential threats against emerging peaceable environment. Countries in post-conflict transformation essentially place priority on this working area to reconstruct structures and institutions affected by protracted conflict. It is difficult to direct a country's progress towards the path of sustainable development without healing structures affected by conflict to remove existing and potential risks.

It is considered a priority in the aims of peace building to alleviate the effects of war on a population affected by a protracted conflict. Peace building also aims to manage the risks in transformation between war and peace. The process of transforming conflict into peace is very volatile and susceptible to various disruptions. Therefore, aiding transformation, and identifying and alleviating risks are important in order to establish a peaceable post-conflict society. Post-conflict societies present enormous potential in this regard, allowing the intervention of international, national, governmental, and non-governmental actors with plans for post conflict peace building.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of post-conflict peace building has become a priority in Sri Lanka recently due to the on-going peace process. The Memorandum of Understanding

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<sup>2</sup> Despite Joseph Montville's original distinction regarding the actor levels of peacemaking and peacebuilding, John McDonald and Louise Diamond have included actor-level analysis in a wider conception of multi-track diplomacy. According to general categorization, actors from governmental and international organizations are categorized as track I interventions while actors from non-governmental organizations are categorized under the track II interventions. For further details refer L. Diamond and J. McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A System Approach to Peace*. Third Edition. (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996), and Ronald J. Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.)

(MOU) signed between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government was instrumental in preventing violent clashes for a considerable period. It raises hopes for peace. The conflict-ridden environment of the country has begun to transform rapidly to take on some semblance of normalcy due to the year-long MOU. The agenda of post-conflict peace building has been instituted to work towards transforming society from conflict to peace in the expectation that negotiations will succeed in securing a lasting compromise.

In relation to the multi-dimensional framework of the concept of post-conflict peace building, this study seeks to address the priority area of *'military demobilization and reintegration'* in the Sri Lankan context to identify and analyze the necessities to design the initiatives. Military demobilization and reintegration have been discussed widely in relation to post-conflict societies. *'Demobilization implies the process, which initiated in order to convert the soldiers to the civilians. Accordingly the experiences derived from the developing countries; demobilization is a critical task, especially when the soldiers are affected by prolonged civil wars. The skills of soldiers are especially designed for combat. Their skills are useless in facing post war economy or civilian lifestyle.'*<sup>3</sup> Therefore, demobilization to reintegrate soldiers into civilian life is a wide working area to be taken into thorough consideration in relation to post-conflict necessities. Demobilization corresponds to reintegration. *'Reintegration refers to the process which allows ex-combatants and their families to adopt, economically and socially, to productive civilian life.'* (United Nations, 2000) Some important objectives include demobilizing ex-combatants and reintegrating them into civilian life; identifying vulnerability among them and their families; developing the skills of ex-combatants; raising awareness amongst them of civilian values and attitudes; providing them with psychological assistance, and safeguarding their economic condition. These measures are aimed to minimize the probability of the use of combat skills in illegal activities. They also help to successfully absorb ex-combatants into civil society and the economy, thus creating opportunities for a progressive lifestyle.

In the Sri Lankan context, military demobilization and reintegration need to be considered in view of the particularities of the scenario. The scenario of the war economy, which provides a livelihood for a considerable number of families in both rural and urban social segments, is crucial in this regard. Demobilization

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dementia.org>

and reintegration will prove to be tasks that are more difficult to achieve if livelihood depends largely on war-remittance. There has been a considerable change in urban and rural poverty in Sri Lanka with the influx of military wages. This situation represents a significant scenario of Sri Lanka's '*war remittance economy*', and raises various issues in relation to demobilization and reintegration. Dunham and Jayasuriya have focused on changing economic scenarios coupled with war, and suggested that the Sri Lankan economy was shifting from a '*Middle East remittance economy*' to a '*war remittance economy*.' Quoting Dunham and Jayasuriya, Kenneth Bush has re-emphasized this idea in 2001.(Dunham & Jayasuriya; Bush, 2001)

Therefore, it is necessary to identify and analyze the scenario of poverty transformation and related vulnerability among the military families in order to tailor make military demobilization and reintegration programs.

Currently over two hundred thousand men in uniform serve in the security forces. (The strength of the government armed forces was estimated as follows: Army- 129, 000; Air Force- 17,000; Navy- 21,000, and Police - 68, 000. The total number amounted to 235,000 in 1996).(Kelegama, 1999) If the war is resolved through a lasting compromise, demobilization and reintegration will become necessary. In that context, it will be important to address economic insecurity, as well as the loss of power and recognition among these battle-trained people. Failure to manage the situation will lead to various social problems and a re-escalation of violence in different forms.

Therefore, coping with vulnerability among the soldiers and their families, and identifying different vulnerability scenarios between different groups, such as between those Killed in Action/ Missing in Action (KIA/MIA) or the differently-able and those serving, are important priority areas in the context of military demobilization for the agendas of post-conflict peace building.

The study tries to address one dimension as military enlistment persuaded by poverty from the multi-dimensional poverty scenario which is interconnected with the conflict of Sri Lanka. It merges the poverty approach and conflict approach, addressing the influence of poverty in military enlistment and its after effects, which challenge the post-conflict peace building perspectives.

This paper is based on a qualitative study which aimed to identify the vulnerability scenario among military families. It is based on interviews of a sample of 50 military families chosen from rural and urban low-income areas.

The questions to be explored in this study are as follows: Is there a transformation of the scenario of poverty among the poor who provide human resources for the armed forces? Why are military families vulnerable in a context of demobilization? What is the risk of criminality among war deserters and soldiers?

According to Robert Chambers, *'The term vulnerability poses a multi-dimensional way of defenselessness, insecurity, exposure to risk, shocks and stress.'* (Chambers 1989; 1-7) It is necessary to identify and analyze the real scenario of vulnerability in any context at risk to develop possible strategies to cope with it.

Poverty in this study is, as usual, based on indicators such as levels of income and consumption (using the poverty line), as well as on vulnerability factors in relation to social and psychological grounds. The variables of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) were used to identify the scenario of poverty and development among the military families.

The study proposes the following hypotheses: *'The unstable economic condition, together with social and psychological vulnerability of soldiers increase crime rate in society, and create negative influence on post-conflict peace building.'*

The conceptual framework of the study outlines the vulnerability among the military families as the independent variable, while taking their economic, social and psychological conditions as dependent variables.

Post-conflict peace building is an area of extensive contemporary research. Military demobilization and reintegration are also significant reference points in relation to post-conflict societies. Resource material on these areas is rare in Sri Lanka. However, some researchers have also focused on poverty, and military enlistment and its aftermath. (Bush,2001; Sri Lanka Presidential Task Force, 2000; National Peace Council, 2001; Dunham & Edwards, 1997 etc.) Kenneth Bush has posed the issue of the war's influence on the economy. He has identified unemployment and poverty as decisive factors in military enlistment. Bush develops his discussion into very important aspects of issues of post-war

situations. He has developed a model of possible issues that could be derived from the post-conflict situation. Bush has pointed out that:

*Without a sustainable social, economic, and political environment (or at least a commitment won from the population to devote itself to create it), the post-war scenario will contain the volatile mix of trained militarized youth with access to weapons in an economy unable to absorb them.*

Although Bush has indicated the potential hazards of post-conflict peace building, he has not mentioned the necessity of identifying existing and potential vulnerability among battle-trained people and their dependents. The Sri Lanka Presidential Task Force Action Plan has also examined the situation of the military families in view of disaster management. It has identified vulnerability in economic, social, and psychological contexts in the various vulnerable groups of military families, such as KIA/MIA, the differently able etc. The National Peace Council has analyzed the broad scenario of vulnerability resulting from the prolonged war. While discussing the entire scenario of the cost of the war, the NPC study also examines the social, economic, and psychological vulnerability of combatants and their dependents, and provides some case studies. David Dunham and Chris Edwards have also attempted to examine the transformation of scenarios of poverty due to war wages and compensation among segments of the rural poor. They have pointed out difficulties relating to the lack of data to clearly examine the situation. These studies have explored the symbiosis between poverty and the military profession, and analyzed the situation in relation to the dimensions of disaster management. However, post-conflict peace building, demobilization and reintegration with vulnerability coping rarely come into focus in these dimensions.

## 2. Methodology

The scenario of vulnerability among the military families was analyzed by a literature survey, and through a qualitative study conducted with the data collected by interviews. The core of the study is based on primary data gathered from a sample of 50 households. The interviews were conducted from August to December 2002. The main locations of the field research were from the district of Kalutara. The familiarity of the places and the availability of more contacts since the researcher lives in Kalutara tended to choose this district for the field

research. At the first stage, low-income areas of the district of Kalutara were located with the assistance of the district's Samurdhi office. Interviews were carried out in the four low-income areas selected from these locations. Two of these four main locations are based in rural low-income areas, and other two are situated in urban low-income areas. Polgampola and Meeghathenna, two rural villages situated around 18 km from Mathugama in the district of Kalutara, were selected as rural low-income areas. The traditional livelihood of these two locations is derived from agriculture, such as paddy, rubber, small tea plantation, and chena cultivation. The military profession is also a high income source in these two villages. According to the figures provided by the Grama Sevaka (GS) and the key informants, there are approximately 60 military families in these two villages. The other locations are found in urban low-income areas, such as Gallassa, a village situated around 3 km from the city of Kalutara, and Ranavirugama, Dombagoda, situated around 5 km from the city of Kalutara. Gallassa is a low-income village. The diversity of the income sources of its dwellers is wider than in the rural locations. The diversity of their income sources ranges from wage work to driving (mostly trishaws), small-scale business in the township, garment jobs, and employment in shops, restaurants and cleaning services etc. The military profession is also a main source of livelihood in this village. The other urban location, Ranavirugama, offers a completely different scenario, and provides easy access to military families. Ranavirugama comprises 101 houses occupied by military families in the categories of Killed in Action/Missing in Action (KIA/MIA) and differently able. The village is under the administration of the Directorate of Welfare of the Sri Lanka Army. The households were selected randomly from Meegathenna, Polgampoa, Gallassa and Ranavirugama. The lists of households provided by Grama Sevakas (GS) and by the Secretary of the Ranavirugama Welfare Society were used for random selection.

The sample of 50 families was taken from those four locations. Twenty five households were chosen from the rural low-income category, and a further 25 households were selected from the urban low-income category. The distribution among the four villages of the families interviewed is as follows: Meegathenna-12 respondents, Polgampoa-13 respondents; Gallassa-12 respondents, and Ranavirugama-13 respondents.

Interviews were conducted in the sample of 50 respondents with the use of questionnaires. An open-ended, personally-administered, qualitative questionnaire

**Table 1**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Number of Interviewed Households</b>
Rural low income	Meegahathenna	12
Rural low income	Polgampola	13
Urban low income	Gallassa	12
Urban low-income area/ Special Village	Ranavirugama	13

was used to interview all 50 household. In addition, the same sample was again used in distributing a structured quantitative questionnaire for the purpose of collecting background details. Finally, 5 families of the sample were re-interviewed to collect in-depth data. The collected data was analyzed using the software of Microsoft Excel 2003 and Microsoft Word 2003.

The data collection encountered various limitations in practice. Respondents displayed a tendency to expose only disadvantages. The advantages they had received from military wages and compensation were usually muted and, in some cases, were intentionally hidden. The situation at Ranavirugama was very volatile at the time of the study. Internal clashes among the dwellers had increased, and the study faced consequent difficulties.

### **Profile of the interviewees**

From the sample, 100% of interviewees were Sinhalese and Buddhists. Fifty percent of them were based in rural low-income locations, and the other 50% were from urban low-income locations. Thirty nine percent of the sample comprised parents of military personnel. Thirty one percent of the sample accounted for wives of military personnel. Twenty two percent of the sample included relatives of soldiers. Eight percent of the sample included the differently able and serving soldiers.

Forty eight percent of the respondents were male, while the other 52% were female. The educational background of the respondents is as follows: higher studies-2%; Advanced Level-38%; Ordinary Level-48%, and Grades five to nine-4%. Eight percent of respondents did not provide their educational background.



Figure 1

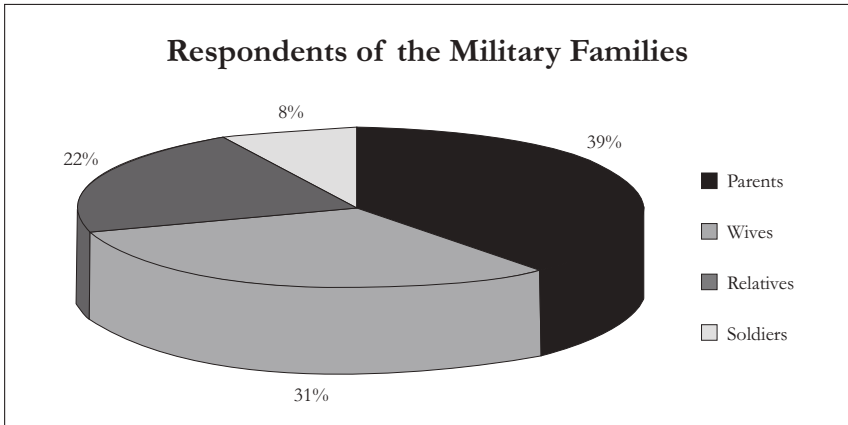
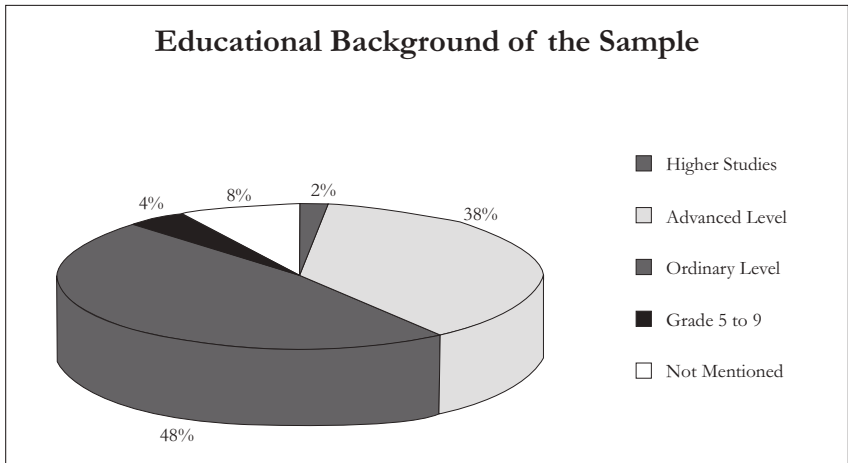


Figure 2



### 3. Main findings

#### Background

Following independence, a modern democratic state was established in Sri Lanka in accordance with the country's last colonial master's model. However, this

model was, unfortunately, incompatible with the traditional necessities of the country's prevailing hierarchical society. Hierarchical social relationships, which demarcated the elite from the non-elite, continued without change. However, unlike most of its South Asian counterparts, Sri Lanka continues to uphold democratic ideals related to maintaining the military under civilian authority. (De Silva, 2001; Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2001) The country presents a different scenario of civil-military relations in the regional topography. However, civilian authority has gradually begun to use the military as a means of legitimate violence against citizens who are identified as threats to political power. (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2001) In this context, civil-military relations have begun to deteriorate. The military profession was a recognized occupation when it performed mostly a ceremonial role up to the 1970s. Since the 1970s, however, the scenario has begun to change. In the 1970s, the armed forces had to face a youth insurrection. The Tamil cause of nationalism was also in a volatile situation. The country has experienced armed ethnic violence from the mid-1970s. 1983 was the most significant commencing year of the ethnic war. The consequent expansion of military manpower and militarization can be traced from 1983 to a 20-year-long period. The military profession became pragmatic as a result of the ethnic war. The necessity and the pressure of the situation led to the recruitment of more soldiers with low-qualifications and poor-training. The prolonged, devastating war finally left behind a dramatic number of deaths and casualties, along with thousands of combatants who survived. The post-war compatibility of them will hardly be maintained if they are not provided access to economic, social and psychological reintegration in the post-conflict society.

### **Social opinion of the majority community about military profession**

The military profession is incompatible with Buddhism which is based on non-violence. Yet, the history of Ceylon's Sinhalese is riddled with prolonged wars and conflicts, most of which were waged against South Indian invaders, Western imperialism, and local kings and rulers. As a direct legacy of the colonial tradition, the modern army of Sri Lanka was established by a Parliament Act on 10 October 1949. Western traditions provide a strong base for this army and its expansion to the Sri Lanka security forces. Officers of the security forces continuously received opportunities for training in renowned western military academies, such as Sandhurst (Royal Military Academy-UK), and West Point (United States Military Academy). The military profession was a recognized occupation due to

the colonial legacy of social recognition accorded to western traditions. This situation has been subject to change since the 1970s. The majority community faced oppression by the security forces during the insurrection in 1971. The security forces killed a considerable number of youth who took up arms. This was a shock to the mentality of the majority. Since 1983, the configuration of the security forces has undergone dramatic changes. The ethnic conflict has dictated the necessity of manpower to wage war. Gradually, the excessive need for manpower has led to the lowering of required qualifications for recruitment. The recruitment of uneducated and unskilled youth has simultaneously led to a decrease in recognition for the military profession. The Southern community also faced excessive brutality during the insurrection 1987-1989 with the atrocious counterinsurgency campaign launched by the security forces. The situation worsens as deserted soldiers began to increasingly involve with criminal and illegal activities in the society. Due to these reasons, the social opinion about military profession was turned to disgrace. However, the military profession is still a source of power and wealth in both rural and urban settings among deprived social segments that lack access to power and wealth. In other words, a soldier in the family can bring recognition, power, and economic security to people who have no social status. On the other hand, as a result of prolonged civil war, and two insurgencies which were suppressed with violence, "use of force" is somewhat established in the community as an accepted practice although it is not morally right. In day-to-day social life, those with access to the use of force became more powerful than those who did not have such opportunities. At the community level, those who have access to the use of force are treated with respect by others, especially by those who have no such power. Therefore, soldiers can gain social advantages, status, and power among people who are deprived of social power. Thus, even though the military profession is not, in general, a recognized occupation in the majority mentality, the power possessed by soldiers through their access to the use of force can influence others in social life. Therefore, poorly qualified youths tend to consider the military profession as advantageous, in view of its economic and social benefits.

### **Economic changes brought forward by military profession**

The locations of the field study are based in low-income villages, according to the classifications of the Samurdhi Authority. The rural low-income locations of Meegahathena and Polgampola represent significant scenarios of the economic

changes evident in families in the periods before and after the recruitment of family members to the military. “Poor” is how they generally describe their condition prior to their enlistment in the army. Most have not possessed a permanent shelter prior to joining the military, but have lived in mud houses with cadjan or tin roofs. The main income sources in these rural locations are agriculture, and wage works in agricultural sectors. Among the main income sources of these military families, prior to their joining the military, were paddy, rubber, and chena cultivation, as well as small-scale tea plantation and small-scale cinnamon plantation etc. Wage work in paddy fields and the rubber sectors represented popular sources of income. One key informant stated that:

*Small-scale agriculture is an income source which hardly allows us to manage with the bare necessities. This source of income can never foster a significant change in living patterns, or assist us to achieve our long-term objectives. We have small rubber plantations and paddy fields. Apart from these sources of income, we usually take some agricultural wage work in land owned by others. However, it is very difficult to change our condition to a better status. We don't have enough or regular income. Significantly, families which have members enlisted in the military have achieved very prominent economic development. (25 yr. old; farmer/wage worker; male; Polgampola)*

According to the views of this key informant, it is difficult to earn enough through agriculture. This source of income does not allow them to manage day-to-day expenses, and to develop their living patterns to achieve better status. They do not earn enough money to achieve long-term desires such as: improving the condition of their houses; constructing permanent shelters; developing their income sources; investing some extra money, and settling family members in marriage (women are a special consideration due to the traditions of dowry, etc.). The changeable nature and infrequency of an agricultural income underlie this situation. Therefore, almost all respondents emphasized their poor income in the period prior to the enlistment of their relatives in the military.

The study has given priority to the non-commissioned layer of the armed forces in consideration of the possibly higher rate of vulnerability. The sample is mainly constituted from the non-commissioned layer, which can be usually found in the low-income locations.

The scenario was similar in the urban low-income locations as well. Families suffered mainly from low income before the recruitment of a family member in

the military. Their vulnerability stemmed from a lack of skills, inadequate education, a lack of access to power etc. Most respondents from urban locations described their condition as 'poor' prior to the enlistment of a family member in the military. Before such recruitment, most respondents lived in houses constructed with used timber and a tin roof, and suffered from the effects of a low income and the consequent failure to achieve long-term objectives.

Significantly, the sample does not provide a single case in which a family member was engaged in foreign employment. It is also one of the factors that the sample shows a higher rate of vulnerability. Foreign employment, especially in Middle-Eastern countries, is also a much sought after income source, and a popular resort among low-income groups in Sri Lanka to recover from extreme poverty. In the social outlook prevalent in Sri Lanka, foreign employment is connected to fortune and prosperity. It is recognized as a positive development towards a prosperous life. Conversely, the status or recognition accorded to the military profession is not favourable or positive. According to the views of one of the key informants,

*The military profession is an option that is popular among those who have failed in education or economic development. Therefore, recruits decide to face the brunt of war. Even though they are able to uplift their living conditions using war wages, the threat to their lives, and its negative social effects, are always with them. For instance, most parents were reluctant to settle their daughters in marriage with military recruits during the war-ravaged years. Foreign employment receives comparatively more recognition at the village level as a positive and fortunate development towards a permanent solution to poverty. (56 yr. old; worker in Rubber sector; male. Polgampola)*

The families of respondents suffered from the negative effects of low income prior to the enlistment of a family member in the military. Following recruitment, the families of respondents were able to cope with excessive poverty, and managed to uplift their living conditions. The significant transformation brought about by a regular monthly income has improved the condition of families, and helped them to achieve their long-term desires gradually.

Military wages are comparatively high, and those possessing lower-level educational qualifications are unable to earn such an income by any other job due to the prevailing economic situation in the country. Therefore, youth who are uneducated tend to join the military, braving risks of death and injury. It is

obviously a rational decision, made in a context of oppressive poverty that affords them few options to cope.

The families included in the sample had achieved much with the use of regular military wages. They had managed to achieve their long-term desires as well. Significantly, 46% of the sample had initiated the construction of permanent shelters to change their living environment. However, these houses had not yet been completed in most cases. Almost all such structures had good planning. They were planned with 4-5 bedrooms, modern bathrooms, pantries, and large modern kitchens with tiled floors. All the houses were planned as very large structures, resulting in difficulties in completion. A further 26% of the sample received houses from *Ranavirugama*. Therefore, 72% of the sample were able to change their living status in acquiring a permanent house.

**Table 2**

<b>Permanent Houses</b>	<b>%</b>
Initiated Construction	46%
Received from <i>Ranavirugama</i>	26%
Total	72%

A tendency to invest in electric and electronic items was also prominent. All the houses had large T.V.s, refrigerators, fans, cassette decks, CD players etc. Except for a few, most houses were well furnished. A tendency to acquire expensive items and build large houses clearly indicated rising expectations linked to their income. Further, all the houses had good sanitation, access to clean water, and electricity. According to the respondents, most families were able to change their food habits and use more expensive food items after receiving a military income. Respondents were reluctant to give clear information about their earlier and current food habits. But, most of them have stated that they are now consuming more expensive foods. For instance they have mentioned some of these expensive food items as milk powder, fish and meat. Thus, the families of soldiers have been able to overcome excessive poverty through the benefits of a regular monthly military wage.

There is also another dimension to this situation. Although a military wage, which is comparatively high, is adequate to maintain better living conditions, it is

simultaneously not sufficient to foster rising expectations. This situation reveals the desires of military families in the social context. Military families are keen to acquire large houses and modern household items, as these are symbolic of wealth and prosperity in the psychosocial mentality of Sri Lanka. They try to gain recognition and respect at the community level as those who possess these resources. On the other hand, they seek more assistance to eliminate all their grievances in order to become rich and recognized, as access to power lies with people at this social level. They justify their claims for more assistance with the perception that they have proved their commitment to the country by giving a son for military duty.

In this context, military families have various grievances. They usually appeal that the monthly income is not adequate to manage expenses. They also raise the need to secure good jobs for their family members. However, considering the educational qualification and skills of these family members, obtaining such employment is not possible with the current situation in the country. According to the sample, the educational levels of family members were rarely higher than the Advanced Level qualification. Most of them possessed lower qualifications, and their skills were not developed to suit vocational needs. On the other hand, the country's social mentality has long established values which are tended to respect some professions. This is somewhat changed with the development of modern sectors. Yet it still has a strong psychosocial effect at the community level. In one instance, a mother was not satisfied with employment in garment factories for her sons and daughters. Her elder son is an amputee and a military pensioner. She has appealed for better jobs for her other children, especially in the government sector, because their elder brother had made a commitment to the motherland. Most other families held the same views. They asked for jobs with better recognition for their family members, because their families had made a commitment to the country in giving one member to the military. There were many such requests, and all were based on desires of acquiring wealth, power and recognition, in a context in which citizens receive unequal treatment and face discrimination according to their status, power and wealth. As a result of weakening democratic institutionalization, the country has established political, social, and economic spheres which allow the obtainment of favours by power, status, wealth, recognition, and personal relationships. In this context, social power of individuals become more crucial in day to day life and it produces a struggle to gain access of social power . (K.M. De Silva has done a wide account

on declining democratic institutionalization of the country. It provides an analytical background to understand the situation). (De Silva, 1993)

Military families also referred to their other requirements, such as the necessity of loans on a low-interest basis, or in some cases, the need for interest-free loans. Interest-free loan schemes cannot be expected in the worsening economic conditions of the country. Low-interest loan schemes had already been provided to military families through the military welfare directorate. However, a high demand and priority procedures limit access. One differently-able soldier said,

*I applied for loans but was not successful. Loan schemes are on a priority basis. High rankers and servicemen who have longer service get priority. On the other hand, it is difficult to get loans because of high demand. (32 yr. old; military pensioner; male; Meegahathenna)*

They also demand land for cheap prices. This demand has already been addressed. The welfare directorate and the *Rana Viru Seva Authority (RVSA)* have initiated programs to provide land and houses for the needy among the military families. However, limited resources and an excessive demand obstruct a satisfactory solution to the problems.

Significantly, military families were able to uplift their living conditions using war wages. However, their increasing needs, as well as the worsening economic conditions of the country render their income inadequate for monthly expenses. On the other hand, rising expectations and fewer opportunities to achieve them have led to more grievances.

The other dimension of this situation involves a lack of education, training, and professional expertise among members of the military families, which traps them in the vicious circle of poverty. It tends to deprive them from the access of power and recognition and shuts down their opportunities for upward social mobility. All these reasons sketch the scenario of vulnerability of military families.

### **Situation in Ranavirugama**

*Ranavirugama* (War Hero's Village) in Dombagoda is situated around 5km from Kalutara City on the Kalutara-Horana sub way. *Ranavirugama* is a part of a wide initiative to provide houses for war victims. It comprises 101 houses which were distributed among the families of war victims. The Directorate of Welfare of the



Sri Lanka Army is responsible for distributing houses among war victims who were chosen from the killed in action/missing in action (KIA/MIA) and differently-able categories. The houses are provided to direct dependents of the war victims, who are helpless as a result of the loss. Dependents of the KIA/MIA category are usually aged parents, or wives with little children. The differently able category includes ex-soldiers and their families. In *Ranavirugama*, the differently able category was comparatively less vulnerable than the KIA/MIA category, since the former are able to do most of their work after receiving artificial limbs. Most soldiers of the differently-able category found in *Ranavirugama* were leg or arm amputees. They are less vulnerable than soldiers who are blind, paralyzed, or have sustained critical head injuries.

Some indirect problems have resulted from the fact that *Ranavirugama* houses have been distributed among the two significant groups of the differently able and KIA/MIA with different vulnerability scenarios between them. This situation in *Ranvirugama* has led to dramatic developments because of internal disputes between KIA/MIA and differently able categories. This has occurred due to the unnecessary intervention of some NGO's. According to one of the respondents of the KIA/MIA category:

*The differently able soldiers in the village try to acquire authority to put down the family members of the KIA/MLA category. Differently-able soldiers are now organized under a NGO called ADEP. ADEP representatives in the village try to gain authority. They try to gain advantages by backing the on-going peace process. At the same time, they also try to use us to get publicity for the peace-process. Once they brought us to a press conference and displayed us as war victims without our knowledge. They wanted to imply that we are the people who need peace. ADEP members are not genuine workers for peace. They earn international money and advantages for backing the peace process. We are not war victims. Our relatives gave their lives for the freedom of our motherland. It is our pride. We don't need any peace now. We want revenge for the lives of our relatives. (28 yr. old; Widow; Unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

Although this is a controversial statement, it indicates the feelings of some relatives of the KIA/MIA soldiers. They perceive that they have not received proper recognition for their commitment. On the other hand, heroism is a way of coping with vulnerability. Anger is an inevitable response to the lack of such recognition.

The dependents of the KIA/MIA category face various psychosocial problems. Aged parents, especially, are very vulnerable due to the death of young sons, and their own helpless situations. As stated by one mother:

*Society should recognize the sacrifices made by our children. The Sudu Nelum Movement provided priority cards to my husband and me because our son was killed in action. They recognized our children's commitments. But in society, nobody cares about their sacrifices. Once I went to hospital and tried to get priority. "A Doctor said that you should follow the queue although your son has died in action." I became angry. I said, "If my son had not gone to war, you would not be able to live here safely." After that I have never used the priority card. I don't like to dishonor my son's sacrifices. I feel anguish about this situation. I feel our children have fallen for a selfish society. Nobody cares about their sacrifices. (65 yr. old; female; Ranavirugama)*

The dependents of KIA/MIA soldiers ease their grief by thinking of the sacrifices and heroism of their young relatives in the battlefields. These notions and slogans of 'sacrifice for motherland,' 'heroism,' 'commitment,' 'common purpose,' 'freedom of motherland,' 'integrity of motherland' etc., are useful in attracting youth to fight against the LTTE. These notions are illustrated with honour and status to give recognition to the people who take the challenge. Youth who seek recognition, pride, money, and respect tend to choose this easy path to acquire all those advantages. Their relatives feel anguish when they do not receive proper recognition from society, even after they have made the supreme sacrifice. They have strong feelings about their commitments, and seek recognition for the sacrifices that they have made. This may probably be the only recognition that they can seek from society, since they do not have any other access to power and recognition. This mentality of the KIA/MIA families provides another dimension to the related issues.

In *Ranavirugama*, the clashes between KIA/MIA and differently able categories have worsened the situation and made the atmosphere more uneasy inside the village. It is unfortunate, because the village is already occupied by people who are mentally vulnerable. The KIA/MIA category does not have the strength to compete with ex-soldiers of the differently able category. As a result, the interviewer noted frustration and aggression among the wives and aged parents of KIA/MIA soldiers. According to one of the respondents,

*The newly-formed NGO called ADEP aims to acquire authority inside the village. They gradually acquired all the responsibilities that were in the hands of the members of KIA/MIA families. We were successfully working on the village's nursery, library, children's society, children's park, women's' society, welfare society etc. They obstructed all those activities and tried to bring them under their authority. They intentionally planned to avoid awarding KIA/MIA families with village responsibilities. The only solution to this situation is to give separate villages to KIA/MIA families. We can't live together with differently-able families. (26 yr. old; widow; unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

This situation has arisen due to the difference in access to power between the KIA/MIA and differently able categories. Ex-soldiers in the differently-able category, who are, now organized under the organization called ADEP, are working with the government to lobby for the peace process. The ex-soldier who initiated this organization has now become a prominent orator in public debates for the peace process. In this way, the ADEP has built up strong connections with the government. With direct and indirect support and influence from government agents, such as ministers, the ADEP is now in a strong position. Backed by this power, the ADEP tries to assume authority over communities of war victims who live in special villages such as *Ranavirugama*. This situation directly affects the families of the KIA/MIA category, since they rarely have such access to power. As pointed out by one of the respondents:

*A new NGO was formed, aimed at gaining advantages from the on-going peace process. They try to get money and power by backing the peace process. They plan various activities and take money from the international community. They also try to use the families of war victims for these activities. Their aim in trying to assume authority over the families of war victims is to use them for their agendas. They try to show themselves off as the only representatives of war victim, and they try to represent the voice of war-victims. Their main aim, however, is to obtain money from international agencies, as well as the backing of local power from the government and the peace process. (68 yr. old; pensioner; male; Ranavirugama)*

There has also been unease over housing problems. The 101 houses in *Ranavirugama* were given without any deeds to military families. Therefore, the occupants face difficulties about the ownership of the houses. According to some residents:

*We received the houses without deeds. We tried to get deeds several times, but those attempts did not work. Therefore, we don't have peace of mind about the ownership of the houses. They can take the houses back at any time. (25 yr. old; widow; unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

However, the Directorate of Welfare has also experienced various problems in providing the houses. The direct dependents of soldiers are difficult to find. In addition, various covert attempts are also undertaken to obtain houses. In some cases, members of the military families such as brothers and sisters of soldiers claim for houses. But they are not considered as direct dependents. Only parents of unmarried soldiers or wives and children of married soldiers are considered as direct dependents. It is difficult to transfer the ownership of the houses until these issues have been clarified. However, the transfer of ownership with deeds to direct dependents necessary to be completed as soon as possible, as it will help to dispel the prevailing unease among the dwellers.

The wives and children of the KIA/MIA soldiers add another dimension of vulnerability. Young wives of military families were not found to be directly involved with economic activities in almost all cases from the sample. Their educational levels and skills were not adequate to allow them to compete for jobs. As a result, their economic situation depends entirely on their husband's income. Thus, they are able to manage their livelihood with military wages, but are deprived of sources of power. On the one hand, they are deprived of social recognition as they face marginalisation on account of a lack of education and skills. On the other hand, widowhood and related social misconceptions obstruct their progress. One wife from the KIA/MIA category said,

*I was married at 19. My husband was 24 years old. We lived in my husband's house with his parents. I was pregnant when he was killed in action. After the funeral, my husband's parents asked me to leave, taking my belongings with me. They blamed my husband's death on some evil caused by me. (22 yr. old; widow; unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

A large number of such wives and their children have received houses in *Ranavirugama*. Therefore, they were able to live more independently and escape such harassment from their families. They also receive life-long compensation for the death of their husbands. Thus, their economic situation is not entirely vulnerable; however, their vulnerability is more related to social and psychological dimensions.

The wives of the KIA/MIA category are subject to unwelcome sexual attention in society. Young widows in particular face a greater degree of such attention from men. This situation is very common in the local scenario. According to one wife in the KIA/MIA category:

*It is very difficult to survive with widowhood. Various people offer help with the aim of developing some relationship. I was in charge of conducting the nursery at Ranavirugama. A member of the newly-formed NGO made advances towards me. I avoided him. Finally, he obstructed my work in conducting the nursery, and took revenge on me. (28 yr. Old; widow; unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

The helpless widows who are difficult to find any practical coping strategy against these harassments can be found become more aggressive in their behavioural patterns. If they remarry as a best option to survive in the male-dominated society, the “income of widowhood” will be lost. It caused them to be reluctant in remarriage. The sample does not provide any case of war widows expecting of remarriage.

The psychosocial wellbeing of the children of KIA/MIA families is also an issue to be considered. They have been provided with various facilities such as, scholarships for education, a village level nursery, playgrounds, and other assistance, from the government and non-governmental organizations. However, attempts to address their psychosocial vulnerability are necessary to be extended further.

According to the views of one mother:

*Our children face various difficulties. They observe that other children have both parents. They suffer from the lack of a father, and this affects their mentality quite badly. We need some psychological assistance to address their mentality. (23 yr.old; widow; unemployed; Ranavirugama)*

In this way, *Ranavirugama* was able to provide a clear-cut scenario on the vulnerability situations of victims of war.

### **Welfare initiatives for servicemen**

Due to the repercussions of the protracted war, the government was forced to initiate welfare activities among various segments of the country which were

affected by the war. One such segment included servicemen and their families. The government implemented various welfare programs to assist military families from the beginning of the conflict. However, the practical necessities of the welfare programs increased continuously as a result of losses suffered by the military. There are several organizations working on welfare among servicemen and their families. The main organization in this regard is the Rana Viru Seva Authority (RVSA). Apart from this organization, the tri-services and the police have their own welfare branches. Officers representing the welfare directorates of the tri-services and the police are included in the board of management of the RVSA. As an established welfare network, it has a wide scope of work. Prevailing welfare programs and the actual scenario of necessity should be taken into consideration in evolving post-conflict welfare initiatives.

### **Rana Viru Seva Authority (RVSA)**

The Rana Viru Seva Authority (authority for the welfare of servicemen, hereafter referred as RVSA) was initiated by a Parliament Act on 5 June 2000.(RVSA,2002)

RVSA aims to:

- Empower, protect and develop the active servicemen (Service and Police personnel), and ex-combatants, and to:
- Provide strength and support to their families and to the families of those killed or missing in action.

Under these objectives, the RVSA has commenced several welfare initiatives to assist the servicemen and their families. The main programs are:

Apart from the initiatives undertaken by the RVSA, the welfare directorates of the tri-services and the Police have initiated various welfare programs. The Directorate of Welfare of Army, which is responsible for a large number of active combatants, has initiated various welfare projects such as the school admissions program, and the distribution of land. The school admissions program is on a pro rata basis according to the available vacancies in schools. Servicemen are provided a proportional share of the available vacancies. This program has increased the probability of admission to good schools for the children of servicemen. The welfare directorate provides lands on an easy payment basis. It also enables servicemen to acquire land for affordable prices.

**Table 3**

	<b>Program Activity(ies)</b>
Shelter	Housing projects
Education	Scholarships for children Foster parents scheme Skills Development Training in various fields such as, tailoring, computer, carpentry, motor mechanism, masonry, printing, and gem cutting
Legal Aid	Legal assistance for various legal problems
Healing mind	The RVSA has identified forms of psychosocial vulnerability among different categories. The Human Intervention Unit of the RVSA has initiated programs to address psychosocial needs.
Transit Camps	RVSA has given attention to improving the condition of the transit camps. The RSVA also focuses on social integration and caring for the disabled.
Remembrance Park	A park provides facilities to remember the fallen combatants of security forces.

These scenarios clearly indicate that welfare initiatives have identified actual necessities. The welfare programs of RVSA and the directorates of welfare involve enormous initiatives which help thousands of servicemen and their families. However, these programs face problems of demand and availability. On the other hand, the enormous demands and expectations of servicemen and their families can hardly be met by these initiatives.

According to responses from the sample (comprising 50 houses), 82% had received welfare assistance such as, the Samurdhi benefit (Rs. 250/= per month for a six- or eight-month period), housing, and priority in obtaining a telephone connection, and in school admissions. Only 18% of the sample had not received any assistance.

The assistance received can be categorized as follows:

**Table 4**

Houses of Ranavirugama	26%
Samurdhi benefit (Rs. 250/ per month for 6 or 8 months)	50%
Priority in obtaining a telephone connection.	2%
Priority in school admission	4%
None	18%

According to the respondents, the Samurdhi benefit was not considered to be useful as the amount was too meagre, and was only provided over a short-term duration. Considering their problems and necessities, 64% of the sample said that the assistance they had received was not useful. Thirty six percent said that the assistance was useful in some ways.

As a trend, almost all respondents had grievances over lack of assistance and welfare to address their problems. The most common demands can be categorized as follows:

1. Increase salaries of military personnel
2. Provide jobs/better jobs to other members of military families
3. Provide admission to schools/better schools for their children
4. Provide land for military families
5. Assist in building or completing houses
6. Provide loan facilities on a low-interest or interest-free basis
7. Provide scholarships for education
8. Provide professional training for family members
9. Provide payment for parents also on the death of sons who were married.
10. Provide facilities to build houses in preferred locations instead of in Ranavirugamma.
11. Develop infrastructure and transport facilities in Ranavirugama (e.g. Medical Center, bus service)
12. Provide deeds to the houses of Ranavirugama



According to the responses, the government welfare network has achieved some success, giving at least one kind of assistance to a large number of families. However, this assistance is not adequate to effect long-term changes in their economic situations. Military salaries and compensation, rather than welfare assistance, have brought positive changes in living conditions. However, the provision of housing leads to the long-term development of families. Problems of demand and availability, as well as the capacity of such assistance to change living conditions, raise issues. On the other hand, welfare is usually not able to accelerate long-term changes. However, respondents continue to make apparently impossible demands on welfare.

Although the psychosocial needs of military families have been correctly identified by the RVSA, not a single case from the sample had received psychosocial assistance. Initiatives to promote attitudinal and ideological change towards peaceful lifestyles were lacking in practice.

The RVSA and the welfare directorates have designed their initiatives according to the necessities which arose from the war-ravaged years. As a result of stress from disastrous situations, welfare has been prioritised ahead of empowerment. As the entire vulnerability scenario is wide and multi-faceted, the welfare network, with its limited resources, is not able to comprehensively address the disaster and vulnerability of protracted war together with the declining economic situation of the country. On the other hand, welfare programs aimed at demobilization and reintegration have not yet commenced. However, it is a positive sign that the RVSA has identified the areas of demobilization and reintegration as priorities.

### **Criminal tendency**

Conflict-ridden societies bring violence into day-to-day life. Sri Lanka's society faces an increasing criminal tendency involving war deserters and service personnel. Desertion in the context of a nearly 20-year-long war is an issue that is relevant to this situation. Official sources have given annual war desertion figures as follows: 2000 - 4985, 2001 - 5902, and 2002 - 4678. Nearly 25,000 war desertions have been reported since the beginning of the war. These people are trained combatants. Police sources claim that war deserters are involved in most of the criminal activities in the country. These criminal activities, such as mass robberies and contract killings, are performed mainly for profit. In some cases,

servicemen have also been involved in criminal and illegal activities. This criminal tendency is a direct result of the mismanagement of war deserters in reintegration. The management of deserters has completely failed for many years. Authorities have granted several general pardons for deserters who wish to rejoin the forces. Deserters who did not rejoin under those general pardons had to go underground to evade arrest. The government has warned the community not to employ them in any sector. They have been treated as criminals. There has not been any official intervention to initiate welfare and reintegration among them. This situation has forced deserters to live underground and get involved in criminal activities.

The sample was used to obtain the perceptions of the community on criminal tendencies involving war deserters. One differently able soldier said:

*Soldiers are not afraid to go to war. Desertion happens because of difficulties and injustices faced by the soldiers. In some cases, soldiers are not able to attend the funerals of their parents. Desertion occurs most often due to problems of leave and transportation. However, after desertion they are not able to earn as much money as they did from their job. In this situation, various people try to use them for criminal activities. Soldiers who lived amidst a bloody war are not afraid of killing. Therefore, they can easily be used for criminal activities. (29 yr. old; differently-able soldier; military pensioner; male; Polgampola)*

Other respondents of the sample also gave various reasons for this situation. According to them, military desertion occurs due to the tough actions of military officers. The stress of their hard living conditions also lead soldiers to desert. Problems of obtaining leave as well as limited freedom further worsen the situation. Some respondents indicated that a lack of welfare interventions was also responsible for military desertion. Other reasons pointed out by respondents to account for the involvement of deserters in criminal activities were: economic problems after desertion; ability to use weapons; the persuasion of others towards criminality etc. Moreover, respondents pointed out reasons for the increasing criminality in society such as: problems in military discipline; weaknesses in the country's law and penal code; weaknesses in the Police; the mismanagement of war deserters; the war-ridden mentality of deserters, who are fearless; and the recruitment and training of people with little education etc.

However, criminal tendencies usually arise in societies experiencing protracted conflict. The failure of risk management programs is also a factor in this scenario.

Post-conflict societies are also very volatile and prone to such risks. It is necessary to address the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as their welfare, in this regard.

### **Demobilization and reintegration**

The demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants are necessary to be given priority in a situation that is transforming from conflict to peace. The sample was used to collect perceptions on demobilization and reintegration. Studies with the sample revealed a lack of awareness about the necessity to change attitudinal and ideological patterns towards peace and normalcy. Military families believe that the context of war gives them power, recognition, and money. The sample had not experienced any interventions with regard to peace awareness or peace education programs. Therefore, the views derived from the sample with regard to demobilization and reintegration only displayed intentions to secure privileges such as power, recognition, and money, in a context of demobilization. Their desire to secure those privileges is based on their intention to claim welfare rather than undertake empowerment initiatives. Most of the respondents called for alternative permanent jobs for military personnel, as part of the initiative to reintegrate them into society. They were rarely concerned about the skills that military personnel need to acquire in order to accommodate themselves to the post-conflict economy. They also emphasized other options, such as providing compensation with another job; providing a pension; providing loan facilities for self-employment, and providing a gratuity etc. Some respondents suggested that servicemen be deployed in the development initiatives of the country. Only a few identified the necessity to empower ex-combatants by developing their peacetime competence. However, all respondents clearly stressed the necessity to secure the economic condition of ex-combatants to meet the rising cost of living, and to help them to achieve their long-term desires.

## **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

A considerable number of deprived social segments has escaped from the vicious circle of poverty with the aid of comparatively high military wages and compensation, together with welfare assistance. Significantly, they were able to cope with income poverty, and managed to achieve some of their long-term objectives as well. They have also acquired some social status due to economic

changes and the symbolism of power linked with the military profession. However, their long-term coping ability is still at risk. They depend on a military salary and compensations. At the same time, low education levels and a lack of skills among the members of military families have a negative influence on their progress. Significantly, these issues will be intensified by the incompatibility of soldiers' skills with the demands of the post-conflict economy. It is necessary to accelerate programs for preparing soldiers to meet the demands of the post-conflict economy. It is also necessary for initial action to secure the economic condition of demobilized soldiers for at least one year giving time to prepare for post-war economy. This could take the form of a basic transitional assistance safety net (a grant scheme which is provided monthly). Welfare initiatives such as these are important on a short-term basis, but empowerment is necessary for long-term solutions.

On the other hand, it is also important to promote ideological and attitudinal changes among ex-combatants to enable them to acquire the necessary skills. It is necessary to promote ideological changes that signal a shift from a welfare mentality to empowerment. To this end, empowerment initiatives should be accelerated more than welfare programs. Empowerment is a key concept in gearing them for a more secure future and a sustainable lifestyle. A well-managed comprehensive program is necessary to raise awareness, and encourage, train, and guide them to acquire their position in a post-conflict context. Such a program can trace the personal desires of ex-combatant, and lead them on to their preferred path. This program should be wide enough to address all these issues, yet allow individual attention at the same time. This will be a difficult task because reintegration programs have to guide them to acquire a new identity with recognition, economic capability, and status in post-conflict society.

However, helping them to cope with vulnerability in order to empower them to lead a sustainable lifestyle is a priority in successfully reintegrating ex-combatants in post-conflict society.

Post-conflict societies are very vulnerable to psychosocial and war-trauma influences as well. These should be properly identified and addressed as soon as possible. A wide institutional base is needed to make interventions in this regard. District offices with regional coordinators can be deployed for counseling and healing purposes. On the other hand, post-conflict peace building should give priority to remove war-ridden attitudes and ideologies which are usually anti-

democratic and anti-social. Ex-combatants and their families should be targeted for these initiatives. *‘Long term military service during bloody wars increases hierarchical thinking patterns with various anti-social habits, which unsuitable to civilian life style.’* (Heinemann-Gruder, 2002: 7) These may hamper the development of ex-combatants in post-conflict situations. To implement transformation from conflict to peace, it is necessary to develop a peace-ridden context omitting war-ridden attitudes and ideological practices. A well-pledged communication approach to raise awareness in the community, especially among ex-combatants and their families, of a peace-ridden lifestyle will be helpful. It is important to enhance education on democracy, human rights, peace, progress, innovation, and other possible aspects. Social awareness is also necessary to promote the establishment of a friendly and helpful environment for ex-combatants and their families. Demobilization will not be successful if society is not supportive in reintegrating those who fought for a common purpose. The support of society is also a precondition to maintain the psychosocial wellbeing of ex-combatants. As revealed by the field survey, the economic conditions of aged parents and wives of fallen combatants were average, but their psychosocial vulnerability was very high. This factor points to unfriendly societal situations. On the other hand, differently able ex-combatants also face dramatic psychosocial stress when trying to survive with disability. The serving category is also vulnerable to various psychological problems. A healing process should also address their war-ridden mentality. Therefore, post-conflict peace building should thoroughly analyze the situation before developing a successful program to cope with psychosocial vulnerability among the war-affected segments of the country, including ex-combatants and their families.

Post-conflict peace building has to pay special attention to military deserters and their future. Military deserters should also be targeted for rehabilitation and reintegration to arrest the increasing criminal tendency in society. A general pardon to remove them from the military service will help them to reintegrate into society.

All activities discussed above are based on the military Demobilization and Reintegration Program (DRP). It is a vast long-term initiative which should be linked to international assistance. International assistance is necessary for funds and technical cooperation. The first step towards beginning the (DRP) will involve developing a strong organizational framework. Factors which will ensure the success of DRP are: political will; the efficiency of the organizational

framework; commitment; identification of the scenario of vulnerability through analysis, good management, and adequate resources; close attention, and the continuity of activities leading to long-term success.

In the first instance, the DRP has to identify and classify the vulnerability scenario among ex-combatants. Different categories should be paid close attention. The data collection and analysis of the vulnerability scenario should be conducted on a village basis. This data will be helpful to design the DRP as it will cover the most necessary interventions. The DRP should begin with providing basic assistance packages to empower demobilized combatants for at least one year. This time frame can be utilized to further empower them for successful reintegration. Empowerment should include counselling; other forms of psychosocial assistance; guidance and training to enable them to acquire professional skills; employment assistance; education, and means to address their social, economic and psychological needs etc. The DRP should be regularly monitored and evaluated. The program should be well coordinated. It would help to access demobilized combatants if they were unified by an organization. According to facts revealed by the study, the executive arm of such an organization in Sri Lanka should include a proportional share of all the different categories such as KIA/MIA, the differently-able, and those serving, to avoid the dominance of one category over the others. An organizational framework such as that of the ex-servicemen association can be developed for this purpose. Such a unified representation of these different categories will be helpful for the better coordination of the DRP. The DRP has the further responsibility of preparing society to absorb ex-combatants. It is important to prompt social recognition of their commitments to provide a more conducive atmosphere for their successful reintegration. On the other hand, the concept of security sector reform is also closely associated with the success of the DRP. Security sector reform (SSR) is one of the components of post-conflict peace building. *'SSR embraces not only security from external threat, but also material, physical and social security as well as protection from bodily harm.'* (Chanaa, 2002:27)

SSR rearranges the security sectors, the penal code, and the justice system of a country to promote peace and security. It is also helpful for the DRP.

However, the DRP is only one of the components of the vast initiative of post-conflict peace building. As a process, post-conflict peace building includes various interconnected activities. To achieve long-term successes in transforming conflict

to peace, the whole concept of post-conflict peace building should be deployed in its full capacity.

It is necessary to correctly identify and address vulnerability in the context of military demobilization in Sri Lanka. It will promote the success of the DRP, as well as post-conflict peace building, to enable the sustainable transformation of conflict to peace.

The findings of this study reveal some scenarios of vulnerability among military families. It stresses the necessity to develop more broad interventions to identify vulnerability in relation to military demobilization and reintegration. Based on the post-war requirements of military demobilization and reintegration, the main policy implication posed by this study is the necessity of coping vulnerability among ex-combatants and their families to successfully absorb them into post-war situations in order to strengthen sustainable peace and security of the society.

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### III. Re-integration of Ex-political Prisoners and its Impact on Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka

Ronnate Asirvatham

#### 1. Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ethnic conflicts that gripped Europe through the '90s, there has been a heightened interest in the topics of nations in transition and peace-building after civil wars. Scholars have advanced the theory that a necessary condition for the consolidation of a stable government and economic growth is the empowerment of a vibrant '*civil society*.' Scholars focusing exclusively on peace-building in countries emerging from ethnic conflicts hold that civil society comprising free citizens and associations that cooperate within a context of trust make up the '*social capital*' which, in turn, is a necessary component for securing a stable peace, and its ensuing dividends in post-conflict societies (Lake and Rothchild, 1998; Diamond, 1996).

Given this context, this study examines one of the most intensely affected groups in societies emerging from conflict – released political prisoners – and study the manner in which their reintegration would affect the process of peace building. The study's research question is, '*How does the reintegration of ex-political prisoners effect peace-building?*'

In addition to large numbers of political prisoners (many of whom are subsequently released) in countries which have had protracted conflict, most '*releasees*' are in their 30's and 40's and are a vital part of a workforce of any country which is struggling with post-war reconciliation and reconstruction. Countries which have had protracted conflict not only have large numbers of political prisoners (many of whom are subsequently released), but most '*releasees*' are in their 30's and 40's and are, as such, a vital part of a workforce of any country which is struggling with post-war reconciliation and reconstruction (Van De Merwe, 2001). The premise of this study is that these ex-prisoners, because of their age, make up a socially, politically and economically important segment of post-conflict society. It is necessary that a post-conflict society contributes to reconciliation of the diverse social forces that were once in conflict, and for the reconstruction of the state in order to rebuild its economy. The rebuilding of a

country's economy will create a middle class that is important for the consolidation of peace. Therefore, it is crucial that ex-political prisoners are reintegrated with the mainstream because the stability and longevity of a post-conflict society and state is dependent on this.

This study will be confined to that of political prisoners, imprisoned under "special" security laws. Prisoners arrested under special security laws during wartime, are different to any other type of prisoners because of two conditions. First, there is usually the widespread use of torture to obtain confessions that are used against the prisoner, or to implicate others who are in turn arrested by the police. Second, there is consistently and almost without exception, an ethnic difference between arrestees and arrestors that adds to the arrestees' disadvantage because the arrestor belongs to the dominant ethnic group (Somasundaram, 1998). Thus a clear picture emerges of the dominant '*us*' versus the demonized '*other*' as being responsible for torture. There is much less of the above two conditions in the case of those taken in under normal law. Therefore, those taken in under special security laws need specialized rehabilitation.

It is important to focus on political prisoners because it does not matter politically if the prisoner was convicted of a crime, his or her case was dismissed, or he or she was released on an amnesty. What is politically important is that the rights of the political prisoner, which were suspended during his or her imprisonment, are supposed to be restored after release. Once they are released he or she has every right to be a part of mainstream society again. However, in most post-conflict countries the rights of political prisoners are not restored, leaving them marginalized from society. Such marginalization sows the seeds of future conflict, leading to further destabilization of the state.

This paper will discuss the above research question by first examining the available literature on peace-building and then relating the available literature to the findings of the fieldwork done in Sri Lanka.

## **2. Literature review**

The studies on peace building/conflict resolution in post-ethnic conflict situations are closely tied to the studies on the ethnic conflict itself. Scholars on ethnic conflicts are divided into two schools, the primordialists and the

instrumentalists. The following discussion will present a summary and critique of the two schools of thought.

### Primordialists

The Primordialists argue, *'the aggression of in-groups toward out-groups is rooted in a primordial urge linking group identity with race or ethnicity'* (Henderson, 1997: 655). Such scholars as Samuel Huntington, in his *'Clash of Civilizations'* follow this primordial perspective of ethnic conflict.<sup>4</sup> The instrumentalists argue that ethnic identities are flexible social constructions that can be manipulated by political entrepreneurs to incite ethnic conflict and nationalism as a way of resisting change and loss of power (Gagnon, 1995).<sup>5</sup> In this same manner, scholars on post-ethnic conflict peace-building/conflict resolution are divided into two schools, the primordialists who believe that the key to conflict resolution is history,<sup>6</sup> and the instrumentalists<sup>7</sup> who believe that the political systems should be reformed to achieve peace.

This study divides the primordialists into two sub categories; those who believe that because history is the cause of the conflict a reconstruction of history and an assimilation of different peoples within the boundaries of the state are needed. By assimilation many of the primordialists believe that the people of various minority cultures will *'evolve'* and change to fit the dominant culture of the country. Wirth says that *'pluralistic minorities . . . are merely a way station on the road to other states'* and therefore *'the possibility of the assimilability of ethnic groups is beyond doubt'* (1964: 256). Wirth built on the work of Park and Miller who took America as the ultimate example of the way to manage ethnic minorities and pluralistic societies. Park and Miller agree that a policy of assimilation is the best to mitigate ethnic tensions and conflict. They claim that a wise assimilation policy *'does not seek to destroy the attitudes and memories that are there but to build on them'* (Park & Miller, 1921: 280).

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<sup>4</sup> For others in this school of thought see - Edward Shills, "Primordial, Personal and Sacred Ties," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8 (1957) & Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics among others," *Old Societies and New States* (New York: Free Press 1963) – amongst others.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Merton "*Social Theory and Social Structure*" Glencore IL: Free Press & Benedict Anderson , *"Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism"* (London: Verso 1983) – amongst others.

<sup>6</sup> See Deutscher 2001, Huntington 2000 & Kaufman 1994 among others.

<sup>7</sup> See Horowitz 1985, Lijphart 1977 & 1979, & Thambiah 1989 among others.

Deutscher who pulls the above mentioned works together looks at the recent studies of ethnicity and assimilation and concludes that while there is residential integration and the absorption of American values of recent immigrants to the United States (such as Koreans – who are better educated than their immigrant forefathers) each ethnic group tends to retain ethnic associations and institutions (Deutscher, 2001: 139). Deutscher concludes that whilst there are darker sides to assimilation policies, policies designed to provide for a multicultural society do in fact lead to assimilation<sup>8</sup> and that *'assimilation is desirable in terms of social cohesion and social solidarity and the reduction of intergroup conflict.'* (Deutscher, 2001: 149)

The second sub-category in the primordialist school is those who advocate a return to the governmental structure that was in place *'when history began.'* By the *'beginning of history'* they mean a return to the tribal borders that were adhered to before the imposition of the nation-state and international borders drawn by colonial powers. Scholars generally advocate complete separation of ethnicities that are currently fighting within borders. (Huntington, 2000: O' Leary, 2001) Huntington advocates *'it is often wise to accommodate those pushing for ethnic separation, segregation and homogenizations - even if it means partitioning entire nations to reduce violence'* (Huntington, 2000: 113).

The following discussion will give three criticisms of the primordialists' school of thought as well as explain why the primordialist thought which was considered *'pre-modern'* in the 60's has now re-emerged at the forefront. One of the criticisms this study makes of the primordialist peace builders is that the question of when history begins is unanswered. For example, is the solution to address the wrongs (real or perceived) that those ethnic groups feel have been perpetrated against them before the nation state was formed or after? What happens when the group that is most discriminated against in the pre-nation state is now the main discriminator in the post-nation state world?

Another criticism this analysis makes against the second sub-category of primordialists is that because of history, separation is not always viable. This is due to the geographic and/or demographic layout of the country such as the division of natural resources that are in demand by all parties of the present

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<sup>8</sup> Deutscher gives the example of the educational policies of Sweden, which were designed to be inclusive of the migrant Finn population, but studies later found that such a policy led to greater assimilation of Finn's into the Swedish culture.

nation state. An example of a country where secession according to its pre-nation state borders has been quashed is Nigeria. Many states fear the increase in separatist movements would result in the increasing fragmentation of states making international governance difficult. Deutscher criticizes the theory of returning to pre-colonial borders saying that most of the African countries have held the former colonial borders inviolable even though they had the power to change it because the alternative was just too horrendous (Deutscher, 2001: 105). Due to such criticisms and the fear that primordial solutions such as partition would simply transform ethnic civil wars into ethnic international wars, the literature of the primordialists peace-builders went out of fashion after the 1960's and then re-emerged again the 1980's (Henderson, 1996; Rogers, 1994; Schaeffer, 1990). The thought and scholarly work of the second group of primordialists received encouragement with the peaceful separation of Czechoslovakia in the mid 90's, and this type of conflict resolution has gained in popularity since then. Again the critics say that in the case of the break up of Czechoslovakia and Slovenia's separating from Yugoslavia there were several criteria that had to be met to ensure such peaceful partitions. As for case studies, for every peaceful partition there are at least been two examples of exacerbated conflict because of partitions (Deutscher, 2001: 104 - 106).

### **Instrumentalists**

This study will now turn to explaining the second school of peace building, the instrumentalists. There has been a proliferation of political thought that advocates a change or modification of political institutions to achieve peace, since the early 1990s. This study divides the instrumentalists into two sub categories as well; those who favour the reform of democratic (or non-democratic institutions) within the country, such as the electoral system or the judiciary only, and the other category which favour a more interdependent approach where the reform of the political institutions must go hand in hand with the reconciliation of the peoples in question.

The instrumentalists of the first category, such as Saideman, Lanoue, Barnes, Lijphart and others, feel that by first reforming the political system, either by having a more inclusive electoral system or changing the parliamentary/presidential system, or by reforming the judicial system where justice is measured and meted out, the immediate cause of conflict could be removed, the playing



field is leveled, and (regardless of the past wrongs) diverse peoples will have a chance of reaching equality and equity in the future. The hope is that by leveling the playing field, in time people will feel included and the reasons for conflict will evaporate. Saideman says, “ethnic strife can be managed if they [governments] ameliorate the insecurities perceived by exiting ethnic groups and give politicians relatively few incentives to play the ethnic card” (Saideman, 1998: 148). In his work *‘Democratization, Political Institutions and Ethnic Conflict,’* Saideman concludes that a parliamentary system could be threatening to a minority. However, he adds, that in a presidential system where political parties in the assembly might chose which of the president’s policies to support, ethnic groups may be safer as they have the power to block unfavourable actions toward their group (Saideman et al, 2002). This scholarly thought has been put into practice in countries where the governmental system and/or judicial system has been completely destroyed by ethnic conflict, for example the United Nations has been following this practice of giving more prominence to the reform or reconstruction of a new governmental system and judiciary in Kosovo and East Timor (Strohmeyer, 2002).

Barnes comments on the *‘dark side of democracy.’* Barnes says because democracy is generally associated with economic well being, democracy would be strengthened as long as economic progress lasts. However, *‘if democracy does not produce prosperity at least in the mid term, it is likely to lose legitimacy’* and the post conflict country is likely to lapse into turmoil again (Barnes, 2001: 86). Barnes concludes that while economic development seems to be a key variable, *‘even if direct causation cannot be clearly seen . . .’* the construction of institutions that continue to support the rule of law and inhibit the concentration of power is essential for peace-building (Barnes, 2001: 100). Barnes adds, that *‘the design of these institutions needs to be based on a realistic appreciation of the nature and power of the interests involved . . . the very debate of constitutional forms, the role of a coalition government, consensus versus majoritarianism, consociationalism, parliamentary vs. presidentialism, can be the opportunity to develop a common vocabulary of civic culture’* (Barnes, 2001: 101).

Galtung, Lederach, Rasmussen, Van De Merwe and others who belong to the second category of instrumentalists feel that while the changing or reform of the electoral and judicial system could be helpful, the trickle down effect of peace takes too long and is more of a preventive measure (which is necessary but not sufficient) and not a curative measure in the long run. These scholars borrow from the primordialists in studying the history of conflict and adding a socio-

cultural dimension to the concept of peace building and conflict resolution. The second category of instrumentalists say that in each dimension of peace building, historical restoration, reform of political institutions and socio-cultural reconciliation must go hand in hand if the causes of conflict are to be eradicated and prevented from recurring. Estrada-Hollenbeck argues that *'conflict resolution processes promote restorative justice rather than legalistic justice and are more likely to lead to reconciliation . . . because the identification of parties as either victims or perpetrators is not necessary to the conflict resolution process, third parties do not impose settlements and finally the disputing parties use their subjective understanding of the conflict to identify the problem, shape the course of interaction, collectively and integratively create a settlement and bind them psychologically to the settlement'* (Hollenbeck, 2001: 82).

While agreeing with the above theory Van De Merwe adds, that while *'restorative justice'* is one of the keys to reconciliation, the approaches of these disputing parties to achieve *'restorative justice'* and the conflicting peoples' understanding of the term, *'restorative justice'* is important for a lasting settlement to be reached (Van De Merwe, 2001). Van De Merwe examines the impact that the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) had in South Africa and concludes, *'a key dimension of the different approaches to reconciliation is the tension between top-down and bottom up approaches'* (Van De Merwe, 2001: 204). He says that the TRC could only achieve limited amount of reconciliation in its short life because of the fundamental disagreements between both the local communities and the government about the meaning and purpose of restorative justice. *'Local conceptions of restorative justice embody the need to deal with rebuilding the fabric that been destroyed by the dynamics and culture of violence on a personal basis while the government and TRC dealt with it in a symbolic and impersonal manner'* (Van De Merwe, 2001: 205).

Rasmussen says that, *'if a lasting peace is to be consolidated, reconciliation – as a change of heart and mind – must eventually take place in three relationship domains'* (Rasmussen, 2001: 121). The three domains that he specifies is the 1) political and elitist leaders; 2) various groups within society; and finally 3) relationship building and reconciliation between the state and civil society. Rasmussen concludes that reconciliation in the first and second domain can go on as parallel processes, but that *'rehabilitation and reconstruction of society will be severely impeded if there is an unstable environment (in the first domain) marked by violent competition for political power and control'* (Rasmussen, 2001: 121). Rasmussen concludes that a lasting peace could be achieved *'only by restoring the most basic faith in the possible existence of goodwill'* and only

if all parties involved are willing to *'negotiate a revolution of peace'* (Rasmussen, 2001: 121).

Galtung says reconciliation is *'a theme with deep psychological, sociological, theological, philosophical and profoundly human roots - and nobody really knows how to successfully achieve it'* (Galtung, 2001: 4). Therefore he does not offer any prescriptions on how to peace-build, but only gives different approaches that countries and societies can adopt and adapt to build peace. In his extensive study Galtung gives twelve approaches,<sup>9</sup> of which he says *'taken singly none of these approaches are capable of handling the complexity of the after-violence situation such as healing so many kinds of wounds'* (Galtung, 2001: 19). Galtung says one of the reasons only one approach will not work is because each approach is embedded in dense nets of cultural assumptions. He asserts that if reconciliation is to be achieved, *'Cultural eclecticism is a must. We cannot draw from one culture alone'* (Galtung, 2001: 21). He concludes that the need in all reconciliation approaches is to give it a good start, so that *'from modest beginnings waves of togetherness may spread even from the most turbulent centers'* (Galtung, 2001: 21). Taken together this sub-category of instrumentalists deduce that a *'general theory'* of peace-building is hard to cobble together, because each approach to peace building needs to have a culture specific foundation in order to address the specific needs of after violence trauma.

The common themes in both these categories (primordialists and instrumentalists) and sub-categories is that they all advocate democracy as the form of government that is necessary for Peace-Building. The primordialists advocate democracy in the forms that it is practiced in the United States of America or the United Kingdom while the instrumentalists prefer a more culture specific form of democracy. Nevertheless, democracy is cited as the most desirable form of government because it increases wealth and promotes a more equitable society, therefore creating a middle class as well as promoting human rights, good governance and the rule of law (Barnes, 2001: 101).

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<sup>9</sup> The 12 approaches Galtung prescribes are I) Exculpatory nature-structure-culture approach; II) Reparation/restitution approach; III) Apology /forgiveness approach; IV) Theological/penitence approach; V) Juridical/punishment approach; VI) Codependent/karma approach; VII) Historical/truth commission approach; VIII) Theatrical/reliving approach; IX) The joint sorrow/healing approach; X) The joint reconstruction approach; XI) The joint conflict resolution approach; XII) The ho'o pono pono approach. See Galtung, 2001.

Another common theme in the discussion of Peace-Building is that of justice. Scholars agree that for peace to be consolidated, justice must be even handed, where no one in the state is above the rule of law. In his book explaining the difference between the theory and practice of peace-building Mani encapsulates the necessity of *'justice'* in peace building saying, *'Injustice is not just a consequence of conflict but is also often a symptom and cause of conflict, therefore to restore justice after conflict is to re-link peace and justice after conflict has torn them apart'* (Mani, 2002: 5).

In the following section, this study will endeavor to relate the concepts of good governance and the term *'justice'* to present a theory on the correlations between the reintegration of political prisoners and the process of peace building.

### 3. Theory

The following theory section will first define the key terms. Then it will present a model of Peace-Building caps and use the model as the basis of the theory for this study. The concept of *'discrimination,'* will be discussed and the term will be divided into three sub-categories. The study will illustrate how the three categories of discrimination remain within the political prisoner population and how the residue of such real or perceived “discrimination” could lead to future conflict.

In any discussion the definition of terms is important. For the purpose of this study, the term *'ethnic group'* is drawn from Gurr, who defines it as, *'people who share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on a belief in common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits'* (Gurr, 2000: 5). The term *'ethnic violence'* would be defined in this paper as instances when an *'ethnic group'* protest – make an appeal to government leaders for redress of grievances – and/or rebel – make a conscious attempt to destabilize the government itself (Saideman et al, 2000: 105). The term *'reintegration'* is the process, which would bring people back into society by helping them to achieve economic sustenance, restoring his or her relationships, and moving him/her toward independent living, so that he or she can contribute as individuals again.

The definition of Political Prisoners has evolved over the years. Before World War I the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), defined them as Prisoners of War - combatants imprisoned after major international conflicts (Armstrong, 1985: 621). After World War I with the increase of civil conflicts

throughout the world the term 'Political Prisoner' was redefined. The term now included '*noncombatants imprisoned during a civil war*' (Armstrong, 1985: 625).

The term was modified again as civil and ethnic wars became protracted and turned into low intensity conflicts. Civil wars (and in most cases ethnic conflicts) mean armed conflicts within borders of states. However, unlike in the trans-border conflicts, which are mostly decided by diplomacy and military power, civil wars have exploited another dimension – domestic law – for more powerful socio-cultural and ethnic groups to maintain their hegemony over less powerful ones.

The law however was not used in isolation. It was used hand in hand with the state's security apparatus. Examples of Northern Ireland, Kashmir, South Africa and Nepal illustrate that states used both the law and the armed forces/ police/ intelligence to crack down on '*dissidents*' and '*rebels*.' What they realized soon was that law, applied to all citizens uniformly, and was not sufficient to curb such '*dissidence*'. '*Special*' laws were needed that would specifically target these '*dissident*' communities and terrorize them into submission.

It is with such an intention that '*special*' or security-related laws were enacted in various countries. These laws had two objectives: (a) physically to confine and torture civilians so that their day-to-day concerns would be survival, rather than entertaining ideas about the socio-political and cultural aspirations they wanted fulfilled, and (b) to destroy leadership in civilian communities by targeting leaders specifically.

In both these cases, it was easier to confine and torture, rather than eliminate persons seen as rebels and dissidents, since arbitrary taking of life would create national and international repercussions. It was more prudent to represent them as '*threats to national security*' and enact special laws to curb their rights. Such laws when applied restricted a range of rights: movement, assembly, expression, language, conscience and political freedom.

It is important to note, however, that special law, though framed to suppress socio-cultural and political rights, was drafted in such a way that it interpreted certain activities, or activities in certain areas as acts against the state, endangering its integrity and sovereignty. Therefore, these laws were not overtly seen as repressing group rights, but as suppressing dissidence, sedition or rebellion against the state. It

is such systematic use of the law with the twin aims of purging people of 'dangerous' ideas, as well as destroying civilian leadership, that led to the confinement and detention of large groups of people. They were charged with violating security laws and became political prisoners. Therefore, inevitably in a situation where arrests are so arbitrarily set in motion, *'many people who are being held as political prisoners have no political past, but have been victimized as relatives or friends of person being sought by the state'* (Van Der Kroef, 1977: 630). Thus, for this study the definition of a 'Political Prisoner' will be borrowed from both Armstrong and Van Der Kroef and be defined as; non-combatants imprisoned under special security laws, regardless of their political ideology.

When these civil and ethnic wars come to an end, it is easy to dismantle or modify such laws by a legislative act,<sup>10</sup> however it is not easy to wipe away the damage these laws have done to the society in question. Political prisoners have come into direct contact with the warring parties and the experience they have had with at least one warring faction (whoever arrested them) is bitter, which makes reintegration, in a peace-building context more difficult. Their experiences, in most cases, infect the society around them, which makes reintegration of the society they live in more challenging as well. Political prisoners are therefore vital in any peace-building exercise because their grievances have to be addressed.

States with a history of ethnic or civil strife rely heavily on *'special powers'* or *'prevention of terrorism acts'*, which encourage mass arrests and discourages the due process of law (Boyle, 1977: 676). Due to such special laws, there are many prisoners who are not ideologues or combatants, but simply those who have an ethnic similarity to the rebels confined behind bars. This study focuses on political prisoners such as described above and will concentrate on such prisoners who are interned only by the state under special security laws.

This study differentiates between *'prisoners'* and *'political prisoners'* for several reasons. Special security laws such as the prevention of terrorism acts or special powers acts were introduced with the specific intention of curbing terrorism or rebellion challenging the sovereignty of the state. In 1981, the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,

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<sup>10</sup> Eg. South Africa and Uganda have done away with such laws, when enacting a new constitution. Britain has modified its Special Powers Act with a Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2000, after the Belfast Agreement was signed.

criticized 20 countries which had such statutes, which did not partially or completely comply with the ICCPR because of at least one of the following reasons:<sup>11</sup> These statutes define terrorism loosely (or do not define it at all) and include a number of acts that are punishable as terrorism, thereby limiting the political freedom of the citizen. Second, those who were arrested are usually subject to much more stringent measures than those taken in under normal law (e.g. in Sri Lanka - under the Prevention of Terrorism Act) confessions before a police officer are admissible as evidence in court, no bail given, and a period of up to 72 hours is allowed before the police need to produce a suspect before a magistrate, all which do not apply under normal law. The 72-hour rule allows systematic torture to take place before the suspect is brought before a magistrate. The police are given the right to arrest or search property without warrant, which does not apply under normal law. Though the matter comes up before court those taken in under special security laws find it much more arduous to prove their innocence due to inbuilt hurdles in the system than those arrested under normal law have to face. Finally, prisoners can be held indefinitely without indictment or are denied trial by jury (such as in the '*Diplock Courts*' in Northern Ireland) under the special powers acts (Fairweather et al, 1984: 25).

'Peace-building' has been defined as '*actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order avoid a relapse into conflict*' (UN '*Agenda for Peace*' 1992). Peace research differentiates between negative peace and positive peace. The former being an absence of war, such as a cessation of hostilities, and the latter, which involves the removal of structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1975: 25). Peace researchers have acknowledged that achieving a balance between these two concepts is difficult but necessary in order to consolidate peace - '*Peace-building has to aim to achieve its objectives of negative and positive peace simultaneously - not consecutively - in order to be sustainable*' (Mani, 2002: 13). Lederach sees peace building as a dynamic process and defines it as, '*a comprehensive term that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of stages and approaches needed to transform conflict towards sustainable, peaceful relations and outcomes*' (Lederach, 1997: 63). This study will use Lederach's definition of the concept.

Modern day peace-building scholars have begun to advocate peace-building models, which involves not only politicians and warring factions but also the

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<sup>11</sup> UN Press releases HR/1099, 1100 and 1101. 1981.

general populace' as well. One of the widely used models was introduced by Lederach (1996). His model has been the basis on which scholars have based prescriptions for peace building for countries as diverse as Northern Ireland to Ghana.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this study will use his model as the basis of this paper.

Lederach gives a three-tiered model for peace building. The top level comprises politicians, the military and bureaucratic elites who engage in high level negotiations that aim at reaching a political '*solution*'. At the middle level there is input from religious leaders, trade unions and intellectuals. While the bottom tier is comprised of grassroots level actors such as NGOs, the voluntary and community sectors, and local activists. According to Lederach, the grassroots level is the tier where '*many of the symptoms of conflict are manifest*' while those at the top of the pyramid are least likely to be affected by its consequences on a day-to-day basis (Lederach, 1996: 42).

Lederach concludes that the top-level official process is incapable of delivering on its own. He says, the '*single most important aspect of encouraging an organic perspective (to peace-building) is in creating a genuine sense of participation, responsibility and ownership in the process across a broad spectrum of the population and there is a need for an organic approach for peace building*' (Lederach, 1996: 49). He prescribes a '*web of reconciliation*' (1996:50) that would consolidate peace, saying, '*We must move beyond short-term crisis orientation and toward the development of a capacity to think about social change in terms of decades and generations*' (Lederach, 1996: 53). The challenge of reconciliation and peace-building he says '*. . . is to open up the social space that permits and encourages individuals and societies as a collective to acknowledge the past . . . and reach toward the next step of rebuilding the relationship that has been broken*' (Lederach, 1996: 54).

One method of acknowledging the past is to investigate into the original causes of the conflict. Once the original causes of conflict are known, society could move to the next step of trying to eliminate or mitigate those causes of conflict. Such actions to remove the underlying causes of war would lead to Peace-Building.

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<sup>12</sup> For more on Lederach's model see:- Asefa, Hizkias; "Co-existence and Reconciliation in the Northern Region of Ghana" 2001. Abu-Nimer, Mohamed; "Education of Coexistence in Israel" 2001. Fitzduff, Mari; "The Challenge to History: Justice, Co-existence and Reconciliation Work in Northern Ireland" 2001. McCandless, Erin; "The case of Land in Zimbabwe" 2001. & Van de Merwe, Hugo; "Reconciliation and Justice in South Africa" 2001.



In ethnic conflict, the main structural cause of war is *'discrimination'*. *'Discrimination'* or *'group discrimination'* has been defined as *'political, economic and cultural restrictions that are invidiously imposed on members of ethnic, religious and other communal minorities as a matter of public policy or social practice'* (Gurr, 2000: 106). As the world has not only seen discrimination of the minority by the majority but vice versa as well, this paper will modify the above definition to include *'all groups'* instead of *'minorities'* only. This study includes *'all groups'* because the example of South Africa, illustrates that the minority can discriminate against the majority as well. In the world today, politicians to exacerbate real or perceived discrimination and foment ethnic violence between groups have used the word *'discrimination'* loosely (Lake & Rothschild, 1998: 4). Examples of this would be in Yugoslavia, where Slobodan Milosevich fanned the perception that Serbs had been economically discriminated against by the ethnic minorities (Lake & Rothschild, 1998: 7). In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala (78% of the population in Sri Lanka) elite instilled the fear (in the Sinhala polity) that any type of autonomy to the minority populations would ultimately lead to the annihilation of the Sinhala race (DeVotta, 2002: 88). In Northern Ireland, there is the trepidation of the Protestant Irish that any political concessions to the Catholic Irish would lead to an amalgamation with the Republic of Ireland rendering the Protestants an impotent minority (Fairweather et al, 1984: 24). The claims of discrimination has led to long and protracted civil wars where both the majority and the minority communities have claimed *'discrimination'*. Given the conflicting claims of discrimination, this study is not interested in "who" does the discrimination but in *'how'* the discrimination takes place. By eliminating the structural process by which *'discrimination'* has, or still does take place, *'one set of commonly identified causes of conflict'* will be removed, making the task of peace-building so much easier (Mani, 2002:127).

As the most commonly identified causes of conflict *'discrimination'* is a salient causal factor and mitigating its effects would strengthen peace in a post-conflict country. Scholars have argued that *'horizontal inequality - that is inequality among groups - rather than vertical inequality between individuals - is the fundamental source of organized conflict'* (Mani, 2002: 128). Smith's paper on *'Legitimacy, Justice and Preventive Intervention'*, notes that *'the most war prone states were not the most ethnically diverse . . .'* but the states where *'ethnic differences provide easy material for group mobilization by political leaders and the sense of ethnic identity coheres around resentment and claimed grievance'* (Smith, 1997: 20).

In order to understand the causes of conflict, this study will break down *'discrimination'* into three categories; 1) political discrimination; 2) socio-cultural discrimination; and 3) economic discrimination. Again the above three categories are not distinct but mutually reinforcing. Political discrimination will include legal discrimination such as laws that advocate or promote unfair practices against groups. For example the Act of Union (1910) which ensures that the native African population will have an inferior status in South Africa (Knox & Quirk, 2000: 149), or laws such as the PTA and Emergency Regulations in Sri Lanka, where *'violence is institutionalized into the very laws and the whole system works to perpetuate a coercive control over a subjective people'* (Somasundaram, 1998: 317). Such legal discrimination tends to stifle political opportunities for groups. This in turn augments the perception of injustices by one group in relation to another, such as depriving groups of a *'legitimate place in the country'* (Horowitz, 1985: 135). Some scholars have concluded that such perceptions of injustices could invoke passions that drive and sustain ethnic conflicts much further than materialist values such as economic inequalities (Horowitz 1985: Harff & Gurr 1998: Schock 1996).

Socio-cultural discrimination could occur as a result of public policy or social practice and could range from restrictions *'on the pursuit of a groups' cultural interest or expression of their customs and values'* to the lack of state funding for education in a group's language (Gurr, 2000: 118). Examples of such discriminative public policy would be the lack of state funding for Irish Catholic Schools in Northern Ireland to *'restrictions imposed on admissions of Tamils to universities through standardization'* (Somasundaram, 1998: 312). Women not finding work because they wear headscarves and are perceived to be Muslim in France and white children being banned by their parents from playing with black children are examples of socio-cultural discrimination through social practice (Gurr, 2000: 118). Such socio-cultural discrimination with anomalies in the education and skill development fields feeds greater economic discrimination as it causes greater unemployment.

Economic discrimination would be defined as the extent that members of one group *'are or have been systematically limited in access to desirable economic goods, conditions and positions that are open to other groups in their society'* (Gurr, 2000: 109). Schock's *'Conjunctural Model'* on the causes of conflict *'shows that income inequality has a strong positive relation to political violence'* (Schock, 1996: 118). Such income inequality has a bigger impact when the inequality is between groups. Horowitz points out that,

“the economic underpinning of group hostility has been a persistent undercurrent in the literature of ethnic conflict” (Horowitz, 1985: 106). The United Kingdom found in a study it conducted during peace negotiations leading up to the ‘*Good Friday Agreement*’ that ‘*on all major economic indicators . . . Catholics experience much greater levels of disadvantage... and these differential experiences sustain feelings of disadvantage, discrimination and alienation among Catholics, which in turn influence attitudes to political and security issues*’ (Knox & Quirk, 2000: 53).

To rectify the above ‘*discrimination*’ Mani, like the other advocates of multi-dimensional peace building prescribes that ‘*justice*’ must be delivered. Mani divides justice into three dimensions - 1) legal justice or the rule of law; 2) rectificatory justice – which is defined as correcting past wrongs in terms of direct human consequences of conflict; and 3) distributive justice – which focuses on rectifying structural and systematic injustices such as ‘*political and economic discrimination and inequalities of distribution that are frequently the underlying causes of conflict*’ (Mani, 2002: 6).

As illustrated by the examples of South Africa, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, in a conflict situation where violence is pervasive the demarcations as to who is the victim and who is the perpetrator are not always clear, making the deliverance of ‘*justice*’ to one group or another in post conflict countries extremely difficult. Marie Smythe, a Northern Ireland peace activist points out, ‘*it is more discomforting for members of a society to acknowledge ways in which by action or inaction by benefiting from an unjust system or being a passive bystander they might have contributed to perpetrating or permitting injustice*’ (Mani, 2002: 121). Because of the implications of whole societies being perpetrators and/or victims, scholars are now using the term ‘*survivor*’ ‘*making the distinction between perpetrator and victim pointless*’ (Minnow, 1998: 35). Recognizing this shortcoming in his prescription of ‘*justice*’ Mani has modified the concept of ‘*Rectificatory Justice*’ and replaces it with ‘*Reparatory Justice*’. Reparatory justice is defined as a form of justice, which would ‘*make use of combinations of existing legal and social means of reparation, while providing an overarching framework to understand and respond to the survivors’ claims for justice for past violations arising in the aftermath of conflict*’ (Mani, 2002: 174). Therefore, ‘*Reparatory Justice is both sensitive to the nature of the offences and their impact on victims, offenders and societies, and flexible in devising a suitable combination of responses to them*’ (Mani, 2002: 175).

In theory, the necessity to reintegrate ex-political prisoners with the rest of society lies within the ambit of reparatory justice. When a prisoner is released justice is believed to be complete, as the prisoner is released from prison because the justice

system deems it the just action.<sup>13</sup> However, justice is not completely delivered to these ex-detainees because: 1) the lack of social acceptance and stigma as a political prisoner: releasees return to hostility and a lack of co-operation from their neighbors – especially in villages or urban areas which identify with the ‘enemy’ and their presence creates obstacles in social relations giving rise to tensions within their families and immediate surroundings. 2) Prisoners go back to lives where employment is largely denied to them because of their internment status. 3) Ex-prisoners live in fear despite release, as they are liable to re-arrest by military and paramilitary groups because they are noted to be ex-detainees. 4) Released prisoners usually continue to be victims of post-traumatic stress disorders and are reportedly subject to psychological and psychosomatic illnesses. Prisoners sometimes are tortured so badly they cannot ply their trades because physical abuse during detention prevents them doing strenuous physical work. Therefore, discriminatory causes of conflict are manifest in the ex-political prisoners, and their non-reintegration into society will only magnify the discrimination.

Survivors’ narratives disclose the manner in which they are forced into vulnerable positions and experiences of loss of trust in the immediate world, after their release. Mistrust breeds fear, and fear breeds violence. However, through reintegration programs the released political prisoner would be able to regain some of their trust in society. Then they will be able to renew their relationships with society and contribute to society as individuals. Such reintegration will reduce the perceived discriminatory practices against political prisoners. Thereby, through reintegration of ex-political prisoners many of the underlying causes of war could be eliminated.

In summary, this theory section cites three of the main causes of ethnic-conflict as political, socio-cultural, and economic discrimination. This analysis illustrates that these three main causes of conflict are manifest in the lives of political prisoners, even after their release. Given that Peace-Building is ‘*actions to remove the causes of conflict*’, this study hypothesises that;

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<sup>13</sup>. Either the prisoner has been released from prison because the judicial system finds him or her not guilty or because he or she has served their time for which they were found guilty and is released at the time stipulated by the courts.

*H1: If political prisoners are not reintegrated then the process of Peace-Building is undermined, leading to further conflict.*

As methods to strengthen the process of peace-building, scholars have prescribed three types of justice – 1) legal justice or the rule of law, 2) distributive justice and 3) reparatory justice. Reparatory Justice is defined as one that includes the first two types of justice to understand and respond to conflict survivors' claims for justice. Since there have been modest studies on the subject of life after prison, for political prisoners in ethnic conflicts, this study is of the opinion that the reintegration of political prisoners should come under '*reparatory justice*'.

This study asserts that the reintegration of political prisoners is one of the necessary building blocks to bring about a lasting peace. As there has been little investigation into the lives of released prisoners and because they continue to suffer discrimination even after the cessation of hostilities, this study has chosen to focus on them. This study will now present the methodology by which it gathered data to test the research question.

## **4. Methodology**

Political prisoners were identified as those who had been arrested under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979. This study decided only to look at prisoners released after 1985. This decision was taken because it would allow the survey to compare the lives of prisoners who had at least a 15-year period to reintegrate with society at large and those who did not. It also allowed for the inclusion and comparison of prisoners who were released under the general amnesty of 1987,<sup>14</sup> and those who had been released by the judiciary. Such a time-period allowed for an insight into the lives of the released prisoners under two governments<sup>15</sup> as well as before and after three failed attempts<sup>16</sup> at a peaceful settlement.

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<sup>14.</sup> A General Amnesty was declared in 1987 releasing prisoners arrested under the PTA for minor offences (providing food and information to the LTTE) as a goodwill gesture right after the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of 1987 was signed.

<sup>15.</sup> The government of the United National Party was in power until 1994 after which the leftist coalition government of the Peoples' Alliance was ruling until 2002. In 2002 the general elections brought in a hybrid government, where the President is from the Peoples' Alliance and the Prime Minister is from the United National Party.

<sup>16.</sup> The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of 1987, and subsequent peace talks in 1990 and 1994.

The study was conducted in 2003, between May and July. It surveyed only prisoners who were arrested in the North and East of Sri Lanka because it is only looking at political prisoners who have been arrested and released in regard to ethnic conflicts.<sup>17</sup> The total sample size was ninety-five interviewees. Forty-eight of those surveyed were political prisoners and forty-seven comprised the sample group of those not arrested but living in the same area as the prisoners. The sample was divided district-wise, into four districts, Trincomallee, Batticaloa and Amparai (Eastern Province) and Jaffna (Northern Province). Wherever possible the survey attempted to draw equally from released prisoners who lived in towns, villages and refugee camps,<sup>18</sup> to control for effects of different living conditions. A village in an area controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) was also surveyed.

In the absence of comprehensive records of released prisoners, the sample was selected with the help of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Home for Human Rights (HHR) which provides legal aid to prisoners arrested under the PTA and monetary assistance to those affected by war. The Family Rehabilitation Center (FRC) that provides medical help for those affected by war trauma also gave the researcher permission to interview their patients who were ex-prisoners, if the individual prisoner did not have any objection to being interviewed. Therefore, a sample selection bias towards ex-prisoners who have sought or seeking medical, judicial and financial help is likely. However, once the researcher had explained the purpose of the survey, through word-of-mouth several ex-prisoners who were not connected with the two above-mentioned NGO's came forward to be interviewed and were included in the survey. Given the sensitive nature of the topic and the trauma suffered by the interviewees in most cases, the researcher was always introduced to the village by an NGO worker. The NGO worker was not present at the time of interview so the interviewee could speak of his/her own will.

The method used to gather information was the survey/questionnaire. The questionnaire was formulated with the help of the professors at the University of Houston and University of St. Thomas as well as the HHR. In order to quantify personal preferences most questions were based on a five point ordinal scale - '1)

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<sup>17.</sup> There are prisoners who have been arrested under the PTA in the south of the country as well – but they were arrested due to a Marxist insurrection.

<sup>18.</sup> These villages and refugee camps will remain anonymous, primarily because these villages and refugee camps are small where everyone knows everyone else and therefore the case studies could be identified easily.

*no fear 2) somewhat fearful 3) moderately fearful 4) very fearful 5) extremely fearful (think about it all the time)*'.

While questionnaires can be useful, their limitations are many. Anthropologists raised these limitations in data gathering through questionnaires and stated that other unstructured methods of interviewing were necessary to obtain a clearer understanding of the subject at hand (Leach, 1967). Each questionnaire was followed up with amorphous dialogues, conversations and interviews as a means of gathering qualitative data. Doctors, lawyers NGO and government personnel were also interviewed to gain a better picture of the ground situation of the villages and ascertain the veracity of some facts that had come to light during the survey process. Documents such as court proceedings and Judicial Medical Reports were also perused wherever possible to verify the stories of the ex-prisoners.

The data collected was then used to create a data set with bi-variate correlations. The study then sought to identify best line of fit based on an R-Square to measure the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between variables. This study found that in some data, correlations between the variables were easier to comprehend looking at the data using a linear line of regression. However the best line of fit was the cubic regression. All of the above methods were used to obtain and quantify the findings of this study, which is detailed below.

## 5. Case Study

Sri Lanka is just emerging from an ethnic war of twenty years, between the majority ethnic group - the Sinhalese and one of the minority ethnic communities – the Tamils. It is an island in the Indian Ocean, and has a population of 18 million people. This section will examine the lives of political prisoners arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 after their release, and analyze the manner in which they ought to be rehabilitated in order for lasting peace to be achieved in country.

In order to downplay '*the numbers game*' of the parliamentary system where the majority ethnic group ruled<sup>19</sup>, a presidential system modeled after the semi-authoritarian '*Gaullist system*' of France was introduced in 1978 (Wilson, 1992: 153). '*First there was a search for executive stability*' and '*secondly there was an anxiety to*

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<sup>19</sup>. As seen in the run up to the Parliamentary elections of 1956, - Devotta: 2002.

*create and maintain consensual politics, which were both intended as devices to pull the country out of its political morass*' (Wilson, 1992: 153). However these twin goals were not achieved mainly due to the constitution giving the President near dictatorial powers, which was used freely against the separatists and *'anyone – Sinhalese and Tamil who openly challenged the government's authority'* (Devotta, 2002: 91).

An integral part of *'the near dictatorial powers vested in state to use freely against anyone who openly challenged the government's authority'* is the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 (PTA). This Act was *'enacted to deal with elements or groups of persons or associations that advocate use of force to accomplish governmental change'* (Ganeshalingam, 2002: 22). While the PTA has been deemed to violate several internationally accepted fundamental rights instruments (the right to be informed of the reason of arrest, right to legal counsel before trial, and the right to freedom from torture amongst others) the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka could not challenge the PTA<sup>20</sup> because *'when the PTA bill was referred to this court, the court did not have to decide whether or not any of those provisions constituted reasonable restriction on Articles 12(1), 13(1) and 13(2) permitted by Article (15)(7) (in the interests of national security, etc.), because the court was informed the Bill passed with two-thirds majority. Accordingly, in terms of Article 84 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka, PTA became law despite many inconsistencies with constitutional provisions'*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20.</sup> The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka has jurisdiction to determine the constitutionality of any bill under article 120 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka. However Parliament could overrule the SC determination with a super majority.

<sup>21.</sup> (I). Violating Article 12 (I) (Right to the equality and equal protection of the law), which includes right to fair trial: 15 of the PTA states "Every person who commits an offense under this Act shall be tried without a preliminary inquiry, on an indictment before a Judge of the Supreme Court sitting alone without a jury."

(II). Violating Article 12 (I) (Right to the equality and equal protection of the law) that includes right not to incriminate oneself: 16 (1) of PTA states "Notwithstanding provisions of any other Law where a person is charged with any offence under this Act any statement made by such a person at any time whether it amounts to a confession or not; a) it amounts to a confession or not; b) Made orally or reduced to writing; c) Such a person was in custody or in the presence of a police officer; d) made in the course of an investigation or not; e) It was or was not wholly or partly in answer to any question; "May be proved against such a person if such a statement is not irrelevant under Section 24 of the Evidence Ordinance. "Provided however that no such statement shall be proved against such a person if such a statement was made to a police officer below the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police."

(III). Violating Article 13 of the Constitution (Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention and punishment and prohibition of retroactive penal legislation): 6 (1) of the PTA states "Any police officer not below the rank of Superintendent or any other police officer not below the rank of sub-inspector authorized by him in writing, without warrant, with or without assistance and notwithstanding in the law to the contrary – a) arrest any person; b) enter and search any premises; c) stop and search any individual or vehicle, vessel, train or aircraft; and d) seize any document or thing connected with or concerned in ... any unlawful activity" (Ganeshalingam, 2002: 22).



(Opinion of Justice Mark Fernando, *Weerawansa V Attorney General & others*, 2000).

Given the arbitrariness of the legislation, it is safe to say that this piece of legislation alone has done much to fan the fires of the protracted conflict –

*it is not surprising that such regulations (PTA and emergency regulations) together with a situation combining some of the worst aspects of both ethnic conflict and guerrilla war produced extensive violations of human rights. The press, scholars and several human rights organizations have portrayed practices that . . . depict the security forces as practicing indiscriminate mass arrests and detention of Tamil young men, frequent, systematic, torture of such detainees and reprisal killing of Tamil civilians covered by either denial of the arrest or reports of encounters with terrorists.* (Rubin, 1987: 27).

The following case studies illustrate how such laws as the PTA have fermented political, socio-cultural, and economic discrimination within the political prisoner community even after their release. In 1996 Kathiravelu,<sup>22</sup> who owned a grocery store in a town in the east was arrested by the STF while transporting biscuits, soap, sweets etc. to replenish stocks in his grocery store. He was charged with taking supplies to the “Tigers” (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam – LTTE), for not giving information about them and not revealing the identity of members of the LTTE visiting his shop.

Kathiravelu was taken to the Special Task Force (STF – an elite group of the police trained specially for counter terrorism) camp, manacled and thrown from the lorry he was transported in. He was kicked in the stomach and beaten with poles. His genitals were trampled by boot-wearing STF personnel. He was repeatedly lowered, head first, into a tank of water till he choked. All this was to obtain a confession from him that he was guilty of the afore-mentioned crimes.

He was remanded at ‘*Magazine prison*’ for one-and-a-half years. He was then transferred to ‘*Kalutara prison*’ and released in 2001. He was not tortured while in prison except for an occasional beating. Before this he was arrested twice – 1990 and 1992, on both occasions by the STF. He was detained for one month in 1990 and according to him ‘*the torture was not severe, just a few beatings a day*’. But in 1992

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<sup>22</sup> All names and places have been changed to protect the privacy of the detainees.

he was imprisoned for six months. During this time, he was suspended from a beam and beaten on his heels several times and given the '*water tank treatment*'.<sup>23</sup>

The bouts of torture he suffered caused unbearable spasms pain in his stomach, bleeding from his mouth and in his urine and disfigurement of his knuckles.<sup>24</sup> The wound in his stomach became a cyst for which he underwent surgery in 2002. Though he seemed cured, the symptoms have returned and he might have to be operated again. He has recurring pains in the chest and thinking about his condition makes him feel dizzy. Due to circumstances (see below) the grocery was closed. He does not have capital to hire people to work for him. Today he has no job and lives on the benevolence of his wife and her family with the prospect of another surgery of his stomach looming.

While Kathiravelu was in detention, his wife Poomani was running the grocery. In December 1997 the STF came looking for her. Since she was not at home the STF gave instructions to her family to send her to their camp. When she went there she was ordered to go inside. She refused and the STF set upon her assaulting her with T-56 gun butts, batons and also kicked her. The beating was so severe that she fell unconscious and had to get her sister to take her home.

Since she was bleeding continuously she was warded for some days in hospital and discharged. Her nightmare had not ended, however. In 1999 the STF returned in search of her. Though she is not sure, she believes it was because her husband and sisters were in detention (see below). Fearing that if she remained she too could be arrested, Poomani fled to a place in the LTTE-controlled area, leaving her children aged seven and four with her mother.

Though the LTTE-controlled areas were secure, Poomani could not find proper medical treatment. When she returned home after the Ceasefire Agreement was signed in 2002, the grocery was closed because there was nobody to run it and there was no money. What is more, neither she nor Kathiravelu can do hard work due their physical condition. Her only source of income today is selling string-hoppers (a staple made out of rice flour), with which she has to fend for two children and also look after Kathiravelu's medical wants.

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<sup>23.</sup> The "Water Tank" treatment is when the victim is tied by his legs and held upside down and dipped into a large body of water.

<sup>24.</sup> All claims of medical problems by the ex-detainees presented in this paper were verified against the reports presented by the Judicial Medical Officer at their respective trials.

Stepping back in time to take up the thread of this story, Poomani has two sisters: Malar and Geetha. In May 1999 the Counter Subversive Unit (CSU) (another elite unit of the police) came one afternoon asking for them. Malar said her sister was in school. After assaulting Malar's parents accusing them of hiding arms, the CSU told Malar to come with them. She refused on the plea there was no policewoman in the arresting party. They were told her father could come along. The jeep went to the school and asked for Geetha who was then only 18. She too was bundled into the jeep. The vehicle then went to the town, searching for Poomani because the CSU believed she was staying there.

Their father was pushed out of the jeep and it sped to the police station. There, the two sisters were stripped to their underclothing and beaten on their backs and hips with S-lon pipes filled with cement. Each was threatened with rape in the presence of the other. They were not allowed to talk to each other and kept in a lighted room, which was closed whenever senior police officers came to the station. After a brief separation when one of them was detained in another police station, they were both held in a remand prison together for two years. Their case came up in the Sri Lankan High Court where lawyers were able to prove the prosecution had forged a document stating the sisters were not tortured. The case collapsed and they were released in 2001.

This tale of relentless tragedy has yet another episode. One day when Geetha's matter had come up in court her fiancé, Ragu, had been present to watch the proceedings. He was arrested when a 'spotter,' who was allegedly an ex-LTTE member working with the CSU, 'identified' him. He was charged with being in possession of bombs to attack a training camp. He was held for six months in detention, of which 40 days were spent in the CSU, where he was tortured.

He was beaten by thick plastic pipes filled with cement and batons, placed naked on the ground and hit on his chest, buttocks, and stomach. Unable to withstand the torture he agreed to confess to concealing information when the LTTE robbed a tailoring shop making army uniforms. A human rights organization filed a Fundamental Rights application for which the CSU failed to appear in Court on two days. On the third day the attorney general said he was withdrawing the indictment. Ragu was free.

Ragu married Geetha later. Ragu, Geetha and Malar still bear the scars of their torture. Ragu's palms and buttocks were swollen after the whipping and the wall

of his stomach has been damaged permanently. Today he cannot sit over a long period of time because he gets stomach cramps. He now lives on Geetha's meager income from a grocery store she has managed to start.

Geetha complains of bleeding even now and the psychological trauma of being humiliated in front of her classmates prevented her from returning to school. Though only 30, Malar bleeds from her mouth, has backaches and her foot hurts when she walks long distances. Though she is a skilful seamstress she cannot help the family because her foot swells and hurts when she operates the pedal of the sewing machine. She says the CSU took away her GCE Ordinary Level (High School Certificate) results sheet, so that she has no documents even to apply for a job. She now helps out with a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) dealing with war victims. Despite the above trauma, this family considers itself lucky. At least one of the family members has found permanent employment after detention, while another has managed to open a grocery store. *'Even though we are now poor, I am not useless and I can try to pay back some of the debts my family incurred because of our arrests'*, said Malar. Geetha, even after her spell in detention, got married and therefore is not completely shunned by a culture where the standing of women in society is determined by their marital status.

The story of Dharini is different. At 22 she was working as a nurses' aid in a government hospital. The job was salaried which meant her financial future was secure. Her only dream was to provide her brother and younger sister with an education that she did not have because her father was a poor farmer in the war zone. However, in 2001 while on her way to work she was accosted at one of the many checkpoints that are ubiquitous in the North and East of Sri Lanka. As her identity card declared that she had been born in an area that was now controlled by the LTTE, the police arrested her. Later she was charged for *'supplying goods to the LTTE'*, and *'supplying information to the LTTE'* and detained for over one year. She was beaten with pipes and had chili powder thrown on her face, into her eyes and mouth. Her face was also submerged in a plastic bag that had been dipped in gasoline. After one year she was released, with a verdict of *'not guilty'* by the high court, because the state could not press charges due to the lack of evidence.

Although she had been released, the trauma she underwent in prison was just the beginning. Her father had mortgaged his farm in order to visit his daughter in prison. The prison was located in a different district, which meant that the trip to

and fro was very expensive. Therefore now his family is impoverished and he is working as a laborer for a daily wage whenever he can find work. Since Dharini's arrest, work has been hard to come by because the Sinhala villagers in her hometown believe that she is guilty and thereby refuse to give her father work, while the Tamils believe she was raped in custody and therefore 'unclean' and want nothing to do with her family. Her mother is suffering from severe psychological depression after Dharini's arrest because she fears her daughter is stigmatized and there is no hope of marriage for her. As the courts have exonerated Dharini, the law states that she could return to her government paid job, once she gets a police report. *I went several times to the police station, but they kept telling me to come on another date. Finally, when my father angrily demanded the police report, they threatened to re-arrest me. I never returned to the police station*, she said. Dharini suffers from headaches and dislikes being away from her home. Therefore her brother and younger sister have given up their schooling and try to find some work to increase the family income. Dharini, said she is afraid even to contemplate the future, *I have thought about committing suicide several times, however because the stigma of a suicide will mar my sister's future, I desisted*'.

The above two stories illustrate how the released detainees suffer discrimination and also how those immediately related to them are discriminated against as well. The story of Dharini exemplifies that even though in theory the provisions of the PTA does not operate after once the detainee is released, discriminatory social practices such as the attitude of her neighbors and the cavalier attitude of the police have put her in a position where she and her family are economically disadvantaged as well.

Vijitha is a 60-year-old mother of two. She was arrested in 1990 at her home. She was held at different police stations for a year and a half before she was charged, during which time she was tortured. She was tied to a tree and whipped. Water was poured down her nose repeatedly and she was beaten on the head with plastic pipes resulting in a blood clot, which later had to be operated on. She was charged with providing food to the LTTE. *I am guilty*, she said, *My son was in the movement and I have fed him*'. The courts returned the verdict of 'guilty' but because she had already been detained for two years (at the time of the verdict) and because of her torture during custody, she was only fined Rs.7500 (\$75) and released immediately. Right after Vijitha was arrested, the army took her to her daughters' school to identify her. Her daughter who was studying to take up her GCE Ordinary Level examination at the time of Vijitha's arrest had dropped out of

school after this incident because she was afraid that the police would come after her in school. Vijitha's son had died in action during her detention.

However, even after her release, the army had continued to visit her home and beat her husband and herself several times. Once they had beaten her husband so badly that he could not return to work husking paddy for a week. *'After the army came the first time I sent my daughter to my sister in the city – there she will be safe'*, said Vijitha. She has not seen her daughter since. *'I am afraid to leave my house, whenever I see a man in uniform I start shaking in fear'*, she said. Vijitha used to make a living selling string-hoppers. Now, however she cannot make string-hoppers because her hands quiver too much (she attributes it to the blood clot). Although her husband does have seasonal work, they are heavily in debt, as she had to borrow money to pay for her hospital expenses and to send her daughter to the city.

The story of Vijitha illustrates the difficulty in differentiating between victim and perpetrator. Nobody, including herself denies that she was guilty of her crime. The fact remains, however, that even though she did her time in prison, her rights were not restored to her after she was released. She still is afraid to move about freely and she cannot seek protection from the state because the authorities harass her with impunity.

Even to those who have not been arrested, these detainees are seen as an example of what could happen to their children. Vasuki, is employed at an NGO in the eastern province, she has never been detained she says because her father is a Sinhalese. She has lived in the eastern province for most of her adult life and has seen her father been assassinated by a Tamil paramilitary group. She is married to a Tamil. She said, *'I have small children now, when I see these detainees, I fear if that would be the future of my children. If I am to know that peace has come this fear must be removed'*. In this manner the lives of the detainees have affected those who live around them as well.

The above section demonstrates that the released detainees are politically discriminated not only by the law but also the implications of the experience with the law. For example, detainees could seek legal redress for the arbitrary actions of the police beatings in their own homes and the confiscation of documents etc after their release. However, the detainees do not seek such redress because they perceive that all law is biased against them and questioning the law will only lead to their detention again. Such a de-legitimizing perceptions of the rule of law in

a country, could lead to chaos and conflict. The case studies illustrate that the ex-detainees are socio-culturally and economically discriminated because of societal norms and loss of skills. Employers do not want to hire anyone who has been released because they fear that either the government will regard them (the employer) suspiciously or that the ex-detainee will be re-arrested again or will not be as productive as someone who has never been arrested, due to the physical and/or psychological problems suffered by the ex-detainee. The case studies also determined that not only are the lives of the detainees and their families affected but also those who live around them. Such a fear of what the government could do breeds suspicion within communities. Scholars have determined that such a suspicion within communities tears at the fabric of society and inhibits the ability of its individual members to work toward reconciliation and reintegrate into a post-conflict society

The following section of this study will attempt to quantify the above qualitative data, by looking at the levels of fear of government by the ex-detainees, the level of employment after their release and the level of education of the ex-detainees children.

## **6. Findings**

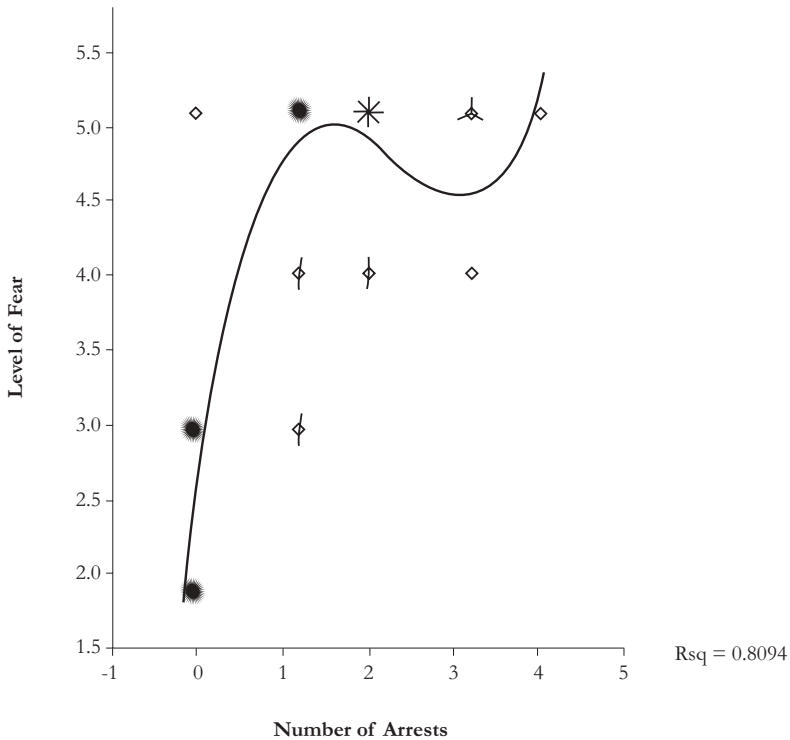
This study examines three variables: the level of fear of government by the released detainees, their level of unemployment and the level of the education of their children. These three variables were chosen because these variables measure the different types of discrimination detailed in this study. As an example, scholars find that low levels of fear of government augur well for a post-conflict country as it shows that the population perceives the government's action as legitimate and is not likely to rebel against it (Horowitz, 1985). A comparison of the levels of unemployment before and after the internment of the prisoner indicates the level of economic inequality they suffer. A comparison between the level of education of the children of these two populations shows there are educational inequalities within these two populations. The following section will present the findings of this study through the above three variables.

**Fear of the State**

This study found that there was a positive correlation between the level of fear of government and number of arrests of a detainee.

As shown in Figure 1.0, right after the first arrest the level of fear increases

**Figure 1**

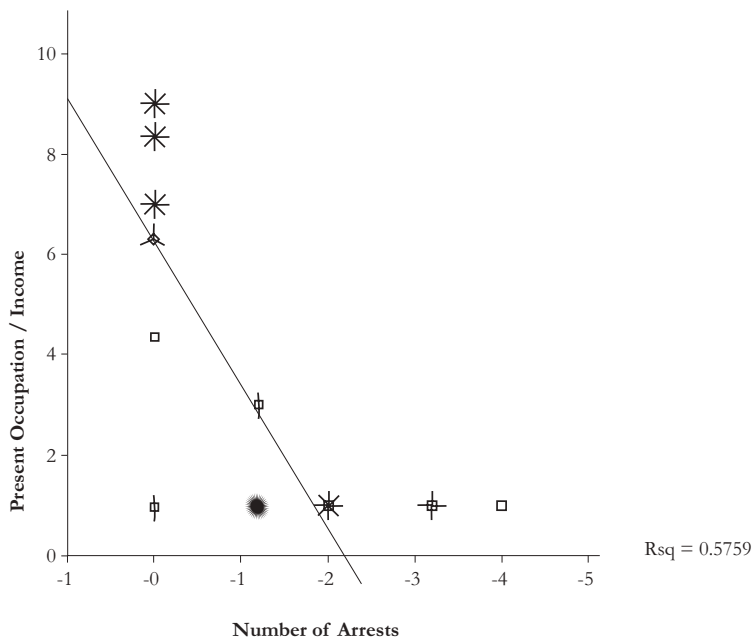


dramatically. What this means is that because the level of fear is so high – people do not leave their houses, they do not go to their jobs, they do not go shopping/ or see their doctor or take any part in their communities as they feel threatened. They exclude themselves from society and are also excluded by society, which leads to an increased marginalization.



However there is a slight dip in the level of fear after around the third arrest. While the lowering of fear is not significant, what is more dangerous that it is in this area that most detainees are afraid enough of the state to feel threatened by it but will not be submissive to the state. The ex-detainees who fell into this category claimed that they would take up arms if anyone tried to re-arrest them or their children.

**Figure 2**



## Employment

Figure 2.0 shows the relationship between the quality of employment/income and the number of arrests. As the number of arrests increase the quality and income of employment decreases. There are three reasons for this decline, one is the fear explained in Figure 1.0, the second is the stigma where employers do not want to employ ex-detainees because they were arrested, and the third is because they are disabled due to the torture they suffered in custody.

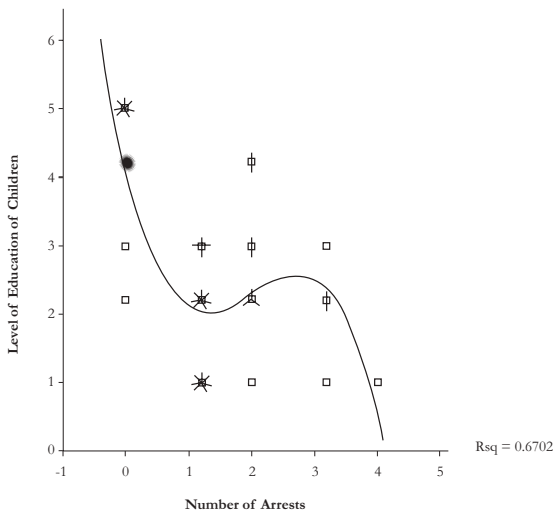
Figure 2.1

	Job before arrest	Job after arrest
Government Servant	6 %	0 %
Shop owner	14 %	4 %
Small businessmen	12 %	0 %
Skilled labourer	20 %	2 %
Farmer	10 %	0 %
Fisherman	14 %	0 %
Casual labourer	12 %	18 %
Student	8 %	0 %
Unemployed	4 %	76%

Figure 2.1 illustrates that these former detainees were employed in a wide range of jobs but now they find it difficult to support themselves resulting in severe frustration, which has negative impact on the economic integration of these former prisoners. The drop in their monthly income is approximately from the range of Rupees.1000 - Rupees.4000 to Rupees.500 – Rupees.2500. What this means is that former prisoners live in a chronic state of poverty which leads to feelings of frustration against society.

### Children’s Education

Figure 3



As Figure 3.0 illustrates after the first arrest of the parent there is a severe disruption in the education of the child. After the second arrest of the parent the drop levels out because the mechanisms set during the first arrest is in place and in some instances parents or other relatives of the child feel it is safer to send their children abroad for safety. With each subsequent arrest, however, the children's education levels are lower than the rest of the country. According to the Global IDP database the rate of student drop out in the North East is 15%, almost four times the national average. However the rate of student dropouts within the ex-detainee population is 42%. There are two reasons for this high drop out rate: First, the parents' fear children will be arrested, especially if they have to pass through checkpoints on the way to school, so they prefer that the child stays at home; secondly because of the extreme poverty, the children are required either to stay at home to look after one parent (if parent is disabled after arrest) and the younger siblings so that the other parent (generally the mother) can go to work. Or the children are required to go to work themselves. The end result of this present situation of an extremely high drop out rate is that the next generation is marginalized and uneducated.

The above findings point out that the three concepts of justice – legal justice, reparatory justice and distributive justice have not touched the lives of these former political prisoners and their families. This study will analyze the implications of its findings in the conclusions.

## 7. Conclusion

The results of this study show that there are barriers to the political, social and economic integration of these former political prisoners. As explained in the theory because these ex-prisoners are not reintegrated, the causes of future conflict have not been eliminated. These former detainees are still marginalized by society even though there has been a ceasefire for two years in Sri Lanka. At the present time, the prisoners themselves have no means of removing the ethos of fear because of the presence of the military, the prevalent draconian security laws and political instability, leading to an increase in the feelings of victimhood and fear of the state among the political prisoners. The result of such feelings could lead to war against the state as scholars have found that *fear is the ... pivotal element... of ethnic warfare*' (Horowitz, 2001: 558). If the fear is not eliminated or reduced then there is the potential for the prisoners to riot or take up arms

because *'the violence of desperate people may not be well inhibited by fear'*, but *'the recurrent fear of being swallowed by those who are more adept at manipulating the external environment'<sup>25</sup> points to the utter helplessness underpinning the violence of those who feel backward'* (Horowitz, 2001: 149 & 182).<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it is essential that the factor of fear be eliminated or reduced in order for the peace-building process to be strengthened.

The second finding is, there are greater rates of under employment within the detainee population when compared to before their arrest. This economic disparity interplays into with the detainee psyche as an injustice and form of discrimination because they feel that the reason they cannot get a job is because of their former detainee status. Their status as former detainees is perceived as being the fault of the state. Therefore, continued unemployment ferments frustration against the state. Gurr, in his work assessing risks for future ethnic wars states that economic discrimination and grievances prompt mobilization and mobilization leads to political action (Gurr, 2000: 229). In other words, *'such perceptions of relative deprivation generate demands for a better deal which if not responded to leads to violence'* (Brown, 1988: 52). At the time of writing, there are very little meaningful reintegration strategies to provide employment and/or skill development for these prisoners in Sri Lanka.

The poor levels of education within the political prisoner population, marginalizes the next generation. This is especially dangerous in Sri Lanka where education is highly valued and educational marginalization was one of the initial causes of war (Horowitz, 1985: 664). The distributive injustices of unemployment and education taken together increase the *'collective fears of the future'*, and *'collective fears of the future is most often the causal factor of intense conflict'* (Lake & Rothchild, 1996: 41). There is also very little awareness of the issues of political prisoners for society to understand their needs.

This causes society to fear former political prisoners and marginalize them, creating a cyclical process where fear breeds fear, which could lead to violence. As found in this study the concept of fear is heightened in society because the former political prisoners have not been reintegrated.

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<sup>25.</sup> In this case the government, who can detain them at will.

<sup>26.</sup> Lake & Rothchild, make the connection that when physical security becomes a paramount concern, groups invest in violence, "thereby making violence possible", and such actions will weaken the state. (*"Containing Fear"* 1996: 43).

As fear, economic and socio-cultural discrimination are causal factors of war, (Mani, 1998: Knox & Quirk, 2000: Lederach, 1996 & 1997) this study concludes that unless the element of fear of government is removed, and unless economic disparity is mitigated and socio-cultural barriers are removed within this population, the causal factors of war will remain. Therefore the country will suffer serious trans-generational consequences and the consolidation of peace in the country will be slim.

In order for peace building to be effective, the peace-building prescription of the three concepts of justice – legal justice, reparatory justice and distributive justice must take place in the country. Reintegration of former political prisoners will be one building block of delivering these concepts of justice to society. Therefore, if these political prisoners are not reintegrated then a key element of Peace-Building is missing and consolidation of peace will be threatened.

Studies in peace research literature have looked at the problems of political prisoners in post conflict countries in terms of psychological damage to the individual. This study, however, contributes to the literature, the concept that the non-reintegration of political prisoners has adverse political implications on society, which will hinder the prospects of peace in the long run. Through understanding the political implications of non-reintegrated prisoners, this study hopes that governments and non-governmental agencies in post-conflict societies will focus on reintegration strategies for former political prisoners in order to mitigate future conflict.

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## IV. Children Supporting Households: Views and Perceptions of Female - Heads<sup>27</sup>

*Kanchana N. Ruwanpura*

### 1. Introduction

Poor and female-headed households rely on their children to support and maintain the economic welfare of their household units, with girls being particularly vulnerable to working and economic demands (Buvinic, Youssef and von Elm 1978:74, Panda 1997:31-7, Anker 2000:6). The argument here is that inequitable patriarchal structures and gender relations place less social and economic value on human capital of girls, which in turn leads to gender-based discrimination and therefore, their removal from school.

Inequities in gender relations does entail girls and boys having different socio-economic values placed on them, and these values are perpetuated through cultural, patriarchal, material and religious structures. While the interactions of these institutions usually result in girls being relatively disadvantaged, in this paper the complexities of female-heads decision making process is examined from a feminist perspective. Such an exercise shows the need for a nuanced analysis on the intersection between poverty and conflict, and their gender-based impact on children. Giving voice to these female-heads also allows for uncovering the social, cultural, and material conditions that matter in decisions that affect the welfare of children.<sup>28</sup>

This thesis is unpacked by presenting results on the particular position of children, which originate from a larger study on female-headed households in

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<sup>27.</sup> This paper draws partly from an earlier article entitled “Dutiful Daughter, Sacrificing Sons” which is *forthcoming* in the journal *Domains*.

<sup>28.</sup> Equally, it shows the need to complicate the often-repeated narrative of the impact of patriarchy on girls and boys. This is important not only for gender-conscious social policy-making, but also for understanding poverty as a process that incorporates an entitlements and capability approach (Kottagoda 2003:183).

eastern Sri Lanka<sup>29</sup> undertaken during the 1997-2001 period. In order to do so, the next section of this paper begins by discussing the fieldwork, done during 1998-1999, and the methodology employed. An entry-point through the fieldwork and methodology allows for an overview of the quantitative results obtained – which is carried out in section 3. It is imperative to note here that while the quantitative findings are important in and of themselves, it is not the central focus of this paper. Yet these results sets the stage for a detailed discussion of the qualitative and in-depth interviews carried out during the fieldwork, which also divulges in important ways arguments in favour of the main thesis expounded in this paper. The fourth section of this paper is sub-divided into two parts. Section 4.1 examines in some detail the social, cultural and economic issues that factor into views and perceptions of female-heads when they make decisions to keep their children in school, or use them as a resource base for supporting the welfare of the households. By drawing upon the narratives of female-heads, it becomes possible to understand poverty as a process, and the ways in which these poverty processes intersect and interact with conflict. The second part of the penultimate section of this paper, section 4.2, therefore, shows the need to pay attention to issues of social exclusion, gender discrimination, and cultural norms to better understand the nexus between poverty and conflict. However, this paper concludes by noting the need to refrain from making the economically deterministic – and consequently simplistic – argument that certain forms of poverty can lead to violent conflict.

## 2. Fieldwork and methodology

When the fieldwork in eastern Sri Lanka was undertaken the working hypothesis, like much of the existing literature, reflected the limited belief that girls in female-headed household were more likely to witness interruption to their education.

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<sup>29</sup> In focusing in eastern Sri Lanka, it is important to note that this is a region of Sri Lanka well-known for its matrilineal practices and inheritance patterns (McGilvray 1982, 1989, Agarwal 1990, 1996). Despite matrilineal practices and inheritance patterns placing women in a favourable position, it should not preclude an analysis of the patriarchal institutions that may be found in such communities. So it is against a backdrop of awareness of the local matrilineal practices and customs found in eastern Sri Lanka that this analysis for the patriarchal institutions and relations in the region is carried out. Not only can patriarchy relations and matrilineal practices be strange bedfellows, but in the recent past the gender-laden ethno-nationalist projects is also likely to have reinforced patriarchal institutions in the area – and therefore is in need of close examination.

During the fieldwork, however, it quickly became apparent that it is usually the oldest child, irrespective of gender, who would see her or his education disrupted. Recognising this particular issue warranted further investigation and engagement with female-heads on the motives for taking boys out of school, where this occurred, rather than girls. It is this particular and unexpected outcome that is explored in detail in the paper. First, however, a discussion of the fieldwork, location, and methodology employed in the study.

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken over a one-year period during 1998-99 in eastern Sri Lanka. The motivation for using eastern Sri Lanka was primarily reasoned by two main factors. Firstly, the presence of all three ethnic communities in significant numbers provided an appropriate context for understanding female-headship as cutting across all three ethnic communities.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the conflict is known to have affected this region in notable and significant ways. These two attributes along with the general economic deprivation in the area from prior to the conflict<sup>31</sup> provide a useful background for exploring the poverty-conflict nexus. This relationship is explored through the voices and narratives of female-heads on their use of children to support households in 'economic' and 'non-economic' ways because of the difficulty and harshness brought about by poverty and conflict.

During 1998-99, when the fieldwork was carried out in eastern Sri Lanka, it was engaged in a protracted ethnic conflict – albeit there was a lull in intense fighting in the area. To enter the region contact with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in each district was established. This was done through the Social Scientists Association (SSA),<sup>32</sup> which was the base in Colombo through which contact was made with NGOs in each district in the eastern region. Through the project activities of NGOs in these districts, research assistants from each ethnic community was found and used for this study. Together with research assistants, village locations for conducting surveys were identified – with three

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<sup>30.</sup> Therefore helping advocate the thesis that household structures may be altering in notable ways that require a focusing beyond conflict-related rise in female-headship (i.e. usually war-widows).

<sup>31.</sup> For example, Batticaloa was noted as one of the poorest districts in Sri Lanka even prior to the rise of hostilities in the district (Chithra Maunaguru of SURYA provided this information, and I thank her for doing so).

<sup>32.</sup> For readers unaware of Sri Lanka's NGO community, SSA is a NGO based in Colombo focusing on research and advocacy on gender, ethnic, and political rights.

villages specific to each ethnic community from every district selected. The survey was conducted in a total of 24 locations, comprising 3 towns and 21 villages.<sup>33</sup>

In the absence of comprehensive household listings, female-headed households were selected randomly through the direction of activists, villagers, and NGOs. Then through informal discussions and word-of mouth, the purpose of the survey was explained to those female-heads involved in the study. The general enthusiasm with which it was received facilitated the subsequent work. The research assistants, some 10 young women from the Muslim, Sinhala, and Tamil communities, undertook the survey more or less simultaneously. Initial surveys by the research assistants were conducted under the author's supervision, with subsequent questionnaires being individually carried out by the assistants. During the one-year period in Sri Lanka, frequent travel between the three districts was undertaken and all in-depth dialogues and informal discussions with female-heads and the other community members (mostly women) were carried out personally.

While questionnaires can be useful, their limitations are many. First, power hierarchies that structure the survey research setting are well known. Researchers and the research group do not always come from the same social milieu. This was the case here. Working with and through research assistants from the local community and ethnic groups did erode some of these structured social realities, but essentially the author remained an outsider. While this is not necessarily a negative factor, and indeed some female-heads said that they felt freer with me precisely because of this, it is important not to be oblivious to the power settings involved in the fieldwork. An obvious example is that during our conversations there was a frequent use of “*miss*” by many female-heads, acknowledging the

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<sup>33</sup> The anonymity of these villages as well as the female-heads interviewed is preserved. This is primarily because these villages were small where everyone knows everyone else, and identification of case studies to be identified with specific female-heads may be detrimental to their welfare. By preserving their anonymity, State or para-military organisations are prevented from using the information provided in this study. This especially important because some Tamil female-heads were openly critical of their social system, and there is an intricate system of information flows that may jeopardise the safety of some households. For example, when in Batticaloa I was told that the L.T.T.E. knew of my presence in the area, but did not think that my project was countering their ethno-nationalist project in any direct way. Therefore, the reservations about divulging further information is noted in this footnote, because the welfare of these households is an important ethical consideration that was borne in mind when conducting this research.

difference between our social backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes these hurdles were overcome and we called each other by our first names. This happened only when there was frequent interaction, familiarity and rapport. Another example of these power structures is that some female-heads gave me information on the assumption that they might get something out of this project.<sup>35</sup> Second, survey methods oversimplify complex processes, sometimes even leading to misinformed responses. An illustration from the fieldwork serves to stress this point. A question in the survey asked what support female-heads received from their kin and/or community. To this question one female-head responded in the negative. Talking with this female-head, however, revealed that she did receive support from her kin in terms of using her siblings' toilet facilities, her sons sleeping on their verandas, and so forth. When it was pointed out to her that this was support too, her response to me was: *'Well this isn't economic support, and anyway my siblings are there for me to rely on such help. This kind-of support I take for granted, and didn't think that it was important to mention the same on paper'*. Such anecdotes point both to the oversimplifications of questions as well as to the inaccurate response a researcher may get should she/he rely merely on surveys. Thirdly, empirical questions prevent researchers from querying relational factors important to decision-making processes. For example, questioning female-heads' decisions to remarry may have a simple 'yes' or 'no' response, but this tells us nothing of the many social relationships they may have considered before making a decision one way or the other. Using illustrations from the research, some limits of empirical techniques are pointed out above. But anthropologists initially raised similar concerns when feminists pointed to the androcentric assumptions that are at the core of the empirical tradition (Leach 1967, Harding 1986:24-6, 162). Feminist economists, too, have increasingly documented their reservations about relying on the questionnaire method, and have called for a broadening of the methods used in conducting research in economics (MacDonald 1995, Berik 1997, Esim 1997, Olmsted 1997, Pujol 1997, and van Stavern 1997).

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<sup>34</sup> "Miss" is used for women in opposition to "sir" for men in Sri Lanka to designate difference in social background.

<sup>35</sup> This occurred even though it was emphatically stated that the primary purpose of the research is for my Ph.D. project. It was made clear that there was an intention to disseminate these findings to NGOs in the area, but the ways in which these results will be used for development-oriented projects was not within the scope of this study.



So while collecting and analysing quantitative data was done, another phase of the fieldwork focused on unstructured dialogues, conversations and interviews as a means of gathering information critical for putting some flesh on the bones of the descriptive statistical account. Gender relationships have to be situated historically, socially, politically and culturally, and ethnographic studies as well as non-formal information gathering exercises are needed to capture the richness and complexity of such dynamics. Drawing upon conversations with female-heads, activists, and other women in these communities, it was possible to get their impressions, thoughts and perceptions of their particular experiences. These narratives draw attention to the numerous ways in which female-heads manoeuvre structural context as well as their approach towards decision-making. Both these processes underscore the importance of social relationships and social/cultural mores in 'economic' decision-making, which, while important, are not the only use of qualitative research. Using unstructured dialogues and conversations as facets of the fieldwork has also directed attention to the most useful quantitative results. For example, female-heads' tales of drunken spouses stress the various factors that lead to *de facto* female-headship and emphasise the need to explore their particular hardships. Olmsted (1997) in her work makes a similar point: *'while qualitative results can interpret quantitative outcomes, they can also be helpful in determining which quantitative results are likely to be the most useful'* (1997:146).

Furthermore, by using qualitative research techniques it was possible to see economic outcomes as embedded in a social, political and life-historical context. By using in-depth interviews, informal conversations, and listening to oral histories, rather than mechanical surveys, facilitated garnering the detailed information on the role of children in the households of female-heads', which is the subject of this paper. More importantly, for the purposes of this paper adopting a qualitative approach enables disentangling the poverty burden from more obvious conflict pressures that lead female-heads make particular decisions when it comes to their children. An illustration from the research serves to elucidate this point. The poverty of some female-heads compelled them to make the decision to involve their young sons in home-based economic activities, namely small-scale cash crop cultivation. However, these female-heads went to reason that it was not only poverty that made them turn to their boys to economically support the welfare of households. They pointed out that the ongoing forced recruitment of boys for soldiering by rebel groups meant that they felt safer if their boys were under their supervision during much of their day.

Something not available if their boys were in school! Ironic as this particular line of thinking may seem, a qualitative approach helps explore in a nuance manner the multiple and contrary array of research issues that complex situations usually tend to provide researchers.<sup>36</sup>

Drawing upon narratives and qualitative research, therefore, helps tease out the diversity of female-heads' experiences that is important in understanding both the political economic contexts as well as cultural underpinnings of female-heads' decision-making processes. The inter-play of these social, political, gender, economic, and cultural attributes are no where more obvious than when it comes the decision female-heads made regarding their children.<sup>37</sup> From the sample of 298 female-heads, 30 female-heads – approximately 10 female-heads from each ethnic group – were selected for in-depth dialogue. In-depth discussions often accompanied the filling in of questionnaire and this was so for many of the in-depth profiles of female-heads. However, through frequent interaction on a regular basis and developing a familiar rapport it also became possible to gain their confidence and trust – with some female-heads still communicating with me. Specific trips to villages that were noted as Muslim, Sinhala or Tamil in each district was made, which helped ensure the ethnic variation of the profiled female-heads. There was, however, no particular procedure for selecting the female-heads who were interviewed in depth. In addition, conversations with women and others in the communities shaped and sharpened my perceptions of the issues faced by female-heads in the region. Based on these case studies, therefore, the complexities of social structures are discussed by paying explicit attention to the resource, in this case that of children, that female-heads draw upon in their survival strategies. Prior to discussing examining the views and perceptions of female-heads on the ways they use their children, the next section of the paper – section 3 – provides a brief synopsis of the main quantitative results. These findings, presented as descriptive statistics, focus on the number

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<sup>36.</sup> Indeed it shows the possibility that prevailing social structures are likely to place human agents in particular social positions and roles that may bring about various contradictions and unexpected outcomes. None of which must be dismissed easily, as they are likely to be findings that ought to be perceived as reflecting the complexity of social reality – and therefore, requiring explaining and more probing (Lawson 1997).

<sup>37.</sup> Indeed from a gender-sensitive development perspective the need to require paying attention to the gender structures can only be brought about by acquiring more information about existing patriarchal relations and structures, which tends to be more easily acquired through qualitative research.

of children found in these households along with their support to their mothers (i.e. female-headed households) as primary and/or secondary income earners. A focus on these descriptive findings, provide the necessary backdrop for discussing the narratives of female-heads on their use of children in a variety of ways to enhance the socio-economic welfare of these household.

### 3. Quantitative findings: household structures and the support provided by children<sup>38</sup>

Children are an invaluable resource to female-headed households. In most instances the very survival of these households depend upon the residence of working-age children. Poverty in these households may be compounded by the existence of dependent children, while the presence of teenage children capable of working and earning wages is likely to improve the economic lot of the household. The tables (tables 1-4)<sup>39</sup> below breakdown the numbers and ages of resident children according to Muslim, Sinhala, and Tamil ethnic groups in eastern Sri Lanka.

**Table 1. Children under 6 in Households by Ethnic Group**

Number of Children	Tamils	Muslims	Sinhala
0 <sup>40</sup>	(101)87.1%	(93)82.3%	(47)68.1%
1	(12)10.3%	(12)10.6%	(18)26.1%
2	(3)2.6%	(6)5.3%	(3)4.3%
3	-	(2)1.8%	(1)1.4%

- Ethnic differences are statistically significant ( $c^2 = 14.11$ ; sig. = .028)

<sup>38.</sup> This section of the paper draws from a previous paper done by the author (along with a co-author) on female-headship in eastern Sri Lanka (see Ruwanpura and Humphries 2004, *forthcoming*).

<sup>39.</sup> These tables are taken from a previous paper, Ruwanpura and Humphries 2003.

<sup>40.</sup> Where 0 number of children is noted for each group, this does not imply that the households do not have any children but rather there are no children belonging to each age-group category. So for example, in this table the implication is not that over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of households do not have any children, but rather that 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of household do not have children under six – which does not preclude these households from having older children. Indeed all of the households that were surveyed for this study did have 1 or more children in their households

**Table 2. Children 6-10 in Households by Ethnic Group**

Number of Children	Tamils	Muslims	Sinhala
0	(74)63.8%	(70)62.5%	(30)43.5%
1	(24)20.7%	(32)28.6%	(23)33.3%
2	(13)11.2%	(8)7.1%	(15)21.7%
3	(5)4.3%	(2)1.8%	(1)1.4%

- Ethnic differences are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 15.88$ ; sig. = .014)

**Table 3. Children 11-18 in Households by Ethnic Group**

Number of Children	Tamils	Muslims	Sinhala
0	(42)36.2%	(43)38.4%	(22)31.9%
1	(32)27.6%	(24)21.4%	(21)30.4%
2	(30)25.9%	(30)26.8%	(17)24.6%
3	(6)5.2%	(12)10.7%	(7)10.1%
4	(6)5.2%	(2)1.8%	(2)2.9%
5	-	(1).9%	-

- Ethnic differences are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 8.17$ ; sig. = .612)

**Table 4. Children > 18 in Households by Ethnic Group**

Number of Children	Tamils	Muslims	Sinhala
0	(60)51.7%	(41)36.6%	(41)59.4%
1	(19)16.4%	(36)31.3%	(16)23.2%
2	(15)12.9%	(13)11.6%	(6)8.7%
3	(15)12.9%	(6)5.4	(3)4.3%
4	(4)3.4%	(8)7.1%	(3)4.3%
5	(2)1.7%	(5)4.5%	-
6	(1).9%	(1).9%	-
8	-	(3)2.7%	-

- Ethnic differences are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.00$ ; sig. = .014)

As noted immediately below each table, the proportion of households that contain children vary significantly by ethnicity for children under six, children aged 6-10, and children over eighteen, but not significantly for children aged 11-18. The number and ages of children in these households in part relates back to the routes into female-headship, which differs for each ethnic group (Ruwanpura

and Humphries 2003:13-5).<sup>41</sup> Household structures, therefore, are partially determined by the different types of female-headed households.

The significant point for this paper is that the household structure and ages of children may determine in crucial ways the ability of these households to avoid falling into poverty traps. Where female-heads have children belonging to older age groups, they are able to draw upon their children to economically support their households. Paradoxically, however, while the economic welfare of these households is relatively better, the ability of older-age children to enhance their capability base is usually severely curtailed. Older-age children's economic support to their mothers is crucial, but they may be doing so at the detriment to expanding their own human capital base. Yet by economically supporting their households, they do ensure to some extent that they help their household's to be economically better off – and therefore, improve their own socio-economic circumstances too.

The situation of those households having younger children is quite different – and sometimes particularly difficult too. Children belonging to younger age groups tend to support their mothers in the form of attending to domestic chores, caring for younger siblings, or assisting their mothers in home-based income generating activities. Because prevailing patriarchal gender norms and rules ascribe these activities as 'non-productive' there is no monetary value placed on them. Nonetheless, such support is undoubtedly important for the overall welfare of these households, especially since it usually allows female-heads to engage in economic activities. However, the forms of support that usually come from younger children are unlikely to enable female-headed households to escape poverty. Economically, then the most dire circumstance were of those female-heads having dependent children, who have to ensure economic sustenance to maintain their households along with caring for young babies and children. The double burden faced by them together with their economic vulnerability is more than likely to push such households into income and structural-based poverty.

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<sup>41</sup>. In the subsequent section discussions of the various ways in which children of different age groups support female-headed households is done at a general level. For a detailed analysis of the particularities of household, ethnic and social group compositions, the interested reader is referred to previous work on female-headship by the author and Jane Humphries (Ruwanpura and Humphries 2003).

Female-headed households' reliance on children to support their households, whether economically or non-economically, often results in disruption and/or interruption of schooling.<sup>42</sup> But in eastern Sri Lanka it is not poverty alone that force female-heads to rely on their children. The conflict too propels its own processes that bear upon the decisions that female-heads make when they choose to use the support of their children. The decisions made by female-heads are never easy and are often difficult. More importantly for this study examining their decision-making process, and the views and perceptions expressed underscore the ways in which the poverty-conflict nexus has a bearing upon children supporting these female-headed households. Section 4 of this paper looks at a couple of themes, on patriarchy and education (human capital formation), that emerged from the narratives of female-heads when they spoke about the factors and issues that were taken into consideration when getting children to support their households.

## **4. Social institutions and social exclusion: two sides of the same coin?**

### **The importance of social symbols and institutions**

The social and cultural context that people inhabit has an important bearing upon the economic decisions they make. While this may seem obvious to non-economists, it is a point all too often overlooked by (neo-classical) economists. There is a tendency within mainstream economists to emphasise the importance of rationality to the virtual exclusion of considering social relationships, positions, and institutions in the economic realm (Lawson 1997, Wyss 1999). A focus on the narratives of female-heads allows us to flush out the importance of social symbols, cultural values, gender norms and relationships, and social institutions in decisions that bear upon the economic welfare of female-headed households. For purposes of this paper, a focus on these social factors helps highlight issues of social exclusion and gender discrimination, along with political instability and

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<sup>42.</sup> Debates on the impact of disrupting children's schooling and education on human capital formation and economic wellbeing are fairly well known, and shall not be explored here. Suffice to note that in many instances such disruptions is a crucial way in which poverty is perpetuated through generations, and issues of unhealthy nutrition and health habits also tend to come about (see Anker 2000, Galli 2001).

security issues that matter in the lives of people living in eastern Sri Lanka. Through the standpoint of female-headed households, a marginal social group, it becomes possible to better understand the interplay of the poverty-conflict nexus when children support these households. The next sub-section of the paper begins with the gender dimensions that factor into the decision-making process of female-heads when they turn to their children's support.

### ● Patriarchal contradictions

A standard feminist theme is that girls suffer disproportionately from poverty, particularly in female-headed households (Panda 1997). The decision to make girls do domestic chores or contribute to family labour, however, need not be determined solely by poverty (Anker 2000:28). Talking with female-heads in eastern Sri Lanka shows that there need not be a single line of reasoning that prevail when the capability base of their children, whether girls or boys, are at risk. More significantly, and quite surprisingly, patriarchal relations were found to bear upon girls and boys in contrary ways than would be conventionally expected from a gender perspective.

Quite unexpectedly, a theme that emerged during the conversations and in-depth interviews with female-heads was the need to keep daughters in school because their cultural norms and values placed restrictions on young girls and women moving around in public spaces and places. By allowing their daughters to remain in school, female-heads reasoned that they were controlling the movements of their daughters, which was important in communities that frowned upon unnecessary mobility in public spaces (McGilvray 1982, 1989). The sentiments of two female-heads from the Tamil and Muslim communities, respectively, shows the ways in which they made decisions to educate their daughter – albeit rationalised using patriarchal logic.

*... But also Hindu culture is more conducive to keeping daughters in school rather than getting them to work at an early age. Getting girls to work at an early age is difficult when mobility of young girls is frowned upon in my community. So I decided to keep my daughters in school and ensure their educational success. (Vasukhi, a 44-year old Tamil **de facto** female-head from Batticaloa, and mother of 6 children).*

*In this day it does not make much sense to keep daughters at home, because having educated daughters can only benefit them, their husbands and their families. But also I do not need all my daughters to stay at home and help in domestic chores, and getting them educated is still adhering to cultural norms that permit restricted movements for women in my community. They just move between home and school, and of course even after getting their educational qualifications it is possible for them to find jobs like teaching, secretarial work, etc. These jobs do allow young women their own income, but do not appear to confront values. (Zareena, a 52-year old Muslim **de jure** female-head from Batticaloa, and mother of 4 children).*

These arguments represent either silent challenges to “authentic” cultural readings or female-heads’ creative use of cultural norms to promote the education of their daughters. While female-heads explained their preference for educating daughters in terms of cultural imperatives, it is of course very possible that these female-heads were simply appropriating patriarchal logic to justify what they wanted to do, namely keep their daughters in school. As third-world feminists have rightly pointed out, *‘there are many ways, of inhabit[ing] nations and cultures critically and creatively’*, and the possibility of female-heads reading and mobilising cultural norms differently should not be dismissed (Narayan 1997:33). The critical point is that daughters can derive well-being benefits from prolonged schooling because of the decisions made by their mothers.<sup>43</sup>

Not surprisingly, this very reasoning had adverse consequences for boys, who were more likely to have their education interrupted for the same reason. The ease of mobility for boys in public spaces made them suitable candidates to work from an early age. In addition the better and higher wages sons were likely to muster, their physical ability to perform agricultural tasks and security reasons were cited as reasons for making their sons help in income-generating and economic activities. As mentioned previously in trying to understand the relationship between poverty (as a social process) and conflict, the bringing-up of security issues by mothers is particularly worthy of discussion.

For the Sinhala community joining the military forces was an effortless option at one point in time, given the intense recruitment drives of the forces and low

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<sup>43.</sup> Though whether their agency is necessarily improved may still remain contentious when the wider social context remain deeply embedded in patriarchal relations and institutions.



educational requirements placed on low-level cadres. Joining the military forces, therefore, provides households with an assured monthly income and even the high risks of being killed in the ethnic war is weighed against the monetary compensation that households receive from the State. Furthermore, de Alwis (1998) notes the ideological and gender images the State, via the media, deploys in calling on both mothers and sons to protect the nation-state. Some Sinhala female-heads, however, expressed ambivalence about their sons joining the military forces, mentioning that protecting their lives was more important than defending the country. While these Sinhala female-heads may be a critical and/or cynical few, their views were important in explaining the motivations for getting their sons to work and boosting household income from an early age. They explained that by getting their sons to work from an early age, they were instilling economic and social responsibility in them. And once this was so, they hoped that their sons joining military forces would be much less likely – and this was probably so, if only because they might not have the stipulated educational qualifications. For Tamil female-heads the threat of their sons been abducted by the L.T.T.E. as child soldiers is very real, and this took place frequently when boys were attending school. Where it was not forced abduction, boys were more likely to join the para-military forces voluntarily where men (their fathers) had been indiscriminately killed and/or tortured by the State military. Female-heads reasoned that by getting their sons to work, not only did they contribute to the household income, infusing them with social and economic responsibility, but also it became possible to keep an eye on their movements.

So the infusion of patriarchal practices with local cultural norms together with political instability and insecurity of conflict brought about contrary conditions leading to unexpected well-being outcomes for sons and daughters. From an orthodox perspective these consequences may seem out of sync with usual gender relations and patriarchal institutions – and indeed, at first glance during the fieldwork this seemed so too. However, listening carefully to these women's voices made it apparent that there ruptures and ambiguities in the patriarchal institutions during conflict not evidently in keeping with the “usual” gender relations that is usually detrimental to the welfare of girls. It may cast situations that bring disadvantages to boys as well – at least in the short-term. Yet, the invoking of patriarchal logic in explaining the choices and decision made by female-heads with regards to their sons and daughter, despite the incongruities, is at one level indicative of the saliency of patriarchal socialisation amongst these

women. Thus, of course, it begs the question the extent to which better welfare outcomes for girls, in this case more years of schooling and education, necessarily leads to more equitable gender relationships in the long-term. In other words, more years of schooling for girls – though unfortunately not for boys in this instance – may be a necessary condition for enhancing their capability base. But the continued use of patriarchal reflections and justification by female-heads is indicative of the ‘co-operative conflict’ situations that they may be involved in negotiating with the wider community, social structures, and patriarchal institutions (Sen 1990, Agarwal 1997). In this respect, the agency of female-heads as well as their daughters remain largely circumscribed by the prevailing social structures. So, despite the paradoxical outcomes for boys and girls, in this particular instance the poverty-conflict nexus is seen also to operate within and through patriarchal relations and institutions.<sup>44</sup>

### ● Valuing education

The emphasis placed on educating children was shaped to a significant extent by their mother’s educational level and expectations. Mothers with limited education appreciated the need to educate their children, particularly their daughters. Despite associated economic hardships of keeping children in school, they viewed education as a stepping stone towards improved well being of their children, in particular their daughters.

*Neither me nor my husband had studied beyond primary education, but a primary aim I have is to educate my daughters. Even though I face economic difficulties I hope to continue their education. To disrupt their education would be to hinder their ability to achieve better things. (Savithri, a 35-year old Tamil **de facto** female-head from Trincomalee, and mother of three children.)*

*... I am resolute in my decision not to disrupt their education, because I know the limited opportunities I have in seeking wage employment are due to my own inadequate schooling. So I make sure that my daughters and I share all responsibilities in caring for my ill husband as well as the domestic chores. This way, I hope, my daughters will be able to succeed in their studies as well and be able*

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<sup>44</sup> An issue clearly worth bearing in mind during investigations of issues on social exclusion and gender-based discrimination vis-à-vis the dynamics between poverty and conflict.

*to have a better future...* (Jameela, a 42-year old Muslim **de facto** female-head from Ampara, and a mother of three daughters).

The sentiments echoed by these female-heads were like that of their more educated counterparts, who generally despite having to live on one income – where they did have secure and stable incomes – did not want to disrupt the education of their children, particularly that of their daughters. A notable number of female-heads mentioned that economic vulnerability tended to go hand-in-hand with lack of adequate schooling and education, which is made all the worse by the ethnic conflict. But they were of the view that such economic vulnerability and hardship because of inadequate schooling and education would persist even in more “peaceful” environments. Moreover, their optimistic belief that transition to peaceful periods in Sri Lanka would eventually take place for them meant having better educated daughters who were able to grapple with the future challenges and social transformations that such transition would bring.<sup>45</sup> Equally, many female-heads articulated that to have better educated daughters is also likely to bear upon positively on the quality of family size and life of their married daughters. Educated daughters they thought would make better provisions for their children, as they would be better informed – and consequently be able to make informed choices – with regards to issues of health, nutrition, and related family matters pertaining to their children.

Experiences of economic hardship and vulnerability by female-heads where this was the case, then tended not simply be linked to the conflict but also to their own inadequate human capital formation. Moreover, female-heads need to continue

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<sup>45.</sup> Such thinking on the part of female-heads may seem to jar with the ‘other’ social reality of Sri Lanka: unemployment rates being higher among educated young women rather than young men. This ‘fact’ reveals the gender-based discrimination young women possibly face when entering and/or participating in the formal labour market. Rightly, this social reality does not seem to deter female-heads to aspire better opportunities for their daughters – much like low-income groups attempting to be socially mobile through better schooling and education. [This particular note is mentioned in light of a comment made by an audience member at the symposium, which appeared to imply that female-heads ought to re-adjust their aspirations and education of their daughters in light of the labour market realities in Sri Lanka. Such comments and views are reflective of prevalent gender-biases among the academic and policy-making community, which is predominantly male. Such biases and prejudices unfortunately falls short of reflective social analysis that accounts not just for socio-economic, class, caste, and income differences but also that of gender and ethnicity.]

educating their children, though in many more instances particularly that of their daughters, indicates their capacity to make interconnections between poverty, gender relations, structural impediments, and the conflict. They did not simplistically think that their poverty was only exacerbated by the on-going ethnic conflict. Because they saw the structural facets to their poverty, they were equally determined in confronting these factors, where it was within their resource base to do so. These female-heads thought that the conflict pervading their lives at this current political and historical juncture in Sri Lanka would pass – and therefore, it was in their responsibility and interest to ensure that the impediments they face ought to be removed for their children where-ever/when-ever possible.

The ability of female-heads to discern between structural factors that impede the well being of their children and the political realities of the ethnic conflict is telling of the need for policies to focus on the structures of poverty as well. Undoubtedly, the conflict bears upon the social structures and institutions that marginalise social groups even further negatively. But to focus only on the humanitarian aspects of conflict situations may imply inadvertently ignoring the very structures that make particular social groups more vulnerable. Moreover, solely humanitarian policies, which may be important in redressing immediate and urgent needs of distressed groups are not known to necessarily enable capacity building of local communities – and has increasingly been challenged through theory and practice (Silva 2003a, Hyndman and de Alwis 2000). Therefore, the need to adopt a holistic approach towards tackling the structural attributes of poverty may not only go towards safeguarding otherwise vulnerable groups during conflict situations, but also contribute to enhancing their capability base and social capital of their areas and communities.

The value placed on education, particularly of daughters, by these female-heads then serves as an illustration of the need to make linkages in policies between social structures, poverty and conflict when targeting vulnerable groups in conflict-affected areas. Humanitarian assistance in these scenarios should be seen only as a first step that is likely to meet the immediate needs of affected groups, but is unlikely to meet the medium-term/long-term strategic needs of vulnerable groups (Moser 1989). The latter requires being mindful of recognising that social structures and social exclusion are factors that need careful and equal deliberation when analysing the particular vulnerability of certain social groups rather than others. So for example, women, low-income/poverty groups, and 'low' -caste groups are more likely to be placed in a weak position during societal crisis –

including conflict-situations – rather than those that encounter less social obstacles in their everyday lived realities.

## 5. Social exclusion and economic vulnerability

Through the use of narratives and conversation with female-heads, the discussion so far has focused on the importance of educating children and the ways in which patriarchal institutions shape their thinking and perceptions in contradictory ways. While these influences brought about unforeseen social issues and themes to the forefront – and consequently mattered to boys and girls differently, an underlying theme that emerged during conversations with female-heads is their sense of social and economic vulnerability. There was keen awareness among many female-heads that their decision to pull out children was because the necessary social protection mechanisms and social assistance was not in place. Equally, many of the kin and community networks that had provided informal means of social protection in prior times was either under stress or had simply broken apart because of the conflict.

The absence of protective social measures was a theme that sometimes propelled women to assume headship, and likewise shaped and influenced the decisions female-heads made about relying on children to support their households. A theme that cut across the many stories told and retold about their paths into assuming household headship in the first instance was also one that determined the particular roles of children in these households. The bitter and harsh experiences of war-widows and their sudden thrust into headship in both Eastern and the Southern Sri Lanka are well-documented (Perera 1999, Thiruchandran 1999). While the abruptness with which many war-widows had to assume headship, mostly under cruel, violent, and brutal conditions, is noteworthy, the sense of powerlessness and vulnerability faced by all categories of female-heads in the study reflects the extent to which social and economic exclusion equally matter. Because female-heads of all categories echoed these sentiments, it suggests that underpinning social structures stacked against particular social groups remain true in both conditions of poverty as well as conflict. The noteworthy difference is that the vulnerability of those poverty groups is significantly exacerbated because of the conflict.<sup>46</sup> Within this context taking the necessary steps and measures to

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<sup>46.</sup> Silva (2003a) makes a similar observation in noting the severity with which poverty-level groups have borne the impact of the ethnic war, particularly in the North and East (2003b:102-3).

eradicate structural-based inequalities is more likely to reduce the susceptibility of socially excluded and marginal communities – not just from the pressures of poverty but from social tension and conflict too.

Many of the female-heads interviewed in this study belonged to underprivileged and materially deprived sections of the social strata in eastern Sri Lanka. The low educational rates of many female-heads partially testify to their materially disadvantaged backgrounds, which reinforced their sense of vulnerability, dependence, and social exclusion in the social sphere. While many female-heads were decisive in wanting to make the lives of their children, particularly daughters, better by ensuring good levels of education, they were aware of the social logic that tended to keep them in particular social positions and roles. In other words, the prevailing social structures tended to keep particular social groups marginal to the mainstream – and, this together with economic hardship and deprivation exacerbated their sense of social exclusion. As pointed out by Silva (2003a), poverty and deprivation of such groups is due not only because of the prevailing economic logic but also that of the existing social logic (2003a:248). These social structures, as has been shown through this case study of female-heads, are also based on gender relations and roles – all of which is made doubly worse during war and conflict. In such instances the need to redress inequitable social structures along with the economic inequities from a gender angle remains of paramount importance in both poverty and conflict situations.<sup>47</sup>

The sense of social exclusion and economic vulnerability experienced by many female-heads was not always, and necessarily, expressed only through the discourse of economic and social issues. Sometimes these subjective experiences were understood through a cultural, religious, and ethnic logic, where female-heads would note their inability to do such and such because this would be to act against the interest of their cultural values or ethnic communities. Ground conditions of war, conflict, and violence does not make it surprising that female-heads of different ethnic groupings used culture and ethnicity to explain their sense of exclusion and vulnerability (Silva 2003b:97). Many of the difficulties and hardships experienced by female-heads cut across all ethnic communities. Yet, the use of

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<sup>47</sup> Kottegoda (2003) makes a similar point about governmental and non-governmental poverty alleviation measures, although in her paper the focus is on the processes of poverty rather than on the analytical connections between poverty and conflict.

culture, ethnicity, and community was an important means through which female-heads of a particular community saw their problems – and decisions that affected the welfare of their children – as distinct from that experienced by female-heads of other communities. In this sense, the social institutions that bring about and perpetuate poverty was seen to be particular to a given ethnic community rather than being common across all ethnic communities belonging to poverty-level groups. This is unsurprising because as pointed out before, an effect of the conflict has been to shape perceptions of vulnerability through the ethnicity lens (Silva 2003b). To put it differently, while economic vulnerability and social exclusion – hallmarks of poverty – is common to all communities, during conflict people belonging to poverty-level social groups make sense of this through their ethnic identities and allegiances. So while poverty and conflict may be intricately connected to each other, the way people experience vulnerability and exclusion may be different under poverty – and under conflict. Consequently, the need to be sensitive to the ethnic facets when redressing issues of social exclusion and economic vulnerability from a policy perspective needs to be reiterated. Policies must be perceived as tackling the particular concerns of each ethnic community. Concomitantly, however, ensuring that the necessary social welfare policies – instead of mere *safety-nets* – along with redistribution of assets are instituted and implemented to ensure that the necessary social protection mechanisms are in place (Mayer 2003:xix). This of course ought to be the case for all social groups falling into poverty categories irrespective of their ethnicity and/or ethnic identity.

What then of the particular gender attributes that have been the central theme of this paper – and in particular its relationship to poverty and conflict? Drawing upon two particular themes noted and discussed in section 4.1, this section of the paper has argued that those groups made most vulnerable by the conflict tend to belong to the most materially deprived and socially excluded. All ethnic communities have to come to grips with the structural attributes to poverty, which reinforces their sense of economic insecurity and social exclusion. Equally, importantly, the on-going ethnic conflict and war situation has propelled a set of dynamics that makes these experiences to be perceived from the subjective position of ethnicity – so reinforcing notions of distinct and separate (“our”) cultural values and norms. Against a backdrop of fundamentalist nationalist projects, whether it is Tamil-Nationalism or Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, the lip-service paid many female-heads to rhetoric of culture and values is not surprising – particularly, since others have shown the patriarchal aspects to each specific

ethno-nationalist project (Jayawardena 1992, Maunaguru 1995, Ismail 1995, 2000). How does this ideological apparatus of nationalism, ethnicity, and gender, matter in the welfare of children within a rubric of poverty and conflict? The decisions made by female-heads with regards to their children – and on the ways in which children would contribute, or not, to the socio-economic welfare of the households – was most often explained by resorting to expressions of culture and community. While female-heads in many instances would creatively articulate and use these “cultural” values to promote the welfare of their children, there were only rare cases of female-heads that were willing to critique and challenge these very cultural values as subjugating them into particular social positions and roles. Therefore, even though there appear to be ruptures and moments of emancipation in the decision-making process of female-heads, the need to equally acknowledge the strength of patriarchal thinking influencing the everyday lives – and the ways in which this thinking circumscribes gender relations and roles needs reiteration. Because social exclusion and economic insecurity has an economic and social logic, and this social logic is also gender-laden – the need to recognise these influences is important. From the vantage point of diverse marginal social groups, in this case that of female-heads, removing them from their particular predicament needs them to pay attention to the nexus between poverty and conflict. This gets played out through experiences of economic insecurity, ethnic identity, discrimination and social exclusion. Equally importantly the need to be aware of the ways in which gender relations and roles shape the material and ideological spectrum should be borne in mind for equity and efficiency reasons. This is particularly the case where alleviating poverty is appreciated as a process that seeks to empower people with their access to entitlements and realising their capabilities (Sen 1990, Kabeer 1994, Kottegoda 2003).

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has used social relations between female-heads and their children to better understand the intersections between poverty and conflict. In doing so, it has sought to bring to the forefront the ways in which patriarchal institutions bear upon poverty and conflict. Poverty and conflict, while possessing both tangible and material dimensions, is also noted for its ideological attributes – which matters in the way which particular social groups experience poverty and conflict. Indeed the ideological dimensions to the conflict make the subjective experiences of poverty, including features of social exclusion, discrimination, and economic



vulnerability, deemed as being particular to one ethnic group and not the other.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, ethnicity, culture, and so forth are used by many female-heads to justify their decisions, without adequate attention being paid to the ways in which the structural attributes to poverty cuts across all ethnic groups. Equally, the saliency of gender dimensions to readings of culture and ethnicity reveals the ways in which patriarchal institutions shape the everyday context at the local level. Clearly, development and social policies needs to pay attention not only to the structural and gender aspects to poverty, but equally the ways in which these structures are perceived to affect each ethnic community under conflict. In this sense perceptions of poverty and conflict matter as much as the real experiences of social exclusion, economic insecurity and gender-based discrimination – and needs to be diligently kept in mind in discussions of poverty and conflict.

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<sup>48.</sup> This is not to deny that the conflict has affected one ethnic group, i.e. Tamils, more than the other two, i.e. Muslims and Sinhalese. This is of course the case. But it is equally important to bear in mind that all three ethnic communities in eastern Sri Lanka have endured the impact of the conflict, albeit to varying degrees, depending upon ethnicity as well as social positions and groupings.

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## **V. A Sociological Study on the Impact of the Ethnic Conflict on Poverty: An Examination of Three Communities in the Seruvila Divisional Secretariat Division**

*E.M.S Ekanayake*

### **1. Introduction**

At present, with the annual birth rate standing at 1.2%, Sri Lanka has a population of approximately 20 million people. Although the Gross National Production of the country is low, the Human Development indicators are relatively high. This is mainly due to the fact that the Sri Lankan government invests heavily on education, health and welfare activities of the country (Tudawe, 2000: 05).

Where the level of education and life expectancy is concerned, Sri Lanka reflects similar standards as those of developed countries. However, one out of five families in Sri Lanka live below the poverty line and this pattern differs regionally and provincially. As analysts point out, those who are living under the poverty line has increased in recent times (World Bank, 2000).<sup>49</sup>

In the case of Sri Lanka, poverty incidence differs district-wise. Nuwara eliya has a rate of 30.02%; while Moneragala, Polonnaruwa, and Badulla has 29%, 28%, and 27% respectively. In general, most of the other districts depict a rate above 18% (UNDP, 1998). Poverty in Sri Lanka is predominantly a rural phenomenon; the rural sector accounts for about four-fifth of aggregate poverty. The share of the rural, urban and estate sectors in the total number of the poor (by the reference poverty line SL Rs, 471.20/person/ per month) is 79, 17, and 04 per cent respectively. The relative contribution of those sectors to national poverty is largely invariant over different poverty measures and poverty lines (World Bank, 1995).

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<sup>49</sup>. "A person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet the basic needs. This minimum level is called "Poverty line" (World Bank Report, 2000)

## 2. Ethnic conflict

At present, 1/3 of the world's population is suffering due to armed conflicts. The majority of these armed conflicts are in developing countries and more than half of the countries in the African continent are embroiled in such conflicts (Goodhand, 2001: 04). Civil wars in developing countries have been mostly due to ethnic conflicts (Abeyrathne, 1998).

The total population of Sri Lanka is 18.4 million. Of this, 74% is Sinhala, 12.5% is Sri Lankan Tamil and 5.5% is Indian Tamil. Indian Tamils belong to the migrant labour force that was brought from India during the British regime to work in the plantation sector. Thus, most of them speak a Hindu-Tamil dialect. The Muslims, who form a smaller percentage, are mostly concentrated in the Eastern part of the country. Sri Lanka has a considerably long history of being under the rule of a foreign power. Before the coming of the British, the Dutch were present in the country from 1658-1779. They had gained power by ousting the Portuguese who had been in the country from 1505 till 1658. Sri Lanka remained a colony of the British Empire until it gained independence in 1948 ([www.oxfam.org.uk/lanka.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/lanka.htm)). In post-independence Sri Lanka, the dominant Sinhala ethnic group excluded the minorities in the formulation of constitution and policies in the national government. As a result ethnic conflicts arose in the country and the mid-1980's witnessed the emergence of a civil war.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the emergence of ethnic conflicts in developing countries has risen dramatically and Civil wars have been the end result of these conflicts (Abeyrathne, 1998). Hence, one cannot talk about poverty in third world countries without examining the connection it has to ethnic conflicts in these countries. Also, most of the third worlds countries are those that were under go colonial rule and had gained independence a few decades back. As multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, there was inevitably a competition among the different ethnic groups to gain power (Silva K.M, 2002: 1). Thereafter, these clashes converted into ethnic conflicts and subsequently to civil wars.

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is embedded in and is an expression of existing social, political, economic and cultural structures. Since 1983 the war has had a devastating effect on all ethnic groups in the affected areas causing widespread misery, inclusive of displacement, loss of property, injury and deaths, and break up of communities (Silva K.T, 2003).

Jonathan Goodhand provides two theories to explain the relationship between poverty and conflict where conflict surfaces as an important factor (2001, 4-5).

### **Conflict causes chronic poverty**

*The macro and micro impacts of conflict are examined with particular focus on how rural livelihoods and entitlements are affected. Conflict is more severe than other external shocks because of the deliberate destruction of livelihoods. Chronic insecurity increases chronic poverty but the impacts vary according to a range of factors including age, ethnicity, gender and region. Classic conceptualizations of vulnerability may not apply. Conflicts may reverse pre-existing powers power relations causing new groups to become politically vulnerable' (Goodhand, 2001: 4).*

### **Poverty causes conflict**

*The processes through which chronic poverty generates grievances leading to violent conflicts are examined. Chronic poverty by itself is unlikely to lead to conflicts—the chronically poor often lack political voice and organization. However, horizontal inequalities and social exclusion, particularly when they coincide with identity or regional boundaries may increase a society's predisposition towards violent conflict. Such background conditions can be exploited by political entrepreneurs. Chronic poverty may also be a significant factor in sustaining wars as violent crime and predation become the only viable livelihood strategy for the chronically poor' (Goodhand, 2001: 4).*

This study examines the assumption that ethnic conflicts impact on poverty.

The war in Sri Lanka, which started in 1983, was mainly fought in the Northern and Eastern Provinces but the effects and its violence were felt in other areas as well (Goodhand, 2001: 10).

Expenditure on war is both direct and indirect. What is visible is the destruction of property, infrastructure, cultivable land and capital and the victimization of civilians. The indirect impacts are mainly felt in the loss foreign investments and in brain drain. (Arunathilaka et al, 2000).

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 cost of the first two phases of war in the North and East was 16 billion dollars or 13.5% of 1997 GDP (Goodhand, 2000:15). This clearly indicates the



direct impact of the war on the growth of the Sri Lankan economy. In year 2000 Sri Lanka recorded an economic growth of 6.0% but in year 2001 it has decreased to negative growth rate of 1.3%. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pointed out three reasons for this decline in growth. The global economic slowdown, which reduced demand for manufacturing export, the ethnic conflict resulting in an attack on Sri Lanka International airport that adversely affected tourism and adverse weather conditions which reduced agriculture yields (ADB, 2001).

Ethnic conflicts lead to various types of social problems. In the Sri Lankan context, problems vary from those issues faced by widows, refugees, orphaned children and the physically disabled to the increase in crime that has greatly affected the country. The presence of army deserters has led to a systematic growth and spreading of criminal activities in the country. In 2003, the strength of the Sri Lankan army was 134,000 however 49,143 had deserted the military by 2003 (Kanagararachchi, 2003). Because of the training they have received and the fact that the Police seek to arrest them for desertion, they tend to join criminal gangs in order to protect themselves and to make a living. These issues need to be addressed at length by the government as it has a direct impact on the social order of the country. Though indirect results of the war, these issues have a direct impact on slowing down the country's development.

The impact of ethnic conflict on poverty can be examined at micro and macro levels. The macro level impact have been studied heavily and the paper will focus instead on the micro level impact.

### **3. Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to understand;

1. The effect of the ethnic conflict on the poverty levels of the people living in war-affected areas.
2. The different ways in which the conflict has affected the three ethnic groups.

### **4. Methodology**

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used in this study. Primary data were collected through interviews, and observations and a literature

survey was done in order to collect secondary data. Furthermore, information was gathered by interviewing the divisional administrative officers, Divisional Secretary, Grama Niladhari, and Samurdhi Animators. Information was also gathered by reviewing the survey reports carried out in these areas.

### Area of study

The area of study is the Seruvila divisional secretariat, in Trincomalee district. In 1981, the total population of the Seruvila DS division was 20,187 (Population and Census Report, 1981). However by year 2000, it has decreased to 11,655. The main reason for this decrease is that people have abandoned the areas due to the war. The population in the area comprises Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim ethnic groups. There are 7355 Sinhalese, 2993 Tamils and 1486 Muslims living in the Seruvila Divisional Secretariat area (Population report of Seruvila Divisional Secretariat, 2000).

Figure 1. Trincomalee District.



As part of the colonization scheme of 1952, Allai (current Seruvila) was established.

The village of Sirimangalapura in the Seruvial Divisional Secretariat was selected for this study. The inhabitants of this village are second generation settlers – their parents settled in the village during the colonization period of 1950. According to the findings of the Integrated Food Security Programme of the German Technical Corporation (IFSP-GTZ), Sirimangalapura, Thanganagar and Nawakkenikadu villages represent the lowest rates of poverty in the area (Poverty Assessment, GTZ-IFSP, 1998). Hence, this study does not assess the poverty in the area, rather concerns itself with the process in which the conflict has increased poverty.

## 5. Data analysis

### Loss of life and property

Direct results of the war are the loss of life, injuries, destruction of property, and the breakdown of social order in these areas. These have increased poverty among the people in the region. There have been 151 LTTE attacks on the Seruvila DS division within the timeframe of 1986-2000, which resulted in 585 deaths, and 250 reported injuries. Also, 94 Tamil civilians have disappeared within the timeframe of 1989-1992 (Police Crime Report 2000, Serunuwara Police).

The loss of '*chenna*' cultivation and home gardening has had a direct impact on poverty. In 1985 people left the area in the face of continuous LTTE attacks, and on their return, a year later, found their properties ransacked. Furthermore, their home gardens had been destroyed by wild animals. Particularly the coconut estates that had been very profitable were completely destroyed by wild elephants. As people's livelihoods are based on agriculture, such events had far-reaching effects on their standard of living. Moreover, the villagers who returned with the assistance and security of the military forces faced several problems. They had lost most of their cultivable land and were resettled in the centre of the village where several families were made to live in a relatively small area in order to assure their security.

The Tamil villagers in Thanganagar also left in 1985 in the face of the attacks of the LTTE on Sinhala villages. As a result they not only lost their homes but also their movable and immovable property. As the battle spread, they migrated to Muthur, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna but returned after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the LTTE in 2002.

Although they are cultivating the land, they have no permanent dwellings and are still living in temporary structures.

In the years preceding the war, mixed villages that comprised Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim ethnic groups were common. The Muslims in the Seruvila DS divisions are concentrated mainly in the Nawakkenikadu (Selvanagar/Thopur) area. While only a certain percentage of the Muslims left their areas in the face of the attacks, there has been extensive damage caused to buildings and houses. But in comparison to the damage caused to the other ethnic groups, the Muslims have not been greatly affected.

### **Helplessness as result of the conflict**

Although Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people left the area because of the war, they returned to continue their agricultural lifestyle. This is because of their inability to make a stable income in other areas. The Sinhala villagers living under the threat of war have refused to cultivate permanent crops because of their belief that they would have to evacuate the area in the future. This has indirectly affected the level of poverty. As mentioned before, the Sirimangalapura villagers cultivated coconuts, which were later destroyed by the wild elephants. They have not re-cultivated these lands after re-settling.

The war has directly and indirectly caused mental distress among the villagers. The direct causes include threat to life, injury, detention, torture and death of relations due to war and witnessing violence. Destitution, loss of food and economic problems are indirect forms of mental distress (Somasundaram, 1998: 212). These types of mental distress have directly affected both the Tamil and Sinhala population.

There is a high level of frustration and feelings of helplessness among the people of the area. This is apparent in the high rate of alcoholism in this village. According to a study carried out in Sirimangalapura by Divisional Secretariat, the money spent on alcohol in 1999 amounted to 6,880,000 rupees. In the Tamil village of Lingapuram the amount was 19,497,000 rupees. (Divisional Secretariat survey report, 2000: Seruvila). The females of this village are also addicted to alcohol. Although the alcohol addiction of men and women cannot be directly linked to the war, it has a big impact on the poverty of the people in the village.

This situation has created an ideal environment for those involved in alcohol-based ventures.

### **Breakdown of Traditional Livelihoods**

The traditional livelihoods of the villagers of Sirimangalapura were as livestock development and chenna cultivation. Chenna cultivation was carried out in the jungle area situated about 2 kilometers away from the village. But due to the continuous attacks by the LTTE, they were unable to continue their cultivation. This led to the abandoning of animal husbandry as well since they depended on the jungle for food for the animals. At present their main source of income is the payment received by those who serve as home-guards.

**Table 1. Government employees in Sirimangalapura**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Teaching	02	3.8
Army	06	11.5
Navy	02	3.8
Air Force	01	1.9
Police	03	5.8
Driving	01	1.9
Home-guards	37	71
Total	52	100

Source: Samurdhi Officer's Report, 2001

Sub cultures have arisen as a result of war in these areas. The percentage of those involved in occupations associated with the military is 94.3%. The aspirations of the children in the area are to join the military services. At present, most males prefer to join the home-guards as it brings a stable income that exceeds 4000 rupees on a monthly basis. The preference of school leavers to join home-guards over the army or police is mainly due to the fact that they can work while continuing to live at home.

Some of the villagers have begun to cultivate paddy. However, in comparing the living standards of those who cultivate land to those who work as home-guards, it is apparent that the latter lead a relatively better life. The home-guards also own

televisions, cassette recorders and furniture that have been bought under an installment system. But these will inevitably be pawned for money in time of need at high interest rates of 20% and are rarely recovered.

Villagers also turned towards the brick industry as an alternative source of income. Initially they gathered firewood from the neighboring areas but when attempts were made to collect firewood from the jungles, the LTTE attacks resumed, which led the people to abandon this industry as well. Hence, the war has affected the alternative livelihood that the villagers found.

The traditional livelihoods of the Tamil population of Thanganagar village were livestock development, agriculture and working as hired help. Although there have been setbacks due to the war, the villagers have managed to carry on their day-to-day activities. However, they are unable to sell their produce as the Sinhalese do not want to directly trade with them.

Agriculture, livestock development, trade and working for hire are the main forms of livelihood of the Muslims of Nawakkenikadu. As Sinhala and Tamil people are unable to freely move in the other community's area, due to the war, the Muslims have stepped in as the middlemen trading between the Sinhala and Tamil communities. Since Tamils cannot work in the Sinhala areas, the Muslim people have more opportunities to work as hired help in these areas.

### **Breakdown of state and private sector services**

The breakdown of services provided by the state and private sectors has intensified the level of poverty among the people. The main services that are not being adequately administered at the moment are health and education. Parents of Sirimangalapura tend to spend a lot of money on the education of their children and there is a tendency to send them to school in other areas, as education services are not being provided adequately, closer to home. However, none of the children have been able to study up to university entrance. This is mainly due to the fact that they tend to leave school after finishing their Ordinary Level examinations to join the home-guards. As there are schools for Tamil students in Muthur and Trincomalee, Muslim and Tamil parents do not have to spend a lot of money on their children's education.

As there is no adequate health service in the region itself, people travel to either Kandy or Kurunegala to seek medical advice. This, as in the case of providing an education, poses a lot of financial problems for the villagers. Although health services are being provided at Trincomalee, since majority of the staff members are Tamils, the Sinhala people do not trust them. Tamil and Muslim people on the other hand, enjoy these available facilities.

The war has disrupted transport services. In pre-war era, the people of this area were able transport their produce so they could sell it to either the Paddy Marketing Board or to other traders for a competitive price. However, at present they are exploited by the traders who manipulate the poverty of the villagers and do not offer a good price for the produce. Such exploitation causes the poverty level of the villagers to rise. Exploitation by traders is common to all three ethnicities in the area.

### **Tax policies of the LTTE**

The tax policy system being implemented by the LTTE is also causing problems for all three ethnic communities. The taxes include a payment of 500 rupees for every acre that is cultivated in each season. They also charge an additional 500 rupees for tractors that are used for agricultural purposes. Although the situation is more serious for the Tamil and Muslim people living in the uncleared areas, Sinhala villagers in Dehiwatte and Neelapola are also coming under attack, as huge ransoms are demanded for people who are kidnapped and for stolen vehicles. These tax policies have greatly affected the development of these areas.

### **Breakdown of Community Based Organizations**

In pre-war Sirimangalapura, there were CBO's that facilitated development work in the village. But in the face of the war, both the Funeral Aid Society and Rural Development Society have broken down and at present there are no active CBO's in the village. Presently Samurdhi Society is non-functional. This has directly influenced their levels of poverty as a lot of community work that could have been carried out is being prevented due to this reason. Moreover, many of the NGO's working in the region use the CBO's as a receiving mechanism and provide goods through these organizations. The lack of such an organization in Sirimangalapura would help explain the absence of NGO participation in the area.

Villagers were quick to point out the work that was done in pre-war era with the assistance of such CBO'S and state that the lack of such organizations is a great loss for the community as a whole.

The home-guards of the area have been concentrated into a single unit in the Seruvila Police division. The 37 home-guards of Sirimangalapura are also part of this unit. In times of upheaval or when the community is under attack, the members of this unit contribute a fixed amount of their salary to those affected by such incidents. But this has no impact on helping the development of the community as a whole or in providing a proper support system for the people.

The situation existent in Thanganagar is very similar to that of Sirimangalapura. They are also an isolated unit as there are no CBO and NGO intervention in the area. The Muslims on the other hand are brought together by the activities carried out by the Mosque and their religious leaders. But this does not create the high levels of social mobilization that could be achieved through CBO's.

There is a significant need to utilize the available resources in the area and socially mobilize the villagers. As United Nations' Development Project points out, the best method to overcome extreme poverty among people is to let them organize themselves and form their own organizations that will enable them to take collective action to develop their village. Thus, CBO's become the centre for collective thinking and action and the lack of such organizations leads to an increase in the levels of poverty.

## 6. Conclusion

The civil war has had a direct impact on people living in the war affected areas. The most devastating effect of the war is seen in property destruction and deaths of key people in the families. The loss of income opportunities and frustration has direct relationships to poverty. The war-related frustration and uneasiness has resulted in villagers living in temporary dwellings, not constructing permanent building, or not engaging in steady agriculture. Most people try to earn '*something*' for their daily subsistence. Another factor for the poverty in the Seruvila area is the breakdown of traditional livelihoods and coping mechanisms.

The effect of the war has had varied impacts on the different ethnic groups. Sinhalese communities face harassment from the LTTE and Tamil communities'



face harassment from the armed forces while they engage in traditional occupations. Being buffer groups, the Muslims have certain advantages such as traveling in both the Sinhala dominant and Tamil dominant areas. This has an advantage for their business activities. The tax imposed by the LTTE is considered the biggest impediment the Muslim community faces. The ethnic conflict has affected each ethnic group differently but has contributed to the increase of poverty among each of them.

## **7. Possible solutions to reduce the level of poverty**

It is apparent that the most direct cause for poverty in this area is the ethnic conflict. People who live in the war affected area do not harbor any long-term plans or expectations. This is evident in their reluctance to build permanent structures for houses and cultivate permanent crops. Hence, the foremost strategy to provide solutions for their poverty is to ensure peace through a permanent resolution of the conflict. Unless their fears of the conflict are reduced one cannot even contemplate on addressing the issue of poverty among them. The fact that these communities have placed a lot of trust and confidence in the peace process is a positive factor.

Although there are adequate natural resources in this area, which can be utilized for the development of Seruvila, the people are unaware of how to make use of these resources. Hence, as the second step in the process, the villagers have to be made aware on how to utilize them. Steps should be taken to increase the levels of social mobilization through the establishment of CBO's in the area as these have had a major role to play in development activities in the pre-war era. This would help prevent the growth of negative and passive mentalities among them and would lead to the fulfillment of most of their needs at the community level.

Although they have different sources of income, the people are only set on day to day living with no thought on saving for the future. Hence, saving habits have to be improved and encouraged among them and through these they have to be shown how to invest back into their work. Self-employment has to be encouraged and initiated among them by providing training and necessary credit facilities. There is also a need to provide technical advice through field officers.

The lack of essential services is another main issue among the villagers. Although known for its agricultural activities, the area lacks an Agriculture Officer, a Veterinarian and a Rural Development Officer. These services that have to be provided through the central government or the Provincial council have not reached the people. It is the responsibility of the government to assure that these areas are not politically excluded from the process of development. For, when they are excluded, the villagers tend to depend only on the traditional methods of farming and are unable to use modern technology to improve and upgrade the produce.

Taken as a whole, what becomes apparent is that simply providing them the goods and services they require cannot reduce the level of poverty among the villagers. Parallel to this process, there also should be programmes to change the attitudes of the people. Thus, the idea should be to provide a package of services that comprise both these aspects, which would inevitably lead to the achievement of better results.

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## VI. The Impact of Poverty Alleviation Programmes on Social Integration Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka: **The Case Study of two Government Housing Schemes.**

*Anton Piyarathne*

### 1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is a heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society comprising of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers. Though they live harmoniously, from time-to-time misunderstandings and tensions between these communities arise. A major civil war identified as '*ethnic conflict*', '*separatist*' or '*terrorist*' movement has been waged in the country throughout the last two decades. The need for integration between Sinhalese and Tamils has often been emphasized by researchers, writers, and policy makers. This paper explains how housing schemes could lead to better social integration between the traditional Sinhala villagers and the Tamils who live in the plantation areas.

There are many Tamil identities such as *Colombo Tamils*, *Batticaloa Tamils*, *Jaffna Tamils*, and lastly *Estate Tamils* in Sri Lanka. Not all the Tamils who live in Sri Lanka are referred to as '*Sri Lankan Tamils*', for in the government records, and even at the level of group consciousness, there is a distinction made between the '*Indian Tamils*' of the tea and rubber plantation areas, and the '*Sri Lankan Tamils*' who are the traditional Tamil inhabitants of Sri Lanka, who are largely confined to the northern and eastern parts of the island (Sivathamby, 1995). Most of the members who were engaged in the on-going war were drawn from *Jaffna Tamils* and *Batticaloa Tamils*, while *Estate Tamils* have maintained a somewhat harmonious relationship with the Sinhalese. But the war has created ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in the estate sectors as well. Communal riots erupted in 1983 and on several other occasions and have created enormous hardships for the estate Tamil community. This study has focused on '*Indian Tamils*' (hereafter referred to as '*estate Tamils*' / '*plantation Tamil workers*' who live in the tea and rubber plantation areas. There are tea and rubber small holders in the industry, but they have not been considered in the study.

Two plantations that were previously owned by the government and are now managed by private companies, have thousands of acreage and a resident Tamil

population who have been included in the study. The term 'plantation' is *subject to various definitions, one of the most accepted is 'an economic unit producing agricultural commodities (field crops or horticultural products, but not livestock) for sale, and employing a relatively large number of unskilled labourers whose activities are closely supervised. Plantations usually employ a year-round labour crew of some size, and they usually specialize in the production of only one or two marketable products. They differ from other kinds of farms in the way in which the factors of production, primary management and labour, are combined'* (Sivaram, 2000: 1).

To make the study more enlightening it is necessary to mention the origin of the estate Tamils in Sri Lanka. According to Wesumperuma (1986), from about the 1830s, a capitalist economy began to grow rapidly in Sri Lanka when the British colonial administration wanted to start cash crops such as tea and rubber. But as Asoka Bandarage (1983) points out, they could not generate an adequate docile labour force locally among the Sinhala peasantry (Ibid.: 195). Therefore, they had to rely on migratory Indian workers recruited under the '*Kangani system*'. This system of recruitment of an Indian labour force was peculiar to Ceylon and Malaya. The '*Kangani*' recruited labourers from among their relations, friends and village folk in south India. Thus, the labourer often lived with his kinfolk and the leaders were also from their community, who naturally had an understanding of their language, customs and prejudices (Wesumperuma, 1986: 31). The '*Kangani*' (headman) who was an Indian immigrant supervised the work of his gang, which usually consisted of 25 to 30 persons, but if there were less people to supervise, he would also work as a labourer. All the gangs in the estate would be under a '*Head Kangani*', who acted as an intermediary between the estate superintendent and the labour force with regard to the issue of payments of wages (Kondapi, 1951: 29). After bringing them to the estates, these people were given '*line rooms*' with poor facilities. Each '*line*' is a long barrack building with 10-12 rooms. The double '*line*', which is back to back, can contain as many as 24 households (Hollup, 1994: 53). These people were confined to the estates and worked long hours. At that time the Sinhala villagers labelled them as '*Demalu*', '*Wathu Demalu*', '*Watte Aayo*', '*Layime Aayo*', etc.

Therefore, the Tamil plantation workers had little opportunity to mix with Sinhala villagers around the estates, and they have since been living as an un-integrated community. According to a news item in the *Daily News* of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002, delegates at the conference of the Ceylon Workers' Congress called for the granting of equal maternity benefits for plantation workers; the upgrading of

educational, health and other basic needs of the people and called for action to remove acts of discrimination against the plantation workers. They demanded that the 50-year gap that existed in socio-economic and welfare issues between the plantation sector and other sectors of the community be bridged (quoted from Moonesinghe, 1995: 64). These demands have been articulated with increasing frequency in the last few decades, and successive Sri Lankan governments have heeded them, affecting many changes, initiating various kinds of development interventions in the sectors of education, health and housing in the post-colonial era. Following independence, changing management patterns and the development of education standards, which was extremely low compared to the national statistics in the plantation sector, have given considerable freedom to the plantation Tamil workers in selecting their own jobs. The plantation industry was unable to cater to the new occupational needs/interests of the youths in the plantations. Plantation Tamil youths who migrated in search of jobs outside the estate were able to associate with the Sinhalese. However, this interaction was not sufficient to establish sustainable and wider interpersonal relationships among ethnic groups. As a result of these changes, plantation youths were able to earn much more than before, but were still living in the same accommodation, the *'Line Room'* provided by the colonial estate management.

Post-independence governments concentrated more on development activities in Sinhala villages. Simultaneously, limited development interventions on the estates areas were evident. With the privatization of the government estates, the Plantation Housing and Welfare Trust (PHSWT) was established in mid 1992. The aim of the institution was to improve the social welfare aspect of the plantation Tamil workers. Later this was modified into a different body called the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT). Estate housing, crèches, health and welfare aspects were managed by this organisation. Manikam (1995) points out the inadequacy of housing for the plantation families. In many cases, estate residents were crowded into damp, smoky and dark hovels, severely affecting their health, and creating enormous social and psychological stress (Ibid.: 51). *'Line rooms'* were established during the period 1815 to about 1950. Self-help housing schemes were carried out by the government in the plantation sector (covering both Tea and Rubber estates) as an alternative to the existing socially unacceptable line rooms.

The National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) and Plantation Housing and Social welfare Trust (PHSWT) played a key role in these new housing programmes. The accepted policy of the programme was to move away from the

'line room' and establish a new independent settlement. The intention of the Government was to extend the right to every plantation worker to participate in the national programme, which aimed at providing satisfactory housing for them. The policy would be to extend to the plantation population the voluntary option of living in individual houses built on the basis of the self-help approach or to remain in the existing dwelling with possible improvement aimed at providing additional space, a separate kitchen and improved light and ventilation. This settlement development has been considered a means of enhancing social and economic development integration of the estate Tamil population into the mainstream of the society. A plot of land and financial facilities were provided for the estate workers through estate welfare officers.

Geographically and socially isolated in the plantations, the estate Tamils emerged as a relatively closed community limited to the territorial boundaries of the plantation and in terms of the external socio-political conditions represented by the greater society (Hollup, 1994: VI). Plantation Tamils have been living as a segregated community for hundreds of years in the plantation areas. The need to integrate the plantation with the village was hence accepted as it was, in several ways, necessary for the future well being of the plantation worker communities as well as the village inhabitants (Moonasinghe, 1995: 64). Moreover, the need for integration between both the Sinhalese and the Plantation Tamils has been pointed out by politicians, policy makers, and researchers as well as academics. It is also very important in the discussions of the nation-building process (Moonasinghe, 1995: 64).

This research was aimed at exploring how governmental housing schemes help to create better social integration between Tamil estate residents and the Sinhalese who live in traditional villages around the estates. At the macro level, socio-economic forces also supported integration among ethnic groups in the country. This essay tries to demonstrate how micro level poverty reduction interventions can have an effect on social integration of the plantation Tamils and the Sinhalese (who live in the villages around the estates). The Sinhalese have predominantly been living in these villages, while Tamils live on the estates. The history of the Traditional Sinhala villages around the estates can be traced back a few decades. The Sinhala villages that are around the *Ganga Nagar* have been there even during King *Dutugamunu's* period, while Sinhala village close to *Ganga Nagar* were established four decades ago under governmental resettlement projects. In Kalutara, according to the adults of the area, Sinhala villages close to *Jana Udana*

*Gammanaya* have been there for more than 50 years. These Sinhala villages are hereafter referred to as traditional Sinhala villages and both *Jana Udana Gammanaya* and *Ganga Nagar* are referred to as settlements.

The research was carried out in two self-help housing schemes, '*Ganga Nagar*' in Nuwara Eliya and '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' in Kalutara, established a few years ago for plantation workers, close to traditional Sinhala villages. Estate workers from *Glandon* Estate of Kalutara live in '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' and estate workers from '*Red Hill*' estate of Nuwara Eliya live in '*Ganga Nagar*'. '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' comprises of two stages. The first stage consists of 28 houses that were distributed amongst Sinhala and Tamil workers of the Estate. The second stage includes 40 houses. The housing project was not completed at the time of the study. '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' was inaugurated in 1997 while '*Ganga Nagar*' was initiated in 1985. There are 40 plots of land in '*Ganga Nagar*', but only 37 plots of land were utilized to build houses. All the houses were included in the study sample. Working families who lived in '*Line Rooms*' of the '*Red Hill*' have moved to '*Ganga Nagar*'. They were given half an acre of land, whereas 10 perch plots of land and financial assistance were given to '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' settlers from the government. The Sinhalese came from traditional Sinhala villages and Tamils living in line rooms work on the estates and got plots of land in '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' while only three Sinhala families of '*Red hill*' estate came from line rooms and live with Tamils in '*Ganga Nagar*'.

## 2. Research methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted in the study. A survey was conducted at the beginning of the study to obtain an overview of the settlements. Two different questionnaires were administered to the 29 families in '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' and 37 families in '*Ganga Nagar*' and their relatives living in the line rooms. At the second stage, in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected respondents from both line rooms and new housing schemes. Traditional Sinhala villagers were also interviewed in order to understand the integration patterns between the two communities. Adults and youth, both male and female respondents were included in the study to ensure the inclusion of various points of view. It took seven months to complete the study. In addition to the main research methods, their behaviour patterns in festival times such as '*Deepawali*', '*Thai Pongal*' etc. and functions of the Hindu Temples were closely observed.



**Table 1. Research Sample**

Type of Research	Area		Total sample
	Nuwara Eliya	Kalutara	
<i>Questionnaire Survey</i>			
1. Dwellers in Line Rooms	31	23	54
2. Respondents in settlements	37	29	66
<i>In-depth Interviews</i>			
1. Line Room Dwellers	10	10	20
2. Respondents in settlements	10	10	20
3. Sinhalese in Traditional villages	20	20	40

Source: Research data

Basically, it was expected to discuss social integration of the Plantation Tamils from three angles: the points of view of settlers in new housing schemes, traditional Sinhala villagers and Tamils who still live in line rooms. Therefore, all the Tables that are in the paper should be considered accordingly.

### 3. Theoretical considerations

Social integration is a very important concept since it is the major theme in this work. *'Social integration'* is a process through which people interact or closely associate with others. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* the term integration is *'the act or process of mixing people who have previously been separated because of colour, race, religion etc'*. This definition has been used for the study since it was most appropriate to the research context. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, social integration refers to the principles by which individuals or actors are related to one another in a society (1998: 614).

It was attempted to construct an argument in the research that settlement patterns increase plantation(Tamils)-village(Sinhalese) integration and it establishes integrated estate Tamil communities with the majority of society in our country. The people of this community may acquire a sense of owning property when they live in houses instead of in *'line rooms'*. While still living in *'Line rooms'* and observing the difference between Sinhalese in traditional villages and Tamils, they felt *'We are not a part of the main society, we have no ownership of this country'*.

There was a sub-culture created based on the dwelling pattern in the plantations where Tamil workers live in 'Line rooms'. With the initiation of these housing schemes, Tamils who lived in the estate 'line rooms' also received houses in relatively good conditions, similar to those owned by the Sinhalese who live in traditional villages in the area. As a result of this development, the 'line room' based sub-culture, which created a wide gap between the two communities (Sinhalese and Tamils) both physically and mentally, has begun to decrease.

Most previous research has pointed out the need of social integration between the two communities. In her research *'A Decade of Change in the Plantations: the implication for women workers'*, Valli Kanapathipillai has discussed ethnic segregation in the following terms: *'Plantations have always functioned as enclaves in an economic, social and cultural sense. The plantation workers have remained ethnically distinct and separate. In more recent times the importance of integration with village communities has been recognized'* (1992: 32). According to Kanapathipillai, ethnic identities are also important. According to my research, people who get new houses have a slightly different social identity to that of the line room dwellers. This too has an effect on social integration between the two communities. Ethnic identity still does not lose its importance, but social identity plays a important role in the interaction process of new settlements. In the long run, this initiative has led to better integration between the two communities. In his article *'Plantation-village Integration: A Need for Ethnic Harmony'* Bertram Bastiampillai has discussed social integration and gives suggestions to increase more integration between the two communities.

In earlier times, class operated as a major source of integration in capitalist societies, while the caste system played an important role in the integration process in feudal societies. In my research, ethnicity plays a major role in the integration between the two communities. In addition to this factor, the settlement pattern, too, affects integration. Settlement patterns can neutralize the ethnicity-based segregation. According to Marx's approach there is a conflict between forces of production and the relationship of production. However, there were no such conflicts in this research work. According to Max Weber, status-based societies are likely to lead to a harmonious form of social integration. Weber's theory plays a more important role than the Marxist perspective on conflict, since he discusses status-based approaches. At present the Sinhalese own homes, live in villages close to the estates, and have a good social status, while the Tamils of the plantation areas still occupy "line rooms" that are old barrack-type houses, which are dirty and unhealthy. These plantation Tamils, therefore, have lower social status/esteem.

When Plantation Tamils were able to reach a settlement pattern like the Sinhalese in traditional villages, their social status and self-esteem improved. These developments have helped, to some extent, to bridge the gap in social status and social esteem between Sinhalese and Tamils, and to improve social integration people of the same status/esteem.

As explained by Giddens (1984), social integration can be seen to arise, in particular, from the face-to-face interaction of individuals. According to the study, after introducing new settlement schemes for Tamils, this also provided them opportunities to increase their face-to-face interaction with the traditional Sinhala villagers and created positive integration between the two communities. It can be argued through the study that even children of Tamils and Sinhalese are given more opportunities for integration and socialize accordingly. Children will become integrated through socialization and that ensures a harmonious society in the future.

Considering all the above theoretical aspects, a conceptual frame has been developed for the research. It is argued in this research that, social identity, social status, and social esteem of the plantation Tamil workers who lived in the line rooms previously, have been improved (strengthened), and it has led to a foundation for better social integration of the earlier marginalized plantation Tamil community who lived, isolated in the centre of the big plantations, from the majority Sinhalese.

## **4. Social integration**

### **Emerging trends in relationships between Tamils and Sinhalese**

There was an absence of close relations between Sinhalese and Tamils when plantation Tamils lived far from traditional Sinhala villages at the center of hill estates. The new settlements have led to an increase in interaction between the two communities. These two settlements were established much closer to the surrounding traditional villages, which were mainly occupied by Sinhalese. Beneficiaries of the scheme were selected from the various divisions of the 'Glandon' estate, and were moved to '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*', while some of them lived in '*Red Hills*' relocated in '*Ganga Nagar*'.

**Table 2. The relationship between traditional Sinhala villages and Jana Udana Gammanaya, Ganga Nagar (housing scheme settler's point of view)**

Nature of the Relationship	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Better relations	27	93.0	34	92.0	61	92.4
No improvement in relations	02	07.0	03	08.0	05	7.6
Total	29	100.0	37	100.0	66	100.0

Source: Research data

To make this study more valid, those who were still living in the “line rooms” in the above-mentioned sub-divisions of the estate were interviewed to provide a further understanding of the relationship between the Sinhalese and the plantation Tamil communities. Line room dwellers were asked whether they have much better relationships with the Sinhalese who live in surrounding traditional villages than those who are in *Ganga Nagar* and *Jana Udana Gammanaya*. According to the responses given by the line room dwellers and the settlers, there is better interaction between the Settlers (Tamils) and the traditional Sinhala villages.

**Table 3. The relationship between ‘Line room’ dwellers and the Traditional Sinhala villagers (The line room dweller's point of view).**

Nature of the Relationship	Glandon Estate		Red Hill Estate		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Better relations	14	61.00	04	13.0	18	33.3
No improvement in relations	09	39.00	27	87.0	36	66.7
Total	23	100.0	31	100.0	54	100.0

Source: Research data

The ‘line room’ dwellers in ‘Glandon estate’ have clearly expressed their views, and traditional Sinhala villagers living in surrounding areas have also pointed out that the Tamils living in the settlements have better integration with the Sinhalese than the Tamils still living in the line rooms. 87% line room dwellers agreed that the settlers (*Ganga Nagar*) have better relationships with the Sinhalese, thus proving the

suitability of the research hypothesis, the settlements increase the relationship between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. From data gathered through the in-depth interviews with 20 respondents from traditional Sinhala villages, there is evidence to prove that the settlers (both in *Ganga Nagar* and *Jana Udana Gammanaya*) have more connections/ relationships with the surrounding Sinhala villages.

## **5. Reasons for the better integration of the settlers in ‘Jana Udana Gammanaya’ / ‘Ganga Nagar’ with the surrounding traditional Sinhala villages.**

People living in *Jana Udana Gammanaya*’ and *‘Ganga Nagar’* provided many reasons to confirm that they have better relationships with the Sinhalese of the area. Their reasons are as follows:

A higher number of people from both locations believed that they have a better relationship with surrounding traditional Sinhala villages since they live close to the traditional villages. Ervin Goffman in his book *‘The Presentation of Self in Every Day Life’* (1959) discussed face-to-face interaction that is conceptually more applicable to the phenomenon that is explained here in the form of integration. Goffman discussed it as, *‘the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence’* (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1998: 217). *‘Ganga Nagar’* settlers have a chance to visit the neighbouring town, *‘Niltenna’*, to buy essential items and associate with the Sinhalese than the line room dwellers do. When they were in the estate line rooms they came to the *‘Niltenna town’*, the nearest junction, mostly on estate pay days and other rare occasions. Before coming to the settlement they used to live quite far from the traditional Sinhala villages. *Jana Udana Gammanaya’* is also situated very close to the main bus routes and the other by-roads to the Sinhala villages. The Sinhalese living close to *‘Ganga Nagar’* and *Jana Udana Gammanaya’* use kinship terms such as *‘Aiya’* (elder brother), *‘Aka’* (elder sister), *‘Nangi’* (younger sister), *‘Malli’* (younger brother), etc. to address the family members in the settlement. But the Sinhalese have hardly used these kinship terms to address the people living in line rooms in *‘Glandon estate’* or *‘Red Hill’ estate*.

**Table 4. Reasons for the better integration between traditional Sinhala villages and 'Jana Udana Gammanaya' / 'Ganga Nagar' (new settlers' points of view)**

Reasons	Responses				Total	
	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
We live very close to Sinhala villages	17	30.4	11	20.7	28	25.7
Tamils and Sinhalese live in the same settlement	22	39.3			22	20.2
We often visit boutiques run by Sinhalese than the line room dwellers			16	30.2	16	14.7
Our houses are clean, spacious and we live in a settlement like traditional Sinhala villages	03	05.3	03	05.7	06	5.5
Associate with Sinhalese decently and in a respectable manner	05	08.9	12	22.6	17	15.6
Work for Sinhalese (e.g. daily paid workers Etc.)	02	03.6	03	05.7	05	4.6
Help each other	07	12.5	06	11.3	13	11.9
Worked with the Sinhalese in the estate			02	03.8	02	1.8
Total Responses	56	100.0	53	100.0	109	100.0

Source: Research data

The views of the settlers in new housing schemes were confirmed from in-depth interviews with the traditional Sinhala villagers living in surrounding villages. Nearly 95% of Sinhala respondents believed that the Tamils in new housing schemes (settlements) have good connections with their villages, while only 5% of respondents said both line room dwellers and villagers have the same relationship pattern. Sinhala villagers pointed out reasons for better relationships with the settlements. 10% of them said the Tamil settlers could speak Sinhala; and were able to communicate with the Sinhalese. 45% of respondents believed that Tamil settlers wished to associate with the Sinhalese much more than line room dwellers did. 95% of respondents of the 20 in-depth interviews believed that Tamil settlers had many connections with the Sinhalese because they lived very close to Sinhala

villages. 40% of respondents believed that Tamil settlers are far better than line room dwellers, and therefore, settlers have good contacts with the Sinhalese in surrounding areas. Settlers are treated with more respect by the Sinhalese as a result of this prosperity. All 20 Sinhala respondents believed that the people living in 'Ganga Nagar' lead similar lives to the Sinhalese; this may also be a reason for the Sinhalese to maintain good connections with the Tamils in settlements. The social status of the 'Ganga Nagar' and 'Jana Udana Gammanaya' settlers plays a key role in the case of setting a ground for social integration.

'Jana Udana Gammanaya' is a mixed village, unlike 'Ganga Nagar'. The Sinhalese who worked on the estate, and who originated from traditional Sinhala villages, were also settled in this settlement and mostly known as 'Gammanaya'. Therefore, this presents a very good opportunity for both ethnic groups to live peacefully. Settlers have to accept the neighbours who belong to either race. They help each other whenever there is a need. They share betel, arecanut, foodstuff, and other household items and sometimes even borrow small amounts of money from their

**Table 5. Reasons for better integration between traditional Sinhala villages and the 'Jana Udana Gammanaya' / 'Ganga Nagar' (line room dwellers' point of view)**

Reasons	Estates (Responses)				Total	
	Glandon		Red Hills		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
All have the same relationship	02	06.0	02	03.8	04	04.7
Traditional Sinhala villages are very close to settlements	11	33.3	22	42.3	33	38.9
Line room dwellers have no opportunity to meet Sinhalese	06	18.2	07	13.5	13	15.3
Settlers do business with surrounding villagers			07	13.5	07	08.2
Settlers get their goods from boutiques run by Sinhalese			04	07.7	04	04.7
Settlers visit Doctors/ native doctors in Sinhala villages	09	27.3	08	15.4	17	20.0
Sinhalese do not want to visit line rooms	05	15.2	02	03.8	07	08.2
Total	33	100.0	52	100.0	85	100.0

Source: Research data

neighbours. Quite a high percentage of respondents in '*Gammanaya*' believe that they have good relationships with the neighbouring traditional Sinhala villages since Sinhalese and Tamils came from estate working families living in the '*Gammanaya*'. This living pattern gave prestige to the Tamils who came from line rooms to the settlement. The line rooms of the estate are not clean. Therefore, the Sinhalese who live in traditional villages did not like to visit their rooms, even for tea. But the Tamils who came from estates who live in both '*Ganga Nagar*' and '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' are cleaner. The Sinhalese living in neighbouring villages are motivated to visit their houses and spend more time with them.

Line room residents also said that the '*Gammanaya*' / '*Ganga Nagar*' settlers were better integrated with the Sinhalese because they live close to the Sinhala villages. This is evident in Nuwara Eliya, in particular, where people who live in '*Red Hill*' estate have to come down from the far hills to meet Sinhalese. According to the research findings, a considerable percentage of the line room dwellers said that they do not have opportunities to meet Sinhalese who live in surrounding traditional villages. Line room dwellers rarely visit the towns to buy household stuff. Such visits, when they do occur, may be carried out by the same person. As the Sinhalese perceive that the line rooms are dirty and lack adequate sanitary facilities, they very rarely have even a cup of tea when they visit. The findings of the in-depth interviews indicate that they do not hesitate to eat or drink when the visit '*Gammanaya*' / '*Ganga Nagar*' for weddings, parties, or any other occasion. It is clear that cleanliness provides a condition for close association. In-depth interviews with the Sinhalese in the surrounding villages also supported the above argument. The Sinhalese claimed that settlers in '*Gammanaya*' / '*Ganga Nagar*' led quite similar lives to theirs, and that they behaved decently, unlike the line room dwellers.

Settlers in '*Ganga Nagar*', who conducted business with the Sinhalese live in surrounding villages. They sell their tea leaves to the Sinhala traders, and build relationships with the Sinhalese. The settlers have adequate land, and grow cash crops such as tea, coffee, cloves and pepper, as was mentioned before, to sell to Sinhala businessmen.



## 6. Role of social status in promoting social integration

As mentioned in the theoretical discussion, there is a considerable relationship between social status, social identity and social integration. Research reveals that the 'Gammanaya' and 'Ganga Nagar' settlers have a higher social status than the line room dwellers. All respondents from the 'Gammanaya' stated that their social status was higher than that of those who lived in the line rooms. Line room dwellers also accepted that (as indicated in the following Table). The new self-esteem/social status of the settlers in housing schemes gave them confidence to maintain contact with surrounding traditional Sinhala villages.

**Table 6. Social status of line room dwellers compared with the 'Jana Udana Gammanaya' /'Ganga Nagar' (from the line room dwellers point of view)**

Nature of the social status	Estates (Responses)				Total	
	Glandon		Red Hills		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
<i>Gammanaya/Ganga Nagar</i> has a higher social status than that of the estate	18	78.3	24	77.4	42	77.8
<i>Gammanaya Ganga Nagar</i> does not have a higher social status than that of the estate	5	21.7	7	22.6	12	22.2
Total Respondents	23	100.0	31	100.0	54	100.0

Source: Research data

Tamils living in new settlements believe that they too live in a village environment similar to the one in which the Sinhalese have traditionally lived. Tamil villagers are mentally geared up to have contacts with the Sinhalese, unlike line room dwellers. 24% respondents of 'Gammanaya' said that their village is not equal to traditional Sinhala villages of the area while 76% of the settlers in 'Gammanaya' believed that they lived in a similar village like the Sinhalese and more than 80% of the respondents from traditional Sinhala villages also gave the same answer. More than 61% line room dwellers in various divisions of 'Glandon' estate in Kalutara were not proud about their residence.

**Table 7. Reasons for the good social status of settlers in ‘Ganga Nagar’ and ‘Jana Udana Gammanaya’ (according to settler’s perception)**

Reason	Settlement (Responses)				Total	
	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
Live in a settlement, similar to the village	10	17.5	10	12.3	20	14.5
Live in our own, separate, spacious, houses	20	35.1	27	33.4	47	34.1
Have a lot of facilities	3	5.3	1	1.2	4	2.9
Have a free and independent life	6	10.5	14	17.3	20	14.5
Settlers are better off	8	14.0	8	9.9	16	11.6
Have a healthier life in this settlement	3	5.3	10	12.3	13	9.4
Have a modernized, systematic life	5	8.8	8	9.9	13	9.4
Prestige of the Minister			3	3.7	3	2.2
Sinhalese and Tamils live here	2	3.5			2	1.4
Total	57	100.0	81	100.0	138	100.0

Source: Research data

It is very important for us to understand the perception of the traditional Sinhala villagers on the social status of the people in settlements. 95% respondents of Sinhala villages said that the Tamils living in the new housing scheme in both Nuwara Eliya and Kalutara, which is very close to them, have better social status than the line room dwellers. Sinhala villagers in ‘Niltenna town’ and other close villages pointed out reasons for higher social status of ‘Ganga Nagar’ as follows:

**Table 8. Reasons for ‘Ganga Nagar’ settlers to have higher social status than the Tamils living in line rooms (perception of traditional Sinhala villagers)**

Reasons	Responses	%
Settlers integrate with the Sinhalese	17	18.7
Settlers are rich	15	16.5
Their behaviour is decent	03	03.3
Settlers live in their own houses	16	17.6
Settlers have a different social identity	09	09.9
Settlers are educated	07	07.7
Settlers have a free, independent life	08	08.8
They dress better	06	06.6
They have good health practices	10	10.9
Total responses	91	100.0

Source: Research data

Social status also plays a significant role here. Those who have the same social status can interact easily than those who do not. Settlers in these two schemes believed they had the same social status/ recognition like surrounding traditional villages.

**Table 9. Settlers’ perception on their social status compared to the surrounding Sinhala villages**

Nature of Social	Settlements (Respondents)				Total	
	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Lower social status	5	17.2	3	8.1	8	12.1
Higher Social status	24	82.8	34	91.9	58	87.9
Total	29	100.0	37	100.0	66	100.0

Source: Research data

According to Table 09, the settlers believed that their settlements also received the same recognition as Sinhala villages of the area. They gave the following reasons to support the fact they also have the same social status as traditional Sinhala villagers as follows:

**Table 10. Reasons for settlers to have an equal social status with traditional Sinhala villages (settlers point of view)**

Reason	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
I am a Sinhalese	10	33.3	3	5.5	13	15.3
Owned separate houses/ land	9	30.0	7	12.7	16	18.8
Living close to Sinhala villages	2	6.7	3	5.5	5	6.0
Close relationship with the Sinhalese	3	10.0	17	30.9	20	23.5
Have descent/disciplined behaviour	2	6.7	1	1.8	3	3.5
Have a lifestyle similar to Sinhalese	3	10.0	12	21.8	15	17.6
Have same respect similar to Sinhalese	1	3.3	12	21.8	13	15.3
Total	30	100.0	55	100.0	85	100.0

Source: Research data

Both ethnic groups, Sinhalese and Tamils, live in *Jana Udana Gammanaya*, therefore it gives high social status for settlers. Most of the causes pointed out by the settlers show that they have achieved some socio-economic, and cultural aspects of traditional Sinhala villages. New settlers are no longer scared of the Sinhalese.

## 7. Role of social identity in promoting social integration

As a result of the establishment of the housing scheme, those Tamils who moved to new houses adopted a different social identity and this provided a favourable background for them to integrate more easily with the Sinhalese living in surrounding villages. The Sinhala and the Tamil residents in the area use the term “*Gammanaya*”, which they often use to call traditional Sinhala villages, to address the new settlement in Kalutara. There is a clear difference between the people who live in line rooms, who are known as “Layime Aayo”, “Watte Aayo”, and the people from the settlement who are called “Game Minissu”, or “Gammane Minissu”. In Nuwara Eliya, surrounding villagers used the terms “Kani”, “Colony”, “Nil Tenna” to identify the *Ganga Nagar*. The people of the area categorised or grouped the same Tamil community into two categories according to their dwelling patterns.

**Table 11. Social identities of settlers who are in 'Jana Udana Gammanaya' and 'Ganga Nagar' compared to line room dwellers (from their point of view)**

Responses	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Have a different social identity	15	51.7	30	81.1	45	68.2
No difference in Social identity	14	48.3	7	18.9	21	31.8
Total Respondents	29	100.0	37	100.0	66	100.0

Source: Research Data

People in *Jana Udana Gammanaya* and *Ganga Nagar* have pointed out the reasons for the existence of different social identities within the same ethnic group. They felt that they are more comfortable with the new social identity, and this perception created a base for better social integration. The social identity of the Tamil settlers plays a great role in the aspect of social integration. The in-depth interviews revealed that a Tamil youth experiences negligence or disrespect, when he reveals his background from estate line rooms. But now, youth who live in settlements can fearlessly reveal their social identity to anybody. Therefore, this new identity is setting a firm foundation for them to establish a good relationship with the Sinhalese.

**Table 12. Reasons for settlers to have a different social identity from that of the line room dwellers (settlers' point of view).**

Reason	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Since we live in a settlement similar to a village	14	30.4	13	32.5	27	31.0
We live in a our own house/land	15	32.6	13	32.5	28	32.2
We are leading a peaceful life in the settlement	02	4.3	01	02.5	03	3.4
Villagers are clean, systematic and organised	04	8.7	05	12.5	09	10.3
We are disciplined	02	4.4	04	10.0	06	7.0
Settlers have a high income	08	17.4	01		09	10.3
We closely associate with Sinhalese	01	2.2	04	10.0	05	5.8
Total Respondents	46	100.0	41	100.0	87	100.0

Source: Research Data

The in-depth interviews with the Sinhalese living in traditional villages revealed the following views on social identity of the Tamil settlers in '*Ganga Nagar*':

**Table 13. Social identity of the people in '*Ganga Nagar*' (from the point of view of people from traditional Sinhala villages)**

Reasons for new Social identity of settlers	Responses	
	Number	%
They identify them as a separate social group	20	33.9
They dress well (better)/new clothes	06	10.2
They are also live in a village like us	14	23.7
Houses in <i>Ganga Nagar</i> are similar to that in our villages	19	32.2
Total Responses	59	100.0

Source: Research data

All Sinhalese respondents agreed that people from '*Ganga Nagar*' lead a similar life style to traditional Sinhala villagers. Most of the Sinhalese agreed that '*Ganga Nagar*' had a different social identity from that of the line room dwellers. All the Sinhalese respondents, including the youth, accepted the fact that the Sinhala youth and the youth in '*Ganga Nagar*' are well integrated. It is a good indicator for ensuring future harmony in the area.

## 8. Settlers closely associated with traditional Sinhala villagers.

From amongst the settlers, 97% of the respondents associate with Sinhala friends in surrounding villages, while the line room dwellers did not show the same percentage. Line room dwellers were diffident about inviting Sinhala friends to their homes, as their homes were not in a good condition. According to in-depth interviews, the Sinhalese were averse to visiting line rooms, and partaking of food or drinks from line rooms, since they perceived them to be dirty and unhealthy. The Sinhalese living in surrounding villages bestow more respect on people living in new housing schemes. Most of the line room dwellers are engaged as labourers/ domestic servants in the homes of the Sinhala villagers, but settlers are not engaged in such employment, except for older persons. In Nuwara Eliya, most women do not visit the towns and villages due to distance. They may visit the town once a month or once a week to get essential foodstuffs.

All traditional Sinhala villagers in Kalutara who were interviewed had Tamil friends. According to in-depth interviews with the Sinhala villagers, all have the following types of connections with their friends in *Ganga Nagar*. 60% of the Sinhalese associate with the Tamil as friends, and 40% Sinhalese mutually help Tamils, 35% of Sinhalese visit their friends' homes in the settlements, and 35% of Sinhalese share sweets at festival times. 20% of Sinhala villagers participate in meetings and social services with their Tamil friends, and 10% of Sinhala village youths play cricket with the youths in '*Ganga Nagar*'.

## **9. Events that Tamils and Sinhalese participate in together**

There is a slight difference between the participation of line room dwellers and settlers in events hosted by their neighbouring Sinhala families. 78% of line room respondents participate in funeral ceremonies in Sinhala families, while 65% of Tamil settlers participate in the same events. Though 65% of line room dwellers participate in weddings held by neighbouring Sinhala families, 100% Tamil villagers participate in such events. In Sri Lanka it is customary to attend a wedding only on invitation. The settlers in both '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' and '*Ganga Nagar*' are at the top of the list of invitees to Sinhalese weddings of both areas. In addition to these activities, people who live in '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' and '*Ganga Nagar*' shop, travel, collect '*Seettu*' (cast lots for money collection), participate in various meetings and social work, get loans, and work together with the surrounding traditional Sinhala villagers.

## **10. The relationship between settlers of the housing schemes and the line room dwellers after they moved to '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' and '*Ganga Nagar*'**

There has been a slight decline in the relationships between the line room dwellers and the settlers. And the relationships with their own community has been replaced with more relationships with the neighbouring community (with traditional Sinhala villages).

While a good number of settlers said that they have better relationships with line room dwellers, more than 30% of the respondents said that their relationships had deteriorated. Settlers do tend to have better relationships with their relatives rather than with other families. Settlers have different life styles to those of line room

**Table 14. Settlers' perception of their relationship with line room dwellers following relocation**

Nature of relationship	Responses				Total	
	Jana Udana Gammanaya		Ganga Nagar		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Have the same relationship	20	69.0	25	67.6	45	68.2
Have limited relationships	01	3.4	02	5.4	03	04.5
Have no chance to meet them often	08	27.6	03	8.1	11	16.7
Attend only funerals/ weddings			05	13.5	05	07.6
We mutually help			02	5.4	02	03.0
Total	29	100.0	37	100.0	66	100.0

Source: Research data

dwellers today. This fact itself is a cause for conflict. There is a tendency for conflict to arise between the line room dwellers and the settlers in sharing water, and land etc. Line room dwellers also accepted that their relationship with the settlers had declined, since they did not have opportunity to meet settlers now as before. According to the qualitative component of the study, a strong relationship between line room dwellers and the people in '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*' / '*Ganga Nagar*' could not be observed.

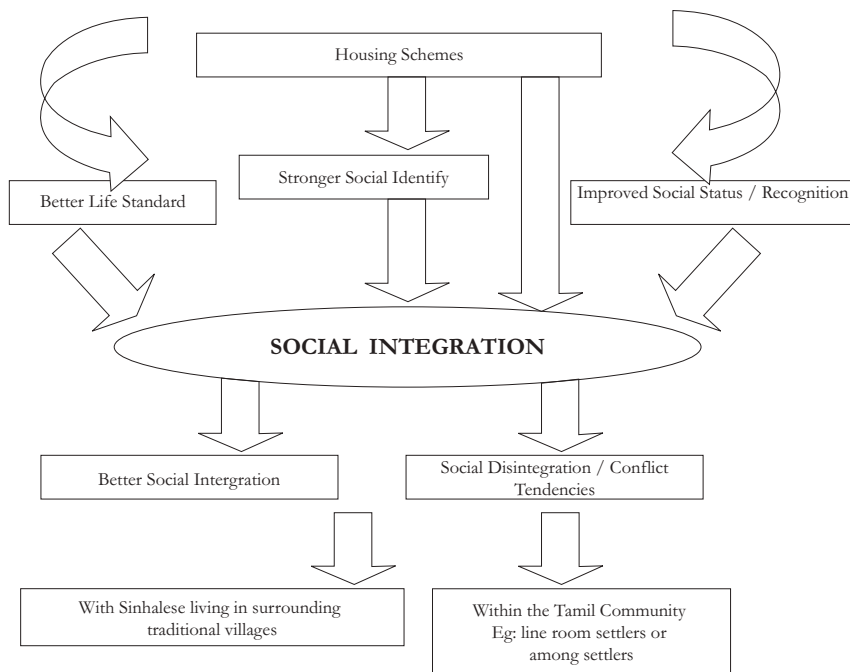
The Sinhalese living in surrounding traditional villages felt that 65% settlers had similar relationships with the line room dwellers as before. However, 35% respondents from Sinhala villages felt that the people living in *Ganga Nagar* had no strong connection with the people living in line rooms due to various reasons. The Sinhalese living in surrounding villages claimed that the settlers have a different identity. For example, '*Villagers think they are rich*', as they live in a different place '*They are prouder than before*', '*They are not docile like line room dwellers*', '*settlers are more proud, and expect more respect from others*', as they live independently, and are individualized.

## 11. Process of social integration

According to the study the social integration process of the plantation Tamils could be shown in a diagram as follows.



**Figure 1. Process of social integration between Tamils and Sinhalese**



## 12. Conclusion

According to the study, housing schemes have played a significant role in poverty-alleviating programmes on the estate sector. They have increased social integration between the Sinhalese and the Tamils of the area, and also contributed to the social harmony at a macro level, achieved strong social identity, status, self-esteem, and prestige of settlers who previously lived in places far away from the traditional Sinhala villages. Living in these newly established schemes has provided a base for social integration. Environmental change has paved the way, for both Tamils who came to the settlements and the Sinhalese who live in traditional villages, to have close relations / face-to-face interactions. According to the study, it is clear that proximity also increases chances of social integration, since the human being is a social animal. This is not assimilation, because the Tamils have not been absorbed into Sinhala culture or traditions. However, they have begun to live peacefully, to

interact more, and share common beliefs and thinking, etc. This type of micro level studies would support in understanding and solving ongoing macro level issues such as the so-called ethnic conflict etc.

The government or non-governmental organisations (NGO's) have to think carefully before initiating these types of development activities, because other ethnic groups should not feel that one ethnic group is favoured by the donors. Otherwise this misunderstanding would definitely disturb the ethnic harmony of the area. There should be a close monitoring procedure to make sure that the planned objectives of the project are achieved.

If these housing schemes are established as mixed villages like '*Jana Udana Gammanaya*', they will provide more opportunity for interaction, understanding, sharing, forming emotional bonds, and ensuring co-existence between the Sinhalese and Tamils. The study shows that physical proximity has brought about emotional attachments. In the long run better ethnic re-socialization between children and adults of two ethnic groups (communities) within the settlements will ensure ethnic harmony and promote nation building.

Settlements should be provided with all the facilities needed in order to reduce tensions erupting within the community based on the following areas. A system of garbage disposal, electricity, water, access for the houses, land demarcation should be appropriately provided by the government or other responsible organisations.

The activities of both Tamil and Sinhala politicians may have an effect on the integration of the Tamils and Sinhalese. Politicians should be broad-minded and wise in their actions and when making statements. Ongoing ethnic conflicts also affect the social integration of these communities. However, the influence of those factors on social integration could be successfully neutralized through these new kinds of housing schemes.

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## VII. Ethnic Relationships and Social Cohesion Among the Slum Dwellers in Colombo City

*Niriellage Chandrasiri Niriella*

### 1. Introduction

Sri Lankan society has been legitimately termed multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-lingual comprising as it does, mainly three distinct ethnic groups, Sinhalese, Tamils, (Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils), Muslims and Burghers who follow four of the principal religions of the world viz. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The Sinhalese form the majority of the population and comprised 75 percent of the Sri Lankan population of 19.5 million in 2001.

The Colombo City is a relatively small city but it is the major commercial and administrative centre of Sri Lanka. The total residents' population of the city was 642,020 in 2001 (Sinhalese, 40.9%; Sri Lankan Tamils, 29.7%; Indian Tamils, 2.2; Muslims, 23.6; and Others, 3.6). Colombo remains a city of diversity, and complexity. A rich ethnic mix consisting primarily of Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims (Ceylon Moors) populate this low-lying port city, many of them (51%) in poor slums (22,358 – 27%) and shanties (20,685 – 24%) settlements.

This present empirical study on urban low-income neighbourhoods focussed on the 1983 riot affected areas in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Various kind of information proved that, except the Tamil people living in slum neighbourhoods, a significant number of the Tamils in the Colombo City were affected by the violence or harassed by mobs in July 1983. Hence, the ethnic social strife has been continuing so far in this country. As a result of this event and other related ethnic factors, serious bomb blasts and similar major attacks, have occurred in the City. These events have continuously produced tension and a stressful life among the various social classes of residents in the city. In relation to this, the study mainly focused attention on the way in which the slum people manage to live together despite the ethnic differences in their neighbourhood. Thus, the main objective of this sociological study was to understand the *'ethnic differences and urban neighbourhood relationships among the slum dwellers in Colombo City'*.



## Theoretical Framework

The concept of neighbourhood finds a prominent place in contemporary urban policy and research. The neighbourhood provides a useful scale for studying social relationships of ‘everyday life-worlds’ (Kearns, and Parkinson, 2001: p. 2103). Also there is a longstanding interest in the residential neighbourhood in western sociology. Typically, a neighbourhood is an area of living sufficiently compact, which permits frequent and fairly intimate contacts between the members. Social interaction in a neighbourhood is face-to-face and primary. This makes for a results in a strong sense of *‘belonging together’*, ensures conformity to the group norms, and endows every member with the capacity to influence the behaviour of the others. Thus understood, a neighbourhood presupposes a degree of homogeneity, stability of residence and restricted physical mobility away from the community, factors that are hardly likely to be found in modern urban communities. The intimate neighbourhood seems to belong to the village or the small town. The spatial patterns of cities, the multi-storeyed apartment buildings, the density and heterogeneity of the population, the continuous shift of residence—the characteristics that one normally associates with the city are hardly conducive to the intimate face-to-face contacts of neighbourhood life.

Cohesiveness refers to the strength of forces that keep the group together. If a group is highly cohesive it remains intact even when it is faced with many adverse circumstances. For example, the family will be a well-knit group if the husband and wife love and respect each other and if there is mutual love between the parents and children. Even if there is a temporary separation, or illness or such other misfortunes, the group will function with great cohesion. On the other hand, if the relationship between the parents is not satisfactory, all the individuals may be nominally living together but there will be continual conflict and lack of discipline. Thus, the group may be united and highly cohesive or it may break down and go to pieces. This is true not only of the family but also of all kind of groups right up to the level of nations.

Phillipson et al. (1999: 740) mentioned that the relationship between people and places is perhaps even more important at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than it was at the beginning. In current theoretical and policy debates concerning social cohesion, the neighbourhood has re-emerged as an important setting for many of the processes, which supposedly shape social identity and life-chances. Social cohesion is about getting by and getting on at the more mundane level of everyday life.

Hirschfield and Bowers (1997: p. 1275-76) felt that socially cohesive areas can be defined as areas with relatively high levels of interaction between residents and a strong sense of community. By contrast, areas lacking in cohesion, or socially disorganised or disintegrated areas do not have such well-defined social networks and it is often the case that the residents of these areas share little common interaction. Also, highly cohesive areas are likely to have a higher degree of social control than more disorganised areas. Further, Hirschfield and Bowers indicated that, two independent factors of social cohesion were derived. The first factor identified high level of juvenile disturbances in single parent families and social heterogeneity. The second factor identified high levels of migration and ethnic heterogeneity. Sampson (1993) commented that ‘*Direct*’ indicators of a lack of social cohesion would include the inability to supervise and control teenage peer groups (gangs), the absence of local friendship and acquaintanceship networks and the absence of local participation in formal and voluntary organisations.

**Table 1. The domains of social cohesion**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Description</b>
Common Values and a Civic Culture	Common aims and objectives; common moral principles and codes of behaviour; support for political institutions and participation in politics
Social Order and Social Control	Absence of general conflict and threats to the existing order; absence of incivility; effective informal social control; tolerance; respect for difference; inter-group co-operation
Social Solidarity and Reductions in Wealth Disparities	Harmonious economic and social development and common standards; redistribution of public finances and of opportunities; equal access to services and welfare benefits; ready acknowledgement of social obligations and willingness to assist others
Social Networks and Social Capital	High degree of social interaction within communities and families; civic engagement and associational activity; easy resolution of collective action problems
Attachment to a Place and Identity	Strong attachment to a place; intertwining of personal and place identity

Source: Forrest and Kearns (2001: 2128)

Forrest and Kearns (2001: p. 2128) described what might constitute a cohesive society and what are the processes which generate and sustain such cohesion. They summarised that, social cohesion can emphasise the need for a shared sense of morality and common purpose; aspects of social control and social order; the threat to social solidarity of income and wealth inequalities between people, groups and places; the level of social interaction within communities or families; and a sense of belonging to a place (shown in Table 6.10). By implication, a society lacking cohesion would be one which displayed social disorder and conflict, disparate moral values, extreme social inequality, low levels of social interaction between and within communities and low levels of attachment to a place.

However, Forrest and Kearns (2001) noted that strongly cohesive neighbourhoods could be in conflict with one another and contribute to a divided and fragmented city. Equally, a society in which citizens had a strong sense of place, attachment and loyalty to their respective cities could be in conflict with any sense of common national purpose, or macro-cohesion. Thus, whether society is said to face a crisis of social cohesion depends upon what spatial scale one is examining and the relative strength of the countervailing forces operating at each scale. Equally Just as importantly, the question presupposes that cohesion is everywhere always a virtuous and a positive attribute, which may not always be the case.

Furthermore, Forrest and Kearns (2001: 2134) questioned as to how we might recognize a socially cohesive neighbourhood and whether it would be such a good thing anyway? The simplest observable measure would be of groups of people who live in a local area getting together to promote or defend some common local interest. This could come in various forms: organizing the annual street party; petitioning for a better local service of some kind; the vigilante group organized to hound out some 's'; the street gang fighting for its turf; poor people fighting for better housing; rich enclaves with guards and security cameras. There is the special case of cohesion is of an ethnic majority imposing its rules and values on others. There is the social cohesion or restrictive covenants and of withdrawal from and defence against the world outside; such withdrawal and defence can occur among both rich and poor neighbourhoods, albeit for different reasons and with different consequences.

Further, Forrest and Kearns (2001) noted that a city could consist of socially cohesive but increasingly divided neighbourhoods. There may be ethnic or religion-based cohesive communities living side-by-side. In such circumstances, the

stronger the ties which bind such communities, the greater may be the social, racial or religious conflict between them. Social cohesion at the neighbourhood level is therefore by no means unambiguously a good thing. It can be about discrimination and exclusion and about a majority imposing its will or value system on a minority. Moreover, the assumed ingredients for social cohesion may be lacking in precisely those parts of the cities which are apparently successful and problem free. Further, Forrest and Kearns (2001: 2126) noted that the problems of cities and particularly the problems of poor people in poor neighbourhoods in cities are at the heart of current concerns about societal cohesion. There is a common belief that there is less social cohesion now than in some unspecified period in British history and that disadvantaged areas suffer particularly from a lack of the qualities and elements which produce and sustain social cohesion—that the poor in poor neighbourhoods are increasingly dislocated from mainstream society. Further, (Forrest and Kearns, 2127) among the factors contributing to this new crisis of social cohesion are the breakdown of Keynesian capitalism, an end to the progressive recruitment of households to the traditional middle classes and the lifestyles and living standards associated with such status, growing inequality and social fragmentation and a perceived decline of shared moral values. Rising crime rates, the growth of organized crime, long-term unemployment particularly among young people, rising divorce rates, and lone parenthood are all taken as signs of an increasingly stressed and disorganized society—in Fukuyama's (1999) terms, all features of the '*great disruption*' which is experienced by a majority of Western, industrialized societies.

Manuel Castells (1997: 354) reflected on what citizenship means in a more multicultural and heterogeneous society, when the social contract between capital and labour has apparently broken down, when there is a growing gap between '*the politics of representation and the politics of intervention*' and where those inhabiting the same geographical territory may inhabit quite different social worlds. Further, Castells (1997) explained that these new ways of living involve a greater degree of discontinuity and risk in everyday life for many households with a higher incidence of job loss, illness, drug dependency, loss of earnings and assets and a more generalized precariousness. He evokes the now-familiar image of an increasingly polarized society rather than an expanding and supposedly more cohesive middle mass. Castells (1997) also noted that people socialize and interact in their local environment, be it in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbours. Keeping in mind these explorative ideas

regarding social cohesion, this section seeks to analyze the Kirulapura neighbourhood relationships.

## 2. Methodology and sampling

The study is exploratory in nature. It focused on a selected slum neighbourhood in Colombo City. The sample for the study was selected by using the random sampling method. The sample size was kept at 100 units (respondents-households) from the neighbourhood. It formed 10 percent of the total number of households. Thus, out of 706 households 100 units were selected from the '*Kirulapura*' neighbourhood.

The Kirulapura slum neighbourhood (mixed: slums and shanties) is situated in the Pamankada-East of Colombo Municipal Council (Ward No. 45). Also, Kirulapura is a heterogeneous neighbourhood, where Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, and Malayalam speaking people live together. Thus, the study was a heterogeneous (Kirulapura: Sinhalese 44%; Sri Lankan Tamils 34%; Indian Tamils 2%; Muslims 18%; Burgher 1%; and Malayalam 1%) slum neighbourhood. Total number of persons of the sample population was 540.

The following main research tools were applied for the data collection among the slum dwellers.

- (1) Sample Survey – using an interview schedule
- (2) Ju – depth interviews (particularly informal interviews)
- (3) Participant Observation in a limited way

Most of the selected respondents' age was between 26 to 60 years. Also, 50 percent of the respondents of Kirulapura neighbourhood were women. The head of the household or housewife was interviewed. If in case, head of household or housewife was not available, next immediate responsible member of the household was interviewed. The study took place in 2002. Data for this study, both quantitative and qualitative, were collected within a three month time period between 29<sup>th</sup> March 2002 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2002.

### 3. Kinship, friendship, and neighbour relationships

The researcher found that the existence of the neighbourhood is for more than fifty years. In the Kirulapura neighbourhood, kinship ties are closely linked to the social life of the residents. On the other hand, the evidence of 51 percent of the inter-ethnic marriages in the heterogeneous neighbourhood of Kirulapura reveal valuable trends regarding mixed inter-ethnic or kinship networks. It was found that along with internal kinship networks, they also have strong external kinship relations with other slum neighbourhoods in Colombo Metropolitan Area, which indicates the presence of community level kinship and ethnic ties in the City.

Further, the researcher found this heterogeneous slum neighbourhood exhibited different types of social relationships. Thus, friend and neighbour relationship ties are displayed at a higher level. As expected, participation in community development activities, festivals, and helping attitude in difficulties, were found to be higher in the neighbourhood. It is very clear that the neighbourhood has witnessed various government interventions during their settlement procedure. Kirulapura was upgraded by the UNP government and the residents have received benefits from this project. Therefore, most of the community members were following UNP and this has led to the political hegemony of UNP in the slum garden.

### 4. Attraction to neighbourhood

The effective social cohesion of people toward their neighbourhood was examined in the research through three aspects which seek to capture feelings of '*attraction to neighbourhood*', '*neighbouring*', and '*psychological sense of neighbourhood*'.

**Table 2. 'Attraction to neighbourhood'**

(Item – 1, Statement: Overall, I am very attracted to living in this neighbourhood)	
Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%)
Kirulapura	
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	71
Disagree	14
Strongly Disagree	3
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 2 shows the responses given by the slum residents to the statement: *I am very attracted to living in this neighbourhood*. Accordingly, 12 percent of the respondents in Kirulapura “strongly agree” with this statement, 71 percent “agree” and 14 percent “disagree”. Thus, attraction to the neighbourhood under focus is quite strong and cohesive.

**Table 3. ‘Attraction to neighbourhood’**

(Item 2, Statement: Given the opportunity, I would like to move out of this neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	10
Agree	57
Disagree	23
Strongly Disagree	10
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 3 shows the responses given by the neighbourhood residents to the statement: *I would like to move out of this neighbourhood*. Thus, 10 percent of the respondents in Kirulapura “strongly agree” to move out from the neighbourhood, while 57 percent of them “agree”, 23 percent “disagree” and 10 percent “strongly disagree”. These observations, surprisingly, negate the above observations. It could be more due to a feeling (or rather dreaming) to a middle class locality through residential mobility.

**Table 4. ‘Attraction to neighbourhood’**

(Item 3, Statement: I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years)

Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	76
Disagree	15
Strongly Disagree	1
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 4 shows the responses given by the residents for the statement: *I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years*. According to the table, 8 percent of the respondents in Kirulapura “strongly agree” with this statement, 76 percent of them “agree”, while 15 percent stated that they did not agree. These

observations further reinforce the idea that given their economic status, many are reconciled with their living in the present locality.

Thus, under the sub-scale on ‘*attraction to neighbourhood*’ three statements were tested. According to that, 83 percent of the residents in Kirulapura stated that they were attracted to their neighbourhood. Also, 67 percent of the people felt like moving out of the neighbourhood. However, 84 percent of the people like to remain residing in their neighbourhood.

Guest and Wierzbicki (1999: 92-111) mentioned that being neighbourly (or neighbouring as referred to in scholarly work) is a more voluntaristic activity chosen only by some. The psychological and social motivations for these choices need to be more thoroughly investigated. Forrest and Kearns (2001: 2130) revealed: ‘*there is, of course, a difference between neighbourhood and neighbouring. As research has shown (1999) in disadvantaged neighbourhoods it may be the quality of neighbouring which is an important element in peoples’ ability to cope with a decaying and unattractive physical environment. In more affluent areas, however, neighbourhood may be rather more important than neighbouring—people may ‘buy into’ neighbourhoods as physical environments rather than necessarily anticipate or practice a great degree of local social interaction. In other words, neighbours and neighbouring retain greater importance for the poor and elderly, while the mass of the population develop new and more spatially diffuse networks’.*

**Table 5. ‘Neighbouring’**

(Item 4, Statement: I visit my neighbours in their homes)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	76
Disagree	14
Strongly Disagree	6
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 5 shows responses given by the slum residents to the statement: ‘*I visit my neighbours in their homes*’. 76 percent of the residents in Kirulapura stated that they visited their neighbours, while 14 percent felt that visiting was not so common and 6 percent strongly disagreed to visiting their neighbours. Overall, visiting the neighbours is well practised in the locality.



**Table 6. 'Neighbouring'**

(Item 5, Statement: If I need advice about something, I could go to someone in my neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	73
Disagree	19
Strongly Disagree	4
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

In Table 6 the responses given by the slum residents to the statement: *'I need advice about something, I could go to someone in my neighbourhood'*, are listed. Accordingly, 73 percent of the people in Kirulapura "agreed" with the statement, while 19 percent "disagreed" with the statement.

**Table 7. 'Neighbouring'**

(Item 6, Statement: I believe my neighbours would help in an emergency)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	27
Agree	69
Disagree	4
Strongly Disagree	00
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 7 shows the responses given by the neighbourhood respondents to the statement: *'I believe my neighbours would help in an emergency'*. The neighbourhood residents have given positive responses to this statement. Thus, 27 percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" with this statement in Kirulapura, and 69 percent of them also "agreed".

**Table 8. 'Neighbouring'**

(Item 7, Statement: I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	60
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	7
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 8 shows the responses given by the slum dwellers to the statement: *I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours*. Thus, 8 percent of the residents in Kirulapura “strongly agreed” to this statement, while 60 percent “agreed”, 25 percent “disagreed” and 7 percent “strongly disagreed”.

**Table 9. ‘Neighbouring’**

(Item 8, Statement: I rarely have neighbours over to my house to visit)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	6
Agree	46
Disagree	30
Strongly Disagree	18
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 9 - lists the responses given by the neighbourhood residents to the statement: *I rarely have neighbours over to my house to visit*. According to the responses received, 6 percent of the residents in Kirulapura “strongly agree” with this statement and 46 percent “agreed”, while 30 percent of them “disagreed” and 18 percent “strongly disagreed”.

**Table 10. ‘Neighbouring’**

(Item 9, Statement: I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	64
Disagree	23
Strongly Disagree	8
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 10 - shows the responses given by the neighbourhood people to the statement: *I regularly stop and talk with the people in my neighbourhood*. Thus, 64 percent of the people in Kirulapura “agreed” to this statement, 23 of them “disagreed” and 8 percent “strongly disagreed”. Thus, overall interaction in the Kirulapura locality is higher.

Regarding ‘neighbouring’ six statements were tested. According to the scale, 80 percent of the residents in Kirulapura visit their neighbours’ homes. Further, when

needing advice, 77 percent of the residents usually approached their neighbours. Another important finding is that almost all the people in Kirulapura believed that in an emergency their neighbours would help them. While 68 percent of the people borrowed and exchanged things with their neighbours. On the other hand, 52 percent of the people agreed with the statement *'I rarely have neighbours over to my house to visit'*. While 69 percent of people in Kirulapura regularly stopped and talked with their neighbours.

In situations like sudden illness, majority of inhabitants in the neighbourhood approached the government or private hospitals. But, significant numbers of people also approached their neighbours. In case of family problems majority of them tried to solve it themselves. Some of them also approached their relatives. When any legal problems occurred residents of the slum contacted the nearest police officials. If there were any administrative problems, people of the neighbourhood contacted the Colombo Municipal Council. For the same purpose, some people approached various politicians. Also, the Community Development Centre in Kirulapura gives valuable help to the people in the community.

## **5. Psychological sense of neighbourhood**

Minar and Greer (1969: 3) defined psychological sense of community as *'vague yearnings for a commonality of desire, a communion with those around us'*. Glynn (1981: 790) defined the concept as *'a desirable feeling...associated with the presence or development of a common bond with other people'*. Regarding its role, Glynn (1981: 790) continues: *'Its loss or decline may be associated with numerous deficits, e.g., sustained feelings of anomie, alienation, isolation, and loneliness, the loss of local autonomy and personal involvement in one's community and, perhaps most importantly, a growing inability to maintain a readily available, mutuality supportive network of relationships'*. Given these definitions, it is easy to understand how sense of community and the feelings of belonging that are associated with it (McMillan, 1996) may lead to participation in neighbourhood affairs, and indeed, this relationship has been uncovered in several studies. For example, Chavis and Wandersman (1990) and Perkins et al. (1990) found that sense of community predicts the residents' participation in their neighbourhood block associations. Bachrach and Zautra (1985) found that sense of community predicts the residents' problem-focused coping, and becomes itself a form of participation. Berry, Portuey, and Thomson (1993) reported that sense of community predicts changes in level of political participation over time.

**Table 11. 'Psychological sense of neighbourhood'**

(Item 10, Statement: I feel like, I belong to this neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	8
Agree	79
Disagree	12
Strongly Disagree	1
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 11 shows the responses which were given by the people of neighbourhood to the statement: *'I feel like, I belong to this neighbourhood'*. 8 percent of the people in Kirulapura “strongly agreed” with this statement, 79 of them “agreed”, and only 12 percent disagreed”.

**Table 12. 'Psychological sense of neighbourhood'**

(Item 11, Statement: The friendships and associations, I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot of to me)

Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%)
Kirulapura	
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	74
Disagree	13
Strongly Disagree	1
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 12 shows the responses given by people in the neighbourhood to the statement: *'The friendships and associations, I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot of me'*. 12 percent of the respondents “strongly agreed” to this statement, 74 percent of them “agreed”, but 13 percent “disagreed” in Kirulapura. Thus, belongingness to the locality with psychological satisfaction is quite high among the residents under present focus.

**Table 13. 'Psychological sense of neighbourhood'**

(Item 12, Statement: If the people in my neighbourhood were planning something, I did think of it as something 'we' were doing rather than 'they' doing)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	22
Agree	74
Disagree	13
Strongly Disagree	1
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 13 shows the responses given by inhabitants of the neighbourhood to the statement: *If the people in my neighbourhood were planning something, I did think of it as something 'we' were doing rather than 'they' were doing*. Here it can be seen that 22 percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" with this statement in Kirulapura, and 74 of them "agreed" while 13 percent "disagreed" with the statement. This further reinforces respondents' sense of belongingness is the community under focus.

**Table 14. 'Psychological sense of neighbourhood'**

(Item 13, Statement: I think, I agree with most people in my neighbourhood about what is important in life)

Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	1
Agree	17
Disagree	63
Strongly Disagree	19
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 14 shows the responses given by the residents in Kirulapura the statement: *I think, I agree with the most people in my neighbourhood about what is important in life*. Majority of the people in the neighbourhood did not agree with this statement. However, 17 percent of people "agreed" with this idea in Kirulapura, while 63 of them "disagreed" and 19 percent also "strongly disagreed". Thus, life goals may vary and so may the priorities in one's life.

**Table 15. ‘Psychological sense of neighbourhood’**

(Item 14, Statement: I feel loyal to the people in my neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	86
Disagree	5
Strongly Disagree	4
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 15 shows the responses given by the residents in the neighbourhood to the statement: *I feel loyal to the people in my neighbourhood*. 86 percent of the respondents in Kirulapura “agreed” with this statement. This is further indicator of high sense of belongingness in the neighbourhood.

**Table 16. ‘Psychological sense of neighbourhood’**

(Item 15, Statement: I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	13
Agree	86
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	00
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 16 shows the responses given by the residents to the statement: *I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood*. Here, 13 percent of residents in Kirulapura “strongly agreed” with this statement, and 86 percent “agreed”.

**Table 17. ‘Psychological sense of neighbourhood’**

(Item 16, Statement: I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood)

Scale	Frequency / Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	48
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	15
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 17 shows the responses given by the people in the selected neighbourhood to the statement: *'I like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this neighbourhood'*. According to the table, 12 percent of the people in Kirulapura “strongly agreed” with this statement, 48 of them “agreed”, while 25 percent “disagreed” and 15 percent “strongly disagreed”. Thus, when it comes to individual feeling of ‘status’, the responses vary more than in unison.

**Table 18. ‘Psychological sense of neighbourhood’**

(Item 17, Statement: Living in this neighbourhood gives me a sense of community)

Scale	Frequency/Percentage (%) Kirulapura
Strongly Agree	24
Agree	72
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	1
Total (N)	100 (100.0)

Table 18 - lists the responses given by the residents in the neighbourhood to the final statement: *'Living in this neighbourhood gives me a sense of community'*. It is important to note that 24 percent of people in Kirulapura “strongly agreed” with this statement and 72 percent of them “agreed”.

Regarding the *'psychological sense of neighbourhood'*, it was observed that 87 percent of the residents in Kirulapura felt that they belonged to the neighbourhood. Further, 86 percent of the residents put a lot of value on the friendships and associations they had with other people in their neighbourhood. In addition, almost all the people agreed with the statement that, *'if the people in their neighbourhood were planning something, it means that 'we' were doing rather than 'they' were doing'*. Likewise, 91 percent of the residents in Kirulapura felt that they were loyal to the people in their neighbourhood. An important fact identified was that almost all the people in the neighbourhood were willing to work with their people to improve their neighbourhoods. While, 60 percent of the people in Kirulapura thought that they were similar to the people in neighbourhood.

Further, the study found that the residents of the neighbourhoods had reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Thus, 42 percent of the people in Kirulapura were satisfied with the *'friendliness'* of their neighbours. Another reason identified as contributing to the neighbourhood satisfaction was the *'helping attitude'* of the people, which was reported by 25 percent of the residents in Kirulapura. ‘Being in

the same status' was also identified as a reason for satisfaction for the people in Kirulapura (15 percent). On the other hand, residents of the neighbourhood were dissatisfied with their people for being 'noisy'. Also, 40 percent of the people in Kirulapura stated that they had no dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood. Living in the neighbourhood gave a feeling of security to almost all the residents of Kirulapura. Thus, 67 of the residents in Kirulapura felt secure because of their neighbours' 'faithfulness'.

## 6. Attitudes on marriage, ethnicity, and ethnic social strife

One of the important findings is the positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages and neighbour relations. We have seen that 51 percent of residents of the Kirulapura have practiced inter-ethnic marriages. Using the Bogardus's '*Social Distance Scale*' the researcher had asked to the community, '*Do you mind close kinship relations by marriage with Sinhalese/ Tamil/Muslim/Burgher/Malays?*' The overall picture of the responses can be summarized as follows: In Kirulapura, almost a half of Sinhalese people were open to the idea of marrying into any other ethnic group. Also, significantly 72 percent of Tamils were willing to marry other ethnic groups. The most significant finding is that 82 percent of Tamils were more willing to marry with Sinhalese than any other ethnic groups. On the other hand, a half of the Sinhalese were willing to marry Tamils. Among the Muslims 33 percent of them stated they were willing to marry with other ethnic communities but 67 percent of Muslims have opposed such an idea. There was also a condition put forward by the Muslim community that, if anybody from other ethnic groups is ready to marry our community member, they should come into our religion. Overall as many as 68 percent of minorities agreed to marry with Sinhalese. Thus, though with communal polarization in the society, non - Sinhalese households are receptive to high integration with the majority community.

Kirulapura is an ethnically balanced community. Therefore, 78 percent of the people there can speak the Sinhala language as well as Tamil. This has proved to be an advantage for expressing the residents' own views about other community members and also in understanding each other's needs, attitudes, values, norms, patterns of life and problems. This has lead to the understanding that all people are human and similar. In such cases the ethnic differences do not work or remain valid. Thus, the north - south divide of the country on ethnic lines is hardly visible among the communities under focus.



The researcher could not find much discrimination against any ethnic group in the neighbourhood. If any wrong or bad thing is done by anybody in the slum garden, is punished without thinking about his/her ethnic background, whether Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim. Another major thing is that the residents were more concerned about their economic condition than their ethnic background. They had even protected their Tamil relatives, friends, and neighbours from the mobs during the 1983 riot. Some of the Tamils (elder citizens) living in the neighbourhood were not happy with the Sinhalese biased social transformation carried out by S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake in 1956. They found that “The Sinhala Only” Official Act of 1956 has given rise to feelings of frustration and isolation among the Tamils. This was the basic reason that for the first time the Tamil people thought that the Sinhala government was discriminating against them.

People of the slum displayed their political awareness of the ethnic social strife in the country. More than 85 percent of residents in the neighbourhood stated that “discussion” was the main solution for the ethnic conflict. On the other hand, around 10 percent of them stated that either “war” or “discussion” could do it but it should be undertaken honestly. According to their own views, this means that *‘You do not think of taking any political or economic advantages from this problem. This is our country’s problem; we should solve the problem together through honesty’*.

## **7. Conclusion**

Many scholars on slums emphasize the presence of anti-social problems as the necessary concomitants of slums. They describe slums as generally associated with social problems such as crime, delinquency, prostitution, gambling and regard them as a special type of disorganized and disintegrated area (Zorbaugh, 1929; Gist and Halbert, 1950; Clinard, 1960; Lewis, 1959, 1966, 1968; Blair, 1974; Karan, Bladen and Singh, 1980, Bahadur Mandal, 2000) Contrary, to this notion some of the classical sociological studies of slum reveal that the slum is well-knit and organized (Whyte, 1943; Gans, 1952, 1962). Many scholars have rejected such negative assumptions about the urban poor that they suffer from a culture of poverty, that slum life is socially disorganized and that there is a duality between the slum and non-slum people. They confirm the existence of an organized social and political life among the slum dwellers. (Siddique, 1969; Lynch 1974; Wiebe, 1975; Jocano, 1975; Kapferer, 1977; Majumdar, 1978; Suttles, 1980; Ratna Rao, 1990; Tudor Silva and Athukorala, 1991; Neville, 1994; Vandana Desai,1995).

How far such processes are relevant to the Kirulapura neighbourhood? Are they organized or disorganized? As we discussed so far, the above findings relevant to the Kirulapura showed that this heterogeneous neighbourhood is well organized. However, most of the western literature showed that heterogeneous neighbourhoods would have more crime, and other disintegrated activities. But, the slum is not only the place where people live; there is some mutual understanding and intimate social relationships.

As mentioned, Kirulapura is an ethnically balanced community. Over three - fourths of the residents speak the Sinhala language as well as Tamil. Gore (1970: 215) mentioned *'In a multi-lingual neighbourhood it is not only the mother tongue that is important, but also the ability of the neighbourhood population to speak languages other than one's own. The fewer the languages one knows the more restricted the number of linguistic groups in which one can function effectively. When a person knows more than one language he/she increases not only his/her own chances of communicating with others, but also the chance of others sections to communicate with him/her'*. Gananath Obeyesekera (1984: 71) explained *'the Sinhalese population speak an Indo-European language (Sinhala) while the Tamils speak a Dravidian one. Underlying language and religious difference—Buddhist versus Hindu—are strong cultural and racial similarities. Physically the two groups cannot be differentiated'*. As we have seen in the heterogeneous neighbourhood of Kirulapura, a majority of people can speak Sinhala and Tamil languages. Despite the religious difference, Muslims can speak Tamil as well as Sinhala. This is a very important social fact considering it as a model for settling the people on the basis of ethnic background in the (planned housing) neighbourhood unit. It will definitely work for the people's ethnic harmony.

It is very clear that the Kirulapura neighbourhood has witnessed various government interventions during their settlement procedure. Kirulapura was upgraded by the United National Party (UNP) government and the residents have received benefits from this project. Therefore, most of the community members were following UNP and this has led to the political hegemony of UNP in the slum garden. This has also helped to keep Kirulapura politically peaceful as no one political party could challenge UNP.

One of the major positive factors was identified that strong inter-ethnic marriage and kinship relationships in the neighbourhood. Even, they were willing to marry with other ethnic members of the neighbourhood. Also, there were displayed very high level of friendship, and neighbour relationships. On the other hand, people

of the neighbourhood were satisfied with friendliness of their neighbours, helping attitude of the people and being in the same status etc. Also, most of the people in the neighbourhood believed that *'if we are living in this community, we have to learn how to interact with other people. We do not need to be concerned with their ethnic background, caste, religion or anything else. We have to work hard for our survival. Money is the main thing in this world now. Therefore, we do not have enough time to think about other factors. We are all friends'*. These kinds of relationships and friendly attitudes led direction to the group cohesion among the dwellers in the neighbourhood.

The economic status of the Kirulapura neighbourhood was relatively low but their social cohesion was a very high level. Herbert Gans (1962) argued that social class rather than ethnic identity has a decisive effect on locally based informal relationships. If members of one ethnic group are more residentially stable or more likely to own their homes than members of another group, these social investments and not ethnicity *per se* may account for the variation in neighbour relationships. Thus, according to this perspective, the apparent ethnic differences should disappear after other attributes, such as socio-economic status, homeownership and family status.

Thus, the overall data and findings suggests that a neighbourhood life has a variety of dimensions, and where these features of neighbourhood – personal, social, physical, geographical, and institutional – offer strong inducements for involvement, community feelings will be high. When neighbourhoods provide disincentives for involvement to their residents, the sense of community will be low. Therefore, the neighbourhood, and not just the residents, plays an important role in constructing a community. The community can be strong in neighbourhoods where residents have extensive internal and external ties if it encourages involvement, and it can be weak in neighbourhoods in which the residents have few internal and external ties if it discourages involvement. The services provided by the neighbourhood, the characteristics of the residents, and the social and emotional ties within the neighbourhood are factors which influence the feelings that people have about their place of residence. It is a combination of all of these factors that determine the strength of communal bonds within the neighbourhood.

Thus, the above findings have some kind of implications with the theoretical perspectives on urban neighbourhood. Overall, the slum neighbourhood in Colombo City under present focus emerges as diversified neighbourhood in terms

of social cohesion, neighbourly relations and ethnic relationships. There are several positive forces bringing social cohesion affecting friendly environment in the settlement under present focus. The positive forms of social cohesion that identified in the research location will help others to understand why these forms did not appear in the areas of violent and conflict in other parts of the country. The lessons learnt from this study can be applied even to develop a national social integration among different ethnic communities in the country.

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## **VIII. Avoiding Conflict between Fishermen and Farmers: A Study of Potential Social Conflict Over Scarce Water Resources in Kalametiya**

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### **1. Introduction**

This paper draws on the findings of three, linked research projects designed to provide greater understanding of the impact of policies on the livelihoods of poor people.

The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) project *Improving Policy-Livelihood Relationships in South Asia* is being funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) under its Policy Research Programme. The research is being conducted across South Asia and covers a number of natural resources policies, including coastal resource management in Sri Lanka. The objective of the research is to provide practical policy options to improve the livelihoods of poor people and reduce vulnerability, by improving understanding of the impact of policies on livelihoods and how local people can engage with the policy process.

The Imperial College London (ICL) PhD research project aims to analyse the socio-economic and policy factors influencing the sustainability of natural resource-based livelihoods in rural coastal households, utilising three methodological approaches: livelihood security; food security; and personal security. The research has two broad objectives: first, to investigate the merits and limitations of the three approaches at measuring livelihood sustainability at the household level; and second, to assess how participation in certain coastal zone management policy processes (such as Special Area Management) has affected rural coastal livelihoods.

The third project, the *WEAP-Livelihoods Project* arose out of the first two projects as they identified the impact of water management interventions on different user groups, including livelihoods and wealth groups, and the potential for conflict to arise between them as natural resources become scarcer. The aim of this project is to develop a methodology for rapid appraisal at the local level to obtain information

about livelihoods, wealth and natural resource use, that can be used with the SEI Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) model in such a way that the model can aid planners in the selection of interventions that reflect the needs of various user groups, not just a single, pre-determined beneficiary group.

This paper focuses on the interface of these three projects, primarily the dependence of two livelihood groups, lagoon fishermen and paddy farmers, on water resources and their insufficient understanding of each other's needs, which when coupled with poverty, has the potential to lead to social conflict. It considers how it may be possible to avoid such conflict through development interventions that ensure that the requirements of the different livelihood groups are taken into consideration. This includes existing institutional mechanisms, specifically '*Special Area Management*' (SAM) a management tool employed in coastal zone management policy, as well as tools for better policy planning, such as the scenarios-based tool for water planning, '*WEAP-Livelihoods*'.

## **2. Environmental setting – water resources for livelihoods**

The empirical research for this paper was conducted in Kalametiya, a coastal wetland lagoon system in the Hambantota District on the Southern coastline of Sri Lanka. The lagoon receives water from Kachchigal Ara, a non-perennial stream, and Lunama Lagoon to which it is connected by a channel. Historically, at times of high water levels the narrow strip of beach that separates the lagoon from the sea would be breached, either naturally or manually and in this way the size, salinity and productivity of the lagoon was regulated. Consequently the lagoon area was rich in wildlife, including fish, crab and shrimp species, which many people relied on for their income.

The quantity of fresh water entering Kalametiya lagoon increased dramatically after completion of the Udawalawe Irrigation Scheme in 1967. Water now flows into the Ara from branch canals originating from the Udawalawe Right Bank Canal (RBC) and from the Mamadala and Gurugodella on the eastern side (Figure 1). Not long after the completion of the RBC, increased inflow of irrigation water into the lagoon and heavy rain led to severe flooding of the area. In response to the farmers' complaints a permanent canal to the sea was constructed to drain the lagoon. In the past three years further changes have been made including building-up and extending the banks of the Kachchigal Ara so that water cannot flood the



between different livelihoods and wealth groups, and the impact of policy interventions on them. This was achieved through basic financial considerations (such as income levels), wealth ranking and food security analysis. The research was not explicitly working on conflict either, but uses this case study to highlight how competing demands for natural resources have the potential to lead to conflict situations, in this case ‘conflict’ is defined as a situation which does not necessarily cause violence, but has the *potential* to lead to violence particularly between different resource user groups.

#### **4. Poverty and its measurement**

It is recognised that poverty is a complex, multidimensional concept that extends beyond low levels of income and consumption, and includes a range of other social dimensions (Brock, 1999; JBICI 2002). There are therefore many and varied definitions of poverty that have been put forward by international agencies, government institutions and also by poor people themselves. According to the World Bank (2001), *Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing inability to satisfy basic needs, lack of control over resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, lack of political freedom and voice*.

Traditional approaches to measuring poverty have focused on income and consumption expenditure (World Bank, 2001; JBICI, 2002). In Sri Lanka, poverty measurements have followed the international trend and are now based on consumption expenditure. Households are considered poor if average adult equivalent food expenditure is less than Rs. 1338.48 per adult per month and if more than 50 % of household expenditure is on food (Department of Census & Statistics Sri Lanka, 2002). However, consumption expenditure is only a one-dimensional measure of poverty and only records data from a single point in time.

#### **5. Livelihoods analysis**

The concept of sustainable livelihoods is a more dynamic measure of poverty and provides a better understanding of the complex ‘*driving*’ forces and process behind the poverty concept. Consequently it has gained wide acceptance as a valuable means of understanding factors that influence poor people’s lives and well-being.

There are many definitions of livelihoods, but the definition presented by Carney (1998) based on the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (1992), is most often cited. According to Carney (1998, p. 4): *'A livelihood is considered to be sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base'*. Central to the livelihoods approach is that households have complex livelihood strategies based on activities that provide income, in cash, goods and services. The basis for these strategies is the five *capital assets* that a household has access to: human; natural; financial; physical and social (DFID 2001).

### 6. Food security

One aspect of a household's livelihood system is food security, which has been defined as *'The state of affairs where all people at all times have physical and economic access to adequate, safe and nutritious food for all household members, without undue risk of losing such access'* (FAO, 1996). Food security is another indicator of poverty, and can be measured using food coping strategies: *'short term temporary responses to declining food entitlements'* (Davies, 1993). Empirical studies have shown that when facing a crisis households do not respond arbitrarily to variability in food supply, but use a succession of coping strategies to remain food secure and to maintain their livelihood systems (Davies, 1993; Malleret-King, 2000). For example, in an early stage of crisis, risk minimising strategies, such as change in consumption patterns, may be given priority; and if the crisis persists more drastic strategies, such as sale of productive and liquid assets, are required to meet subsistence needs. In the late stage of a crisis, the most drastic coping strategies would be adopted (such as sale of land). Under the food security approach adopted by the ICL study, short-term coping strategies, and long-term coping or adaptive strategies (permanent changes in the combination of ways in which food is acquired irrespective of the year in question) were investigated to determine how a household reacts to crisis situations.

### 7. Wealth ranking

According to the World Bank's *'Voices of the Poor'* series (2001), "The poor are the true poverty experts" and in this spirit, the variation in the poverty levels in a community can be studied through wealth rankings undertaken by local people.



Wealth ranking exercises are not only useful to determine what criteria communities use to measure wealth and their definitions and indicators of wealth, but also to learn about the socio-economic stratifications that exist within a community. It can also provide valuable insights into the dynamics and processes of poverty that take place over time (Senaratna, 2003).

## 8. Data collection methodology

For the SEI and ICL research, three villages were selected on the basis of proximity to the lagoon and coast and the range of livelihood activities undertaken there. For the SEI-WEAP study, two additional villages in Kalametiya were also included where paddy farming is an important livelihood activity. The five villages selected were Gurupokuna, Wewegoda, Thuduwa, Bataatha South and Hathagala. In each village a household list was compiled including primary livelihood activities, using information collected from the Grama Niladari and key informants. Household names were put on individual cards for use in the wealth ranking.

In each village, three groups of three to four individuals were selected to participate in the wealth ranking exercises. These key informants were asked to discuss the criteria they would use to measure a persons wealth; then to divide the cards with the household names on, into wealth groups based on their own criteria for wealth, taking into consideration all facets of livelihoods that contributed to their perceived wealth, including physical assets such as ownership of a house or land; the type of house that the family occupied; type of income (stable or unstable); livelihood activities; composition of the household (number of dependents, female-headed households); and educational status of the household members (Clemett *et al.*, 2003; Senaratna, 2003).

In the case of the SEI and ICL studies, the household wealth rankings and primary livelihood activities were used to obtain a random stratified sample of 35 households in each of the three villages, Gurupokuna, Wewegoda and Thuduwa. This representative sample was used when conducting household questionnaires, to obtain information on livelihood dynamics over time, natural resource use patterns, policy impacts and food security. In 15 of these households '*intra-household questionnaires*' were conducted, which were designed to gain a deeper understanding of livelihood patterns, in relation to the five capital assets. Under the SEI WEAP

study, findings of the wealth rankings in Wewegoda, Thuduwa, South Batatha and Hathagala were used to obtain a purposive sample of 'very poor' and 'better-off' fishermen and farmers, with whom a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) were undertaken. These included resource mapping, problem scoring and water resource scenarios.

Data analysis for this paper was mainly of a qualitative nature, with some simple descriptive analyses to draw out major trends and better understand relationships between wealth, livelihoods, natural resource use and policy impacts.

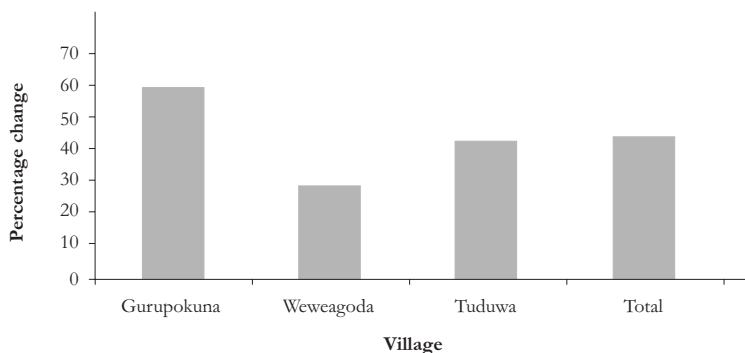
### 9. Socio-economic characteristics of the study population

The results of the various components of the research methodologies suggested that the community is stressed in a number of ways and that it is becoming more difficult to fulfill their livelihoods needs. These conditions are leading to increased competition for resources, particularly water and land, and creating the potential for conflict.

### 10. Livelihood changes

Livelihoods analysis revealed that whilst traditionally the main livelihood activities of the people living in the Kalametiya Lagoon area are lagoon and sea fishing, with a smaller percentage of the population engaging in agricultural activities including paddy farming and *chena* (slash and burn) cultivation, this is beginning to change. Of the 105 households interviewed, around 44 % had changed their primary livelihood activity within the past 10 years (Figure 2). Some of these changes are for personal reasons such as ill health and retirement but of all the households interviewed in Kalametiya that changed their livelihood activities, almost 50 % of these did so because of problems related to changes to the condition of natural resources, either through natural processes or as a result of human intervention. Furthermore, it was indicated in the questionnaires that a large proportion of this shift is related to water availability, including changes in rainfall patterns and water management, which are making it increasingly difficult to earn an adequate income from traditional livelihood activities (Clemett *et al*, 2003).

**Figure 2. Percentage of households that changed primary livelihood activity in the past 10 years**

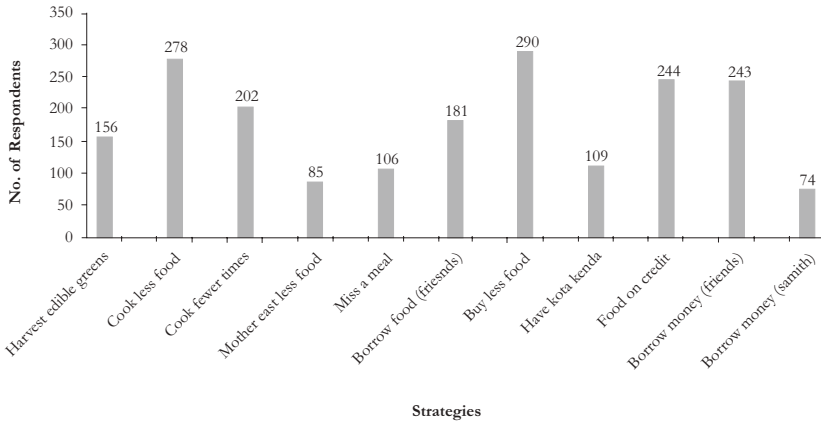


## 11. Levels of food security

The food security household survey revealed that households depend on a number of coping mechanisms when faced with food shortages during specific periods. These mechanisms were similar to those found in other empirical studies and belonged to the early, middle and late stages of food insecurity (Maxwell and Frankenberger, 1992; Nyborg and Haug, 1995; Silva *et al.*, 2002).

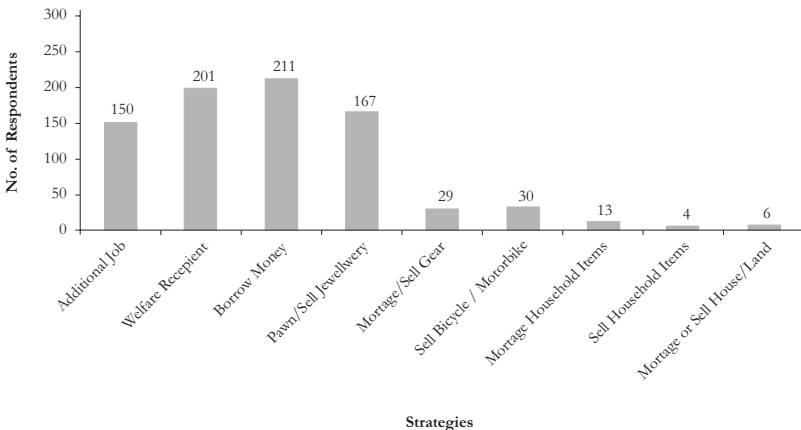
Households clearly showed signs of various levels of food insecurity when asked what coping strategies they had adopted in the short-term, with a high percentage of the respondents indicating changes in consumption patterns. For example 70 % cooked less food than usual, 51 % cooked fewer times a day, 73 % had bought less food, 61 % had bought food on credit and 61 % had borrowed money from friends or relatives to purchase food and essentials. However, overall there was no acute food insecurity in the site with only 27 % of respondents stating that they had missed one meal per day, eating at least two meals per day (Figure 3) (Senaratna, 2003).

Figure 3. Number of respondents adopting short-term coping strategies



Responses to longer-term crises can indicate the level of vulnerability and potential resilience of a household. The strategies most commonly adopted by households to deal with persistent food shortages over the past 10 years were pawning or selling gold jewellery with 67 % of respondents indicating that they had done this at least once in the last 10 years. In addition, 53 % indicated that they had been compelled to borrow money from local ‘samithi’ (societies) or moneylenders, 50 % had been recipients of state welfare schemes and 38 % had undertaken an additional job to generate extra finances at least once in the last decade (Figure 4) (Senaratna, 2003).

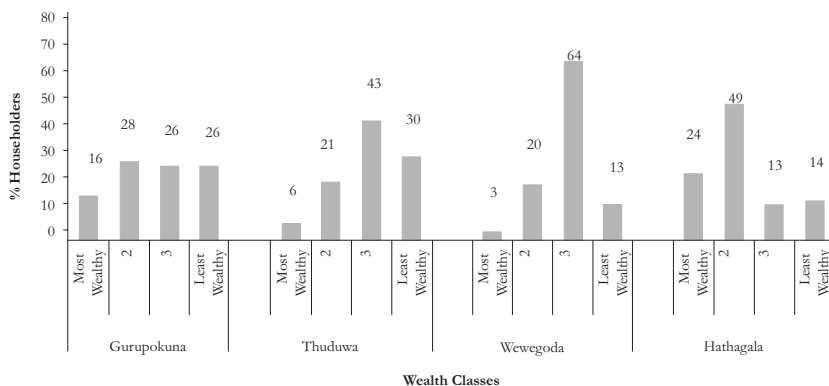
Figure 4. Number of respondents adopting long-term coping or adaptive strategies



## 12. Community perceptions of poverty levels

Although time series data was not collected in the wealth ranking exercises the results clearly show that community members in three of the study villages Gurupokuna, Thuduwa and Wewegoda, which are traditionally fishing villages, feel that at present, over half the households in their villages fall into the poorest two wealth categories, whilst the smallest number are categorised as ‘*most wealthy*’. The situation in Hathagala, a community with a high number of agriculturalists, is quite different with most households being placed in the upper two wealth groups (Figure 5) (Senaratna, 2003; Clemett *et al.*, 2003).

**Figure 5. Distribution of wealth rankings in the Kalametiya villages**



The criteria given by the villagers for the four wealth categories that they defined; ‘*rich*’, ‘*average*’, ‘*poor*’ and ‘*very poor*’, were based on a number of factors. For example, households that belonged to the lowest wealth category (‘*very poor*’) included lagoon fishermen, fishermen who worked on small boats as hired help and those engaged in labour work as a primary livelihood activity. Their income levels were defined as very low and were often described as inadequate to meet their daily needs. Some were unemployed or did not have stable employment, many had debts and others were food insecure. Households in the lowest wealth category included female-headed households, elderly couples or individuals, and families with a large number of dependents or young children. These households usually owned few or no assets and lived in extremely basic, small houses or huts often of wattle and daub construction, that were in poor condition, or they lived

in small temporary structures. On the other hand, households belonging to the 'rich' wealth category included land-owning paddy farmers, coconut land-owners and multi-day boat owners. These households were generally described to have stable sources of income, and more than one family member employed and contributing to family expenses. The family size was usually small or with a small number of dependents. They generally owned many assets and large, completed houses of brick construction (Clemett *et al.*, 2003; Senaratna, 2003).

### 13. Perceptions of natural resource user groups

Although the links have not been confirmed the anecdotal evidence and observations suggest that these perceived manifestations of poverty are linked to natural resource degradation, including water resources. Furthermore, discussions with community members suggest that the effects of water management are clearly being felt by the community and that the impacts are not always beneficial, nor are they evenly distributed among resource user groups, with, in general paddy farmers benefiting more from existing water management interventions than lagoon fishermen. Consequently the research found that the natural resource requirements of the two groups are very different and that they have a lack of knowledge and understanding of the needs of the other group. Furthermore, they have almost opposing opinions on the changes to the lagoon's water management and the future interventions required to sustain their livelihoods. These differing views have the potential to cause severe conflict if intervention decisions do not take a holistic view of all users and if existing policy processes such as SAM are not representative of all user groups. The differing views within the community and the issues over which conflict may flare are highlighted in the stories told by the fishermen and farmers in the FGDs.

### 14. Lagoon fishermen

The lagoon fishermen stated that the conditions in Kalametiya lagoon have altered greatly over the past 30 years due to the development of irrigation schemes in the Udawalawe and Kachchigal Ara and the subsequent construction of a permanent outlet to the sea. These changes, according to the fishermen, have had serious negative impacts on the lagoon and its surrounding ecosystem. Maps drawn by fishermen during FGDs show dramatic differences in the current surface area of

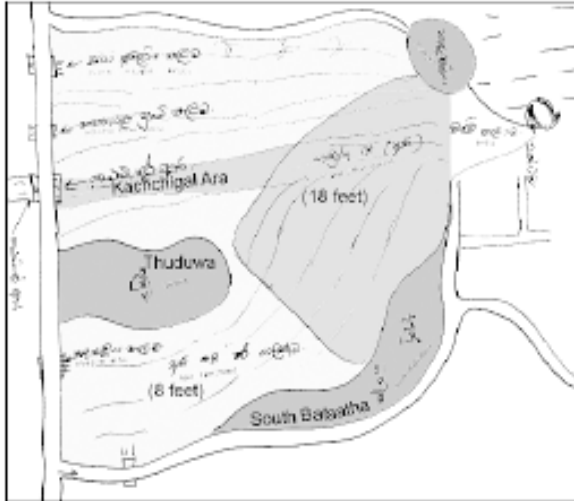
the lagoon compared to 30 years ago (Figure 6). Furthermore, it is commonly believed by the lagoon fishermen that the increased inflow of fresh water has reduced the salinity of the lagoon, whilst the velocity of the outgoing water limits the exchange with seawater, further affecting salinity, and preventing recruitment of post-larvae shrimp.

More recent engineering works, undertaken in the past few years have also influenced the condition of the lagoon. The two bunds built along the banks of the Kachchigal Ara have channeled the water directly towards the sea-outlet, preventing flooding of the land on either side of the bund, which was previously lagoon and marsh land. The result has been an increase in the extent of paddy lands but a sizeable decline in the extent of fish habitat and fishing grounds. The importance of the bund and the severity of the impact are starkly observed in the resource map (Figure 6).

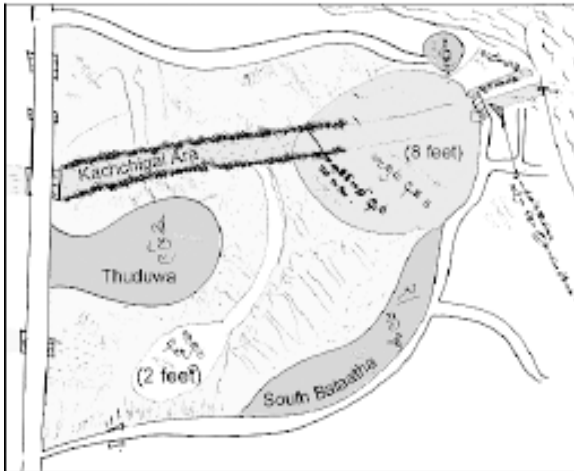
An associated problem is the influx to the lagoon of sediment carried in irrigation water running off up-stream paddy lands. According to local fishermen the sediment has reduced the depth of the lagoon from 18 feet to 8 feet at the deepest point and from 8 feet to 2 feet in other areas (Figure 6). This has, they believe reduced the number of areas where fish can find sanctuary and therefore contributed to over fishing. Sedimentation has provided the ideal conditions for the encroachment of waterweeds such as water hyacinth and *Salvinia* spp., further restricting the extent of the lagoon and reducing its navigability for fishing. These changes in conditions were corroborated by aerial photographs of Kalametiya Lagoon from 1956 and 1994 (Jayatissa *et. al.*, 2002). The photographs show a decline in the lagoon area of shallow, open water, and its replacement by mixed mangroves and homesteads (Figure 7). These changes are most prominent on the eastern side of the lagoon – the area most likely to be affected by changes in flow in Kachchigal Ara and by the bunds build along its banks. Some reduction is also observed on the western side near Bataatha South (Jayatissa *et al.*, 2002).

Figure 7. Land use in Kalametiya based on aerial photographs of 1956 (left) and 1994 (right) (Jayatissa et. al., 2002)

30 years ago













Now





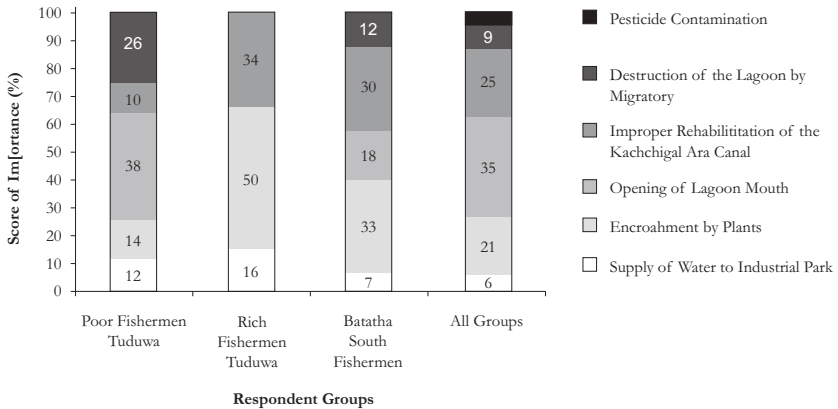
and in the past, and the bund (red) along Kachchigal Ara



-  Mixed mangroves
-  *Sonneratia caseolaris*
-  Homesteads
-  Paddy land
-  Scrub land
-  Grassy plains
-  Barelands inundated at high water level
-  only
-  Sandy beach
-  Rocks
-  Shallow water

The fishermen were requested to score the reasons they provided for the change in the condition of the lagoon in terms of importance. The results from all FGDs were similar, with the hydrological changes, including the opening of the lagoon mouth and the rehabilitation of the canals receiving the highest scores totaling 35 % and 25 % respectively (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Percentage importance given by fishermen to the reasons they cited for the poor condition of the lagoon**



These hydrological and environmental changes have had a considerable impact on livelihood activities carried out in and around Kalametiya Lagoon, especially lagoon fishing and paddy farming.

## 15. Socio-economic impacts for lagoon fishermen

According to local fishermen these changes have resulted in a decline in the numbers of lagoon fishermen by around 60 % in Wewegoda and 20 % in Thuduwa. Some of the fishermen also estimated that the decline in dependency on the lagoon in the Kalametiya area as a whole has been from around 80 % to 20 %, with some interviewees suggesting that the lagoon provides as few as 25 households with their main source of income.

Those who remain in lagoon fishing were found in the household livelihood survey, to be among the poorest in the area, earning only SLRS 1800 on average per month, compared to an approximate monthly average for other livelihood activities in Kalametiya of SLRS 4350. The FGDs held with poor fishermen in Thuduwa revealed that daily incomes from lagoon fishing had declined from around RS 2000 per day to just RS 100-150 or less, which has meant that whereas in the past they only needed to fish for two or three days per week to make sufficient money, they now fish daily, often going to the lagoon 2-3 times per day.

Some fishermen estimated that to make RS 100 it could take a total of about 18 hours fishing over several days.

'Poor' fishermen from Thuduwa and Wewegoda indicated that at present lagoon fishing makes up only about 28 % of their income and they have as a result adapted by diversifying their livelihood strategies to include a range of other income generating activities, the major one being sea fishing from which they derive between 10 and 50 % of their income, as well as *cbena* cultivation, small businesses and agricultural labour.

The older generation of lagoon fishermen remember what an important source of income the lagoon was in the past, particularly in the shrimp season when they could make thousands of rupees in one night, enabling them to pay back debts accumulated during the year, or to invest in fishing equipment, land or home improvements. These people wish to see a return to the natural productivity of the lagoon.

## 16. Paddy farmers

FGDs were held with paddy farmers in two of the major farming communities in Kalametiya, the villages of Bataatha South to the northwest of the lagoon, and Hathagala, near Thuduwa to the northeast. There are about 200 families cultivating approximately 250 acres of paddy land in the Hathagala area and around 50 families cultivating 30-35 hectares in the Bataatha South area.

According to farmers in Hathagala, excess irrigation water from Udawalawe is released through Kachchigal Ara and the land either side of the Ara regularly floods because the bunds, which were originally constructed in 1992, are eroding and cracked. Consequently, they say that if 250 acres is cultivated, about one third of the land does not have a successful yield. They also feel that the outlet to the sea is no longer serving its purpose of relieving flooding as effectively as when it was first constructed because the lagoon mouth has become smaller and the rate of drainage reduced.

In general, the farmers described a dilapidated system of irrigation canals and water storage tanks, which were badly maintained and did not supply the paddy land with the required levels of water at specific times of the year. They complained that the canal system channels are blocked by water hyacinth and other

reeds, and have not been rehabilitated, which is resulting in sedimentation, flow restriction and flooding. When the farmers in Hathagala scored these, the lack of a formal irrigation system and excess water from Kachchigal Ara came out to be the most problematic and were ranked by all farmers (Table 1).

**Table 1. Scoring by wealthy farmers in Hathagala of problems that affect paddy farming**

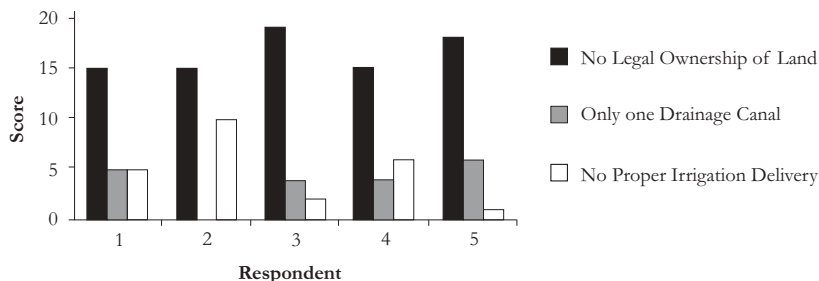
	Respondent					Total (%)
	1	2	3	4	5	
Excess water in Kachchigal Ara and cracked bunds	10	5	6	6	2	23
Blocking of Mini Ethiliya causing flooding	7	2	2	-	10	17
No proper irrigation system	8	7	2	10	5	26
Clogging of anicut with water hyacinth and reeds	-	-	8	-	5	10
Lagoon mouth is getting smaller	-	5	1	9	-	12
No access road to the fields	-	6	6	-	-	10
Destruction by feral cattle	-	-	-	-	3	2

Problems are similar in Bataatha South although the land there is not affected by irrigation water from Kachchigal Ara. Here the paddy land is supplied by water from the Bataatha Main Tank but there is no proper canal system to the Bataatha South paddy fields and they only receive water that runs off the paddy fields of Bataatha North. Consequently in the *'maba'* season their land is inundated with rainwater and in *yala* season, there is insufficient water. In both seasons the yield is affected by the quantity of water.

The farmers are candid about admitting that in both areas much of the land under cultivation is not historically paddy land and has been claimed from the receding lagoon. In Bataatha South, the entire 50 acres of paddy fields are part of the

lagoon area but paddy cultivation was started on them 25 years ago and in Hathagala 100 acres of the cultivated area is not legally owned. This lack of legal tenure is a large part of the problem and is likely to be the reason for the land not being supplied with irrigation water. The paddy farmers in Bataatha South scored this as the greatest problem, giving it 82 % of the total possible score (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Scoring of the problems leading to low paddy yields**



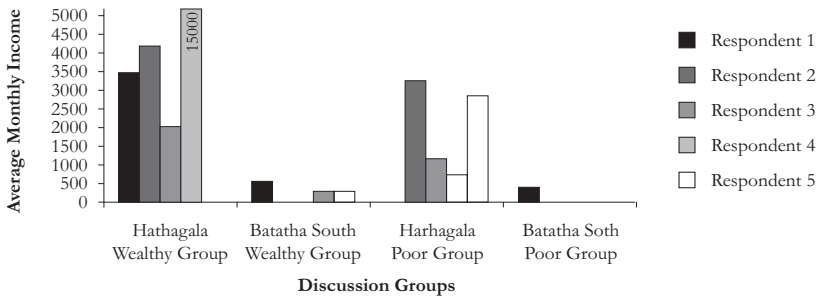
### Socio-economic impacts for farmers

The household questionnaire revealed that drought conditions over the past few years and lack of irrigation water in much of the Kalametiya area is causing serious problems for the farmers, with 81 % of the farmers interviewed citing drought or lack of water as a livelihood constraint. Despite this, the average monthly income for paddy farmers who sell some of their crop is around SLRS 3097, compared to SLRS 1800 for lagoon fishermen. However, there is considerable disparity between farmers in their income from paddy, with Hathagala farmers earning much more than Bataatha South farmers (Figure 10).

The research does not provide sufficient evidence to say conclusively why there is this difference but it is likely to be due to the smaller land area farmed by those in Bataatha South, with households cultivating on average half an acre. Consequently even “wealthy” farmers in Bataatha South indicated that they produce only about 1270 kg of rice per harvest and “poor” farmers about 635 kg per harvest, compared to about 6350 kg and 3050 kg per harvest for “wealthy” and “poor” farmers in Hathagala. Farmers in the poorer groups are also less likely to be engaged in paddy farming as their primary income generating activity, with only two out of five “poor” households in Hathagala and one out of five in Bataatha

South who participated in the FGDs, ranking it first above other livelihood activities, compared to four out of five in both the “wealthy” groups. For poorer households other livelihood activities such as private sector work comprise the majority of the household income and for four of the farmers in the poor wealth category in Bataatha South paddy is only a subsistence crop.

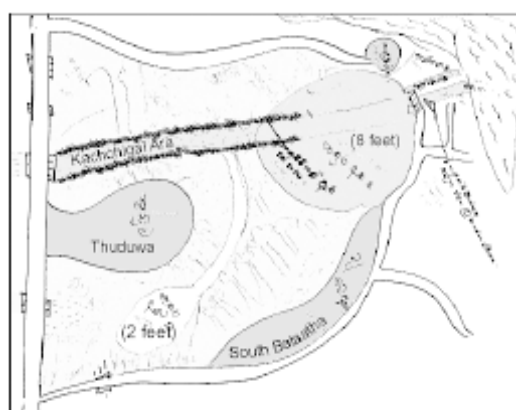
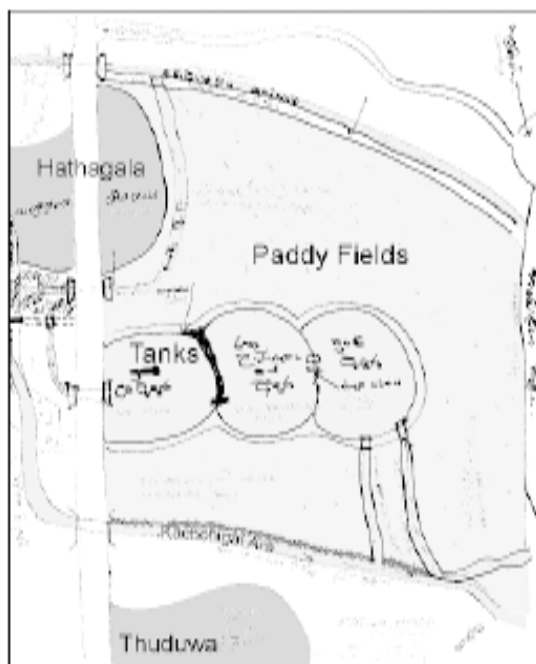
Figure 10. Average monthly incomes for farmers who participated in FGDs



Note: 0 income represents subsistence level crop

## 17. Competing requirements and the implications

These results demonstrate the reliance of both livelihoods groups on water and the other natural resources that it sustains, for both their incomes and subsistence components of household livelihoods. Perhaps more importantly it demonstrates the conflicting requirements of the two groups and the lack of awareness of the needs of other livelihoods groups. This is clearly demonstrated in the natural resources maps drawn by the farmers of Hathagala and fishermen of Thuduwa, in which the foci are respectively irrigation and paddy land, and the lagoon and bund along Kachchigal Ara.



## 18. Comparison of opinion

The central messages from the FGDs also provide a clear statement of the competition for water, opinions on development interventions so far and options for water management to improve the condition of the natural resources in Kalametiya for the benefit of their livelihood activity (Table 2).

**Table 2. Comparison of opinions of farmers and fishermen with respect to management of water resources**

<b>Fishermen</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Excess water is being drained from the lagoon area through the permanent outlet to the sea	There is insufficient drainage and the paddy lands are being flooded
The outlet to the sea allows too much water to drain from the lagoon, reducing its size	The outlet to the sea is becoming smaller and not allowing sufficient drainage
The bunds along Kachchigal Ara are preventing the lagoon from flooding into the whole lagoon area as it used to	The bunds along Kachchigal Ara have been lowered and are too weak and the paddy land is being flooded
Sedimentation from agricultural run-off is reducing the depth of the lagoon	Run-off is insufficient to sustain paddy farming and more appropriate irrigation structures are required

The situation has not yet reached conflict but the components are all in place: the declining productivity of the lagoon and paddy lands; scarcer resources; and greater competition, declining incomes and poverty. Without appropriate interventions this situation could easily escalate from one of competition to one of conflict over resources, as are seen in so many rural areas. The desires of the two livelihoods groups in terms of interventions to address their needs support this supposition:

- The lagoon fishermen would like to see the bund along Kachchigal Ara removed so that the lagoon can be restored to its former size. They also believe that blocking the outlet and returning to the traditional system of cutting the sand bar twice a year to reduce water levels, and remove sediment and waterweeds, would result in a return of the numbers and variety of fish that they saw in the past. They believe that without these actions the lagoon will disappear within 5 years.



- The paddy farmers would like to increase the bunds along Kachchigal Ara to protect their land and to construct a series of canals that channel excess water directly to the sea to improve drainage. They feel that the permanent outlet to the sea should also be rehabilitated to improve drainage.

Consequently the obvious solutions to improve the livelihoods of the lagoon fishermen are the antithesis of the solutions to improve the livelihoods of the farmers. So how can the situation best be addressed?

## **19. Mechanisms for conflict resolution**

A number of mechanisms exist to address resources management issues and conflict, this paper discusses two specific options to mitigate existing problems and to try to prevent or minimise future problems.

### **Special area management**

A forum in which different livelihoods groups can discuss their requirements, identify areas of potential conflict and come to understand the requirements of other groups is a useful tool in locations with issues such as those identified in Kalametiya. This type of mechanism was institutionalized in Kalametiya in 2002 under the Special Area Management or SAM process.

SAM is an approach that involves local communities co-managing natural resources in partnership with the government at specially identified coastal sites, and has been hailed as an important policy directive in Sri Lanka's coastal zone management policy process. This approach is intended to facilitate comprehensive management of natural resources with the active involvement of the local community (De Cosse and Jayawickrama, 1996; Coast Conservation Department, 1997). The main objective of SAM is to resolve competing demands of natural resources within a specific geographical boundary by planning the optimal sustainable use of resources, introducing alternate livelihood options and alleviating poverty (Wickremeratne and White, 1992; RSAMCC, 1996 and Lowry *et al.*, 1999).

The main decision making body in SAM, is the Community Coordinating Committee, which provides a platform for different resource user groups to

discuss issues arising from resource use conflicts. The Committee is comprised of representatives of local resource use and community groups, including fisher and farmer groups, government departments and other relevant parties such as local NGOs, and is chaired by the Divisional Secretariat. The issues between lagoon fishermen and farmers have not yet been highlighted at the Coordinating Committee meetings in Kalametiya since the SAM process is only in its initial stages. Furthermore, since the conflicting requirements of water resources are influenced by factors outside the SAM area, the problem cannot technically be resolved at the coordinating committee level. It is also not clear what conflict resolution methods will be used in an actual case of conflict and exactly who will play the role of mediator - for example, will it be the chair or other committee members. What SAM provides currently in Kalametiya, is the opportunity for different resource user groups to discuss issues that are affecting them, which will hopefully lead to improved understanding and cooperation.

### **Better planning to avoid conflict**

Whilst the SAM mechanism offers the opportunity to discuss issues and improve understanding, it may not be sufficient to enable the development of an intervention strategy that satisfactorily addresses the water management issues. Furthermore, there is the question of what interventions are appropriate considering many of the changes took place over 20 years ago and attempts to reverse them may have additional negative impacts. It would therefore be extremely useful to develop a tool that allows better planning of water management interventions by assessing the needs of the community and identifying the potential impacts of intervention options on various groups. At present water planning in Kalametiya appears to focus on the requirements of land owning paddy farmers but it is this narrow approach that is creating the potential for conflict here and in other areas.

SEI has developed the Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) tool, a microcomputer tool that builds scenarios for water planning and monitoring based on information entered into it. The required information is both demand-side (water use patterns, equipment efficiencies, re-use, prices and allocation) and supply-side (streamflow, groundwater, reservoirs and water transfers). Such an approach allows planners to develop scenarios based on adjustments to either demand or supply or both, and determine the impacts in terms of water availability and quality. For example, imagine that Uda Walawe holds 100,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water of

which Kachchigal Ara receives 20,000 m<sup>3</sup>, and that 10,000 m<sup>3</sup> is the minimum volume required for the ecological functioning of the lagoon and 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> is required for irrigation<sup>50</sup>. Then these sources (Udawalawe and Kachchigal Ara) and demands (ecological functions of Kalametiya Lagoon and irrigation) can be programmed into WEAP (Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Example of the use of WEAP to include issues of poverty in irrigation planning**



At present these figures can be altered in WEAP, for example if the quantity of water received by Kachchigal Ara drops to 10,000 m<sup>3</sup> then the water available for Kalametiya Lagoon and irrigation must be divided in some proportion. Depending on the information given to WEAP, the model allows the operator to see a number of scenarios, which they can then use to make decisions on the division of water that will provide the optimal benefits based on their criteria. The model can also be programmed with crop data, so that the decision can consider how water availability will affect yields.

<sup>50</sup> These figures are purely hypothetical and for the purposes of illustration.

However, currently this tool does not provide an indication of the impacts of changes in water quantity and quality on the livelihoods systems of communities and households. The SEI WEAP-Livelihoods research is therefore intended to facilitate the development of the model to include these aspects by linking the WEAP model to a livelihoods framework. This would allow the development of scenarios that consider, for example, not just changes in water quantity but how communities will adjust to these, what changes it will make to the mobility of certain types of households (such as *'poor fishermen'* or *'rich farmers'*) in terms of poverty and other livelihoods indicators. For example, imagine that the groups of fishermen interviewed stated that if the water received by the lagoon drops to 1 m depth (3,000 m<sup>3</sup>) then it is impossible for them to fish and they will become sea fishermen. If it drops to 2 m depth they believe their income will decrease and about 40 % of poor fishermen will seek alternative income generating activities<sup>51</sup>. Such data could then be provided to the WEAP model, which would use it to build more accurate scenarios for a variety of water management interventions suggested by the computer operator. The operator could then compare between impacts on, in the case of this research, poor fishermen, wealthy fishermen, poor farmers and wealthy farmers.

This adjustment to the model also allows water planners, such as the irrigation department, to plan interventions from the basin level to the local level and therefore improves the accuracy of the predicted impacts on local communities and poor people in particular.

For this development of WEAP to be possible, the model must be accurately informed, which requires consistent assessment and analysis of the livelihoods of target communities. The SEI-WEAP research in Kalametiya was therefore designed to develop a methodology for this data collection, and to provide information with which to build the WEAP-Livelihoods scenarios-based planning tool. The methodology will be flexible to be suitable for different situations and countries but will include rapid rural appraisal and will require information on numbers of households, primary income generating activities and wealth ranking. Most importantly FGDs will be used to pose hypothetical scenarios and to gain an understanding of likely changes to livelihood activities under certain conditions or scenarios.

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<sup>51</sup> These are not figures given by the fishermen but are examples of possible scenarios.

## 20. Conclusions

This case study of Kalametiya highlights several important issues in relation to rural poverty, different natural resource uses and the potential for social conflict, and represents a scenario that could arise in many other parts of Sri Lanka and elsewhere. It is clear that there is in general increasing competition for natural resources in rural areas and that this, combined with inadequate understanding of the needs of other resource users, as well as poverty, has the potential to lead to conflict.

Better planning of natural resource management interventions closely linked with the enhancement of the lives of poor rural people is essential to reduce such competition and the potential for conflict. In this particular case study, irrigation development could address such competition by using a scenarios-based approach to understand and plan for the impacts of potential interventions on various different resource user groups. However, this approach requires careful and consistent assessment of livelihoods, including natural resource use, income generating activities and poverty. Without this, accurate scenarios and appropriate interventions cannot be made. While policy planners and managers devise such management tools for more sound development interventions, it is crucial that at the same time, these factors of competition and conflict are assessed and understood at the local level. Therefore in this context, a forum such as that provided through the SAM process, that brings user groups together to discuss livelihoods issues and devise solutions to existing competition or conflict can play a vital role. Indeed without addressing the needs of the individuals and resource user groups within rural communities, and understanding all facets of their livelihoods, it will not be possible to avoid situations of conflict.

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## Acknowledgements

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) supports policies, programmes and projects to promote international development. DFID have provided funds for the study conducted by the Stockholm Environment Institute, with the Department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka, as part of this objective but the views and opinions expressed here are not necessary those of DFID.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) contributed funding for the WEAP-Livelihoods project.

Sonali Senaratna Sellamuttu is undertaking the Imperial College London PhD research project. Her research is supported by a British Chevening Scholarship, an International Water Management Institute (IWMI) PhD Fellowship, a Ford Foundation/IUCN Post-Fellowship grant and a University College London Central Research Fund grant.





## **IX. Conceptualising Human Rights: Implications for Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies.**

*Sepalika de Silva*

### **1. Introduction**

Recent interest in human rights and *'rights talk'* has permeated almost all realms in contemporary society. Rights have been invoked, used and abused in many different contexts by different institutions for different purposes. Human rights today embody a new order in the transnational legal arena, which has created and expanded the concept of human rights to be inclusive as well as hegemonic. However, the concept of human rights is not a clearly defined and is subject to different interpretations. It is not a static concept and is open to different conceptualisations in various socio-political and cultural contexts. I argue, therefore, an understanding of human rights at grass-root level, especially for development and poverty reduction strategies to promote social integration and equity, becomes critically important if it is to be made meaningful.

This paper is based on a study conducted in southern Sri Lanka to assess the rights' consciousness of the rural population in their everyday context. This paper will begin with a brief overview of human rights discourse and the recent interest in human rights in development and poverty reduction strategies, followed by findings from the study, linking them to potential implications on development efforts.

#### **Evolution of human rights discourse**

Most scholars agree that the current understanding of human rights, as embodied in international human rights standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other various *'instruments'*, derive from pre-twentieth century European liberal philosophical concept of the individual and his/her inalienable rights. Human rights, as a concept however, is neither static nor permanent. It has been evolving over the years and debates around as to what exactly these rights mean and their application in different social and political contexts are present. Most analyses of the history of human rights discourse focus on the chronological order of specific generations, beginning with the post-world

war era of the UDHR to current interests in more varied rights such as development, solidarity and environment. According to Ellen Messer (1993), the trajectory of human rights discourse involves '*generational shifts*', beginning with the first generation rights that were conceptualized with the atrocities of the World War II in mind during the post-war period and therefore were centred on political and civil rights of individuals, as evident in the UDHR. This was followed by the Socialist states' conceptualization of human rights focusing on socioeconomic and cultural rights, reflecting rights to healthcare, welfare, education, employment, and social security amongst others. Messer argues that these two paradigms reflect the Cold War ideologies of the period. Next was a shift towards solidarity and development rights, emphasizing '*equitable socioeconomic order as well as sustainable environment*' (Messer, 1993: 223). Advocates of this concept of rights were mainly from the developing states, who emphasized the importance of collective rights and argued that individual rights cannot be separated from collective rights. They were especially critical of the western-European ethnocentric notions of human rights. Messer adds a fourth generation of human rights comprising indigenous rights, with issues of self-determination against state-centred political frameworks. Hence it can be said that human rights discourse is embodied in particular historical circumstances and that the development and expansion of various aspects of human rights is influenced by socio-political ideologies of actors in the international civil society: '*The expansion of the concept of rights is an historical and social process based on the interaction of representatives from a wide variety of cultural traditions working through the UN and transnational NGOs*' (Merry, 2001: 39). The current interest in human rights within the field of development and poverty-reduction strategies is therefore also historically grounded and belongs to a generation of rights advocated primarily by the Third World states.

### **Human rights in development and poverty reduction strategies**

The linking of human rights to development gathered momentum in the 1990s with several international organizations adopting what they called a '*human rights approach*' to development and poverty reduction. On the one hand, human rights activists in the Third World began promoting more '*socially oriented rights*' while being critical of the existing individualistic definitions and emphasized the right to participate in development activities (Sano, 2000: 739). This is reflected in UN's Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) as well as in the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights (1993). While on the other hand, development

discourse, too, has been seeing changes during this time from its earlier emphasis on the state and macro economics to a more bottom-up, people oriented policy and programmes, as manifested in UNDP and World Bank Reports (Sano, 2000). The convergence of human rights and development can also be attributed to the two following tendencies that prevailed during this period; first, the international recognition of the demands by developing states for social provisions as legitimate entitlements, and second, the increasing emphasis on good governance and democratic practices in development frameworks (Sano, 2000: 736). In other words, development became a right and good governance became prerequisite to development activities.

The rights-based approach to development is thus defined as integrating *'norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development'* (UNHCHR 2003). It emphasises the importance of individual and group participation in development activities and the realisation of international human rights norms and standards for the process of human development. According to the Human Development Report 2000, *'[A] decent standard of living, adequate nutrition, healthcare, education and decent work and protection against calamities are not just development goals – they are also human rights'* (UNDP 2000: 8). This framework therefore attempts to empower the poor and the marginalized through the realisation of rights and entitlements. According to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' *'Draft Guidelines: A Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies'* *'... poverty signified non-realisation of human rights so that the adoption of poverty reduction strategy is therefore not just desirable but obligatory on the part of states that have ratified international human rights instruments'* (OHCHR 2002: 4). This approach therefore considers empowerment through building and improving capabilities and capacities as the core of development processes. Amartya Sen's work in linking development to freedom has also been significant in this regard. Sen (1999) argues quite convincingly that human freedom, or *'substantive freedom'*, contrived in a holistic definition of social and economic opportunities as well as political and civil rights should be seen as a prerequisite to development. Moreover, he sees poverty as capability deprivation; *'...poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty'* (Sen 1999: 87).

This new trend within development and poverty reduction strategies has received substantial attention judging by the prominence it has received at international meetings and conferences. Clearly this approach has much merit, but also demands

a critical assessment at the level of stakeholders as well. This paper intends to provide an initial understanding of this process from the perspective of the local people through an assessment of their rights consciousness. The empirical findings that follow were collected in order to understand the local conceptualisation of human rights in view of all these new directions within human rights discourse.

## **2. Rights awareness and conceptualisation in southern Sri Lanka**

### **Methodology and research setting**

As indicated above, the study was conducted primarily to understand the local rights consciousness or awareness as well as an understanding of the local conceptualisation of human rights in a general sense. The research therefore consisted of a questionnaire survey with a total of 200 questionnaires in two geographic areas and eight interviews to elaborate on issues arising from the survey. The two areas selected were Matara and Kamburupitiya Divisional Secretary's divisions in southern Sri Lanka, based on the assumption that the former is the urban centre of the district and hence more "urban" than the latter which is inland and relatively more "rural" in terms of access to resources and facilities.<sup>52</sup> Although the characteristics of these two areas confirm the above definitions adopted for the purpose of the survey, the boundary between "urban" and "rural" is becoming increasingly difficult to demarcate owing to the effects of globalisation. Yet, in order to ascertain human rights discourses, which I will argue as context-dependent, it was necessary to select two areas which could potentially reveal different attitudes due to their own particular circumstances. Within Matara and Kamburupitiya, two Grama Niladhari divisions were selected using random numbers. The survey was conducted selecting households randomly and respondents were selected from those household members, who happened to be there when we visited. However, due to the nature of the subject of the survey, responses of only those above the age of 18 were taken into consideration. In addition to the questionnaires, eight interviews were conducted, four from each area, as well as interviews with officials of the two Divisional Secretary's offices and the Matara branch of the Human

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<sup>52.</sup> The present study was conducted in the Matara district for my on-going dissertation research involves understanding human rights in post-conflict societies. I have selected Matara as it was one of the worst affected areas during the JVP insurgency of 1989-1991, where many arbitrary killings, disappearances and human rights violations took place.

Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. The two broad research questions followed were; what is the level of human rights awareness among the local people, and how do they conceptualise human rights?

**Human rights awareness**

In order to understand what “human rights” mean to people at the local level, an assessment of their awareness of the concept can be seen as a critical point of entry in the current study since the level of awareness reflects the response to the society towards human rights. As shown below, only 21.5% of respondents answered in the affirmative to the question ‘Do you know about your rights as stated in the constitution?’ (Table 1).

**Table 1. Number and percentage of respondents with knowledge of constitutional rights**

Response	No. of respondents	Percent
Yes	43	21.5
No	157	78.5
Total	200	100

This very low level of awareness is significant since Matara district, in general, consists of a relatively better educated and well informed population with many migrant workers who act as a link between urban centres and home. In addition, Matara and Kamburupitiya showed similar responses to the above question, indicating that close proximity to urban areas does not necessarily indicate a better understanding or higher awareness of human rights. However, in terms of the level of education achieved, there appears to be a correlation between education and awareness. (Table 2).

**Table 2. Knowledge of constitutional rights by educational attainment**

Educational Attainment	Do you know about your rights as stated in the constitution?				Total
	Yes		No		
Primary	1	2.4%	41	97.6%	42
Secondary	2	4.2%	46	95.8%	48
O/Levels	5	9.8%	46	90.2%	51
A/Levels	28	59.6%	19	40.4%	47
Degree	7	100 %	-	-	7
No Schooling	-	-	3	100 %	3
Total	43	21.7%	155	78.3%	198

As presented above, the correlation between the level of education and the awareness of human rights is quite clear, where 81% of those who answered “yes” have education beyond O/Levels, while 87.1% of those who answered “no” have education only up to O/Levels. This is indicative of the association between education and knowledge of human rights in a formal sense. But the ways in which the respondents have learned about human rights (Table 3) indicate that formal education is not the only channel through which dissemination takes place. However, the high number of respondents stating formal or institutional channels such as “school” and “media” could indicate that human rights discourse is not so prevalent at informal levels.

**Table 3. Number of respondents and percentages by method of learning constitutional rights**

<b>Method</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Learnt in school	14	32.6
From the media	11	25.6
By reading the constitution	8	18.6
From people in general	5	11.6
Heard at political meetings	4	9.3
From Human rights activists in the area	1	2.3
Total	43	100

While it can be argued that these two questions only focus on a very narrow meaning of rights in a formal sense, even in a less formal context most respondents were unable to express much about human rights. The respondents were asked to state common rights violations in their areas, and below are the responses received (Table 4).

**Table 4. Number of respondents and percentages by most common rights violations in the area**

<b>Rights violations</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Responded %</b>
Do no know/ Nothing to say	118	65.2
Lack of suitable jobs	20	11
Unfairness in law	19	10.5
Lack of common resources (road, school...etc)	14	7.7
Lack of income to live	4	2.2
Lack of transport	3	1.7
Problems with alcoholics	2	1.1
Lack of children’s rights	1	0.6
Total	181	100

Even though the above question was less formal, more than half the respondents (65.2%) were unable to state instances of rights violations witnessed in their areas. The relatively high level of unemployment in these areas is identified by only 11% of respondents as lack of suitable job opportunities. One of the pressing issues in both these areas, according to the study, is the issue of inadequate roadways, as well as access and conditions of existing roads.<sup>53</sup> However, only 7.7% mentioned it as a violation of rights in the area. In other words, even in a practical, everyday context most respondents' awareness and in turn interest seems limited to comment on this topic. And similar to the earlier point on general awareness, the majority who could not say anything specific has had education only up to O/ Levels.

Awareness of human rights at the institutional level too was found to be low and limited. Although to the 73% stated "yes" when posed the question "Have you ever heard about the Human Rights Commission?", only 1% answered in the affirmative when asked *'Are there any groups that safeguard people's rights in your area?'*. This perhaps indicates that the respondents are aware of the existence of the HRC<sup>54</sup> at a superficial level but not in detail, even though there is a HRC branch office situated in the Matara town. According to this office, they are not directly involved in any campaigns to improve public awareness of human rights and most of their work revolves around checking on the status and rights of detainees and prisoners. For instance, they received 398 complaints in 2002 of which the highest was for torture by police officers (139), second for recruitment, appointment and other employment related complaints (36) and third, for unofficial detention (25).<sup>55</sup> It can be argued then that the limited focus of the HRC contributes towards creating a distance between people and the HRC.

Going back to Table 4 only one person mentioned children's rights. This point seems significant since both District Secretariats of Matara and Kamburupitiya have launched campaigns to promote children's rights in their areas with activities such as workshops, art exhibitions, school programs, street plays as well as providing birth certificates and admission of non-school going children to schools.

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<sup>53.</sup> Concerns regarding road access is one of the most prevalent issues in both Matara and Kamburupitiya where 19.1% of those who have had any kind of disputes in the preceding 12 months stated that the conflict was over access to roads.

<sup>54.</sup> Human Rights Commission

<sup>55.</sup> Information gathered from the Matara office of HRC.



This points to the following question: Does this mean their campaigns are inadequate or there exists an absence of child rights infringements in these areas at the level of common knowledge?

According to this study, awareness of human rights at both informal and formal levels are limited, which could suggest a relative lack of interest in issues of human rights.

**Conceptualisation of human rights**

Closely related to rights awareness is the way in which individuals conceptualise ‘human rights’. This is more abstract than locating rights awareness within a community, but provide an insight into how individuals give meaning to the concept of rights in their everyday contexts. The following table shows the responses received to the question ‘What word/s come to mind when you hear the term human rights?’ (Table 5).

**Table 5. Number of respondents and percentages by description of human rights**

<b>Description of human rights</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Individual rights	77	38.9
Do not know/Can’t say	53	26.8
Right to live freely	39	19.7
Common rights/ resources	28	14.1
Right to employment	1	0.5
Total	198	100

Not surprisingly, a significant number of respondents (26.8%) could not express themselves, majority of whom had only primary education. This corresponds with the limited awareness of human rights discussed above. In addition, Kamburupitiya had more respondents who could not state anything as compared to Matara which also corresponds to the relatively lower educational status of respondents from Kamburupitiya. However, interestingly, even though human rights awareness was found to be low in terms of formal knowledge and practical instances of rights violations, this table suggests that most respondents were able to articulate or express in their own words what constitutes human rights. This perhaps points to two related issues: a methodological issue and a language issue.

Methodologically this confirms the inherent limitations of using a questionnaire survey<sup>56</sup>, but the language issue warrants further analysis. It can be said that when phrases such as '*stated in the constitution*' and '*human rights violations*', standard human rights language, are used it has the effect of creating a distance or a sense of apprehension or aversion among individuals not used to '*human rights talk*'. Although there now appears to be a '*global culture of rights*' (Hastrup, 2003) couched in legal language and operating at the global level, how much of this has transcended to the local level remains to be seen as shown in this study.

Thus according to Table 5, most respondents conceptualise rights within the context of the individual or personal entitlements (38.9%) and less as collective or common rights (14.1%).<sup>57</sup> This individualistic interest is reflected in their relative lack of interest in developing communal resources as evident in the following cases:

Amara is a housewife who lives with her husband, son, three daughters and a male relative. Her husband works as a carpenter and their son is involved in fishing activities. Amara says that although most people in her neighbourhood are relatives, there is very little interaction among them. Disputes most often occur due to boundary and road issues. She claims that they do not have a proper roadway which is very problematic to them. According to her, the road that they use is a 3-foot road that has been in existence from the days of her grandfather. She says that although there are 15 families using this road, no one is willing to go to courts over this matter except for her and two others. Amara says that no one wants to spend even Rs. 500 for this matter. They have gone to courts, but gave up the litigation when it became necessary to go to a higher court for which they were required to spend about Rs. 8000. This was a case against a neighbour who refuses to move his boundary to facilitate the widening of the road. Therefore the case is dropped now. Others also use the road but will not come forward to spend money for the cause. Amara says that if there is a funeral they will not be able to take a coffin and that even a patient cannot be taken in a "three-wheeler".

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<sup>56.</sup> Tables 1 and 3 are based on structured questions while Table 5 is based on an open-ended question.

<sup>57.</sup> Table 5 enumerates responses grouped into categories from an open-ended question. Some of the responses include; "Those that belong to the person", "To obtain/ win one's rights", "Things one ought to get".

Harris used to be a farmer but due to ill health he does not work now. He lives with his wife and child. He is a Janasavia recipient and says that even though he is not working right now, they can get by since their needs are limited. Harris says he does not get involved in village-level societies but goes to help in whatever form of common work. Village-level societies according to him do not work because villagers are constantly trying to put the other person down. He says that only about 10% are like that but that is enough to spoil the rest; people are jealous of the other persons' achievements. Harris states that there are problems with land issues because there is no proper system of ownership. Moreover, he says there was an issue with a road, but the person who was going to lose land used political influence and stopped the bulldozer from working and thus prevented the widening of the public road. Yet he says there was no collective action by the villagers even though it was a clear instance of injustice to all of them.

The lack of collective action and cohesion among these people correspond with the high rate of individualistic conceptualisation of rights where rights are thought of as entitlements for the individual, 'self'. The equation of human rights to individual rights derives from the early understanding of rights grounded in western liberal tradition as discussed in the earlier part of the paper. Moreover, institutions such as the HRC with its emphasis on political and civil rights also help reinforce an individualistic understanding of human rights. This study also found that among the respondents, more females described human rights as common rights and most individuals who responded with a common rights framework had studied up to A/Levels as oppose to those who responded with an individualistic framework who were mostly secondary and O/Level educated.

Perceiving human rights as an individual entitlement denotes a sense that rights are also associated with the context in which they are situated. This can be elaborated in the following case study.

Chandima is a 29-year old Credit Manager of a rural bank in Matara. He lives with his wife and daughter along with the wife's parents and sister. He is a university graduate who has taught for a while at an International school in Colombo prior to taking up the current job. Human rights according to him are rights that a person acquires upon birth; things that one should get. He elaborates further by saying that when a person does not get a suitable position/ job according to his/ her suitability or qualifications, then that is a violation of rights. His appointment at the workplace has been challenged by a person claiming it to be a violation of

her rights since she has more experience than he. However Chandima says he is suitably qualified with a degree, has knowledge of English as well as computers and work experience and was selected through formal channels.

As the above case indicates, Chandima's idea of human rights revolves around employment opportunities, qualifications and education. This is perhaps due to his exposure to the human rights case at his work place as well as the fact that he is a university graduate. Although Chandima says that human rights are birth rights, his narrative suggests that he perceives human rights from a negative perspective, where rights emerge in situations of deprivations. This can also be seen in the following case study.

Edwin was a carpenter by profession who now works very seldomly because of health reasons as well as the lack of job opportunities within the village due to high competition. He is 59 years old and does casual work once in a way. According to him, human rights mean '*labeema nolabeema*' (not receiving what one ought to get). As an example he explains that if his samurdhi benefits are withheld by the government, then that would qualify as a violation of his rights.

The above cases are indicative of the extent to which social contexts help colour one's conceptualisation of human rights and that these concepts are embodied in both the immediate circumstances as well as social networks within which these individuals are located. As Richard Wilson states "local interpretations of human rights doctrine draw on personal biographies, community histories and on expressions of power relations between interest groups" (Wilson, 1997a: 12). Likewise, Hastrup (2003) argues that human rights discourse should operate on the concept of the self as embedded in social ties and emerging from dialogical processes. Therefore, the social context where ideas about the self, and in turn human rights, are embedded provide an insight into how individuals see themselves vis-à-vis rights and entitlements.

In this sense, it is significant that 44.4% and 65.8% of respondents thought that political and economic influences respectively, were necessary in fighting for one's rights. This shows that economic factors outweigh political factors in human rights issues, and seems to suggest that individuals perceive actions against rights violations on economic terms. Moreover, 85.3% of those that stated economic influence as a necessity also stated that wealth is essential for everything, especially in legal matters, to pay for lawyers etc. This is perhaps the reason why 34.4% of

those who responded could answer neither “yes” nor “no” to the question whether they will take action if their rights are violated in any way<sup>58</sup>, taking into consideration the relatively low economic status of both these areas.

Hence another trend that can be seen in the way rights are conceptualised among the respondents is that most of them seem to think of human rights from a legal perspective. This is closely related to the individualistic conceptualisation of human rights where there exists an idea that rights or entitlements should come from somewhere else, and that individuals have to “win” these rights. The following table shows the persons from whom people will seek help if there is an instance of rights violation (Table 6).

**Table 6. Number of respondents and percentages by persons from whom help is sought when rights are violated**

<b>Persons</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Lawyers	77	40.9
Police	48	25.5
Grama Niladhari	38	20.2
Local Elites	7	3.7
Relatives	6	3.2
Divisional Sec's Office	4	2.1
Neighbours/ Elders	3	0.3
Regional Political Leaders	2	1
MP	2	1
Samurdhi Niyamaka	1	0.5
Total <sup>59</sup>	188	98.4

The high number of people turning to lawyers and the law enforcement (Police) for help and not to the traditional dispute settling mechanisms such as the village priest, relatives or local elites suggests that a legalistic understanding of human rights exists among these people. This is perhaps inevitable as human rights discourse is couched in legal language and is represented by institutions and mechanisms that endorse these ideas.

<sup>58.</sup> To the question “Would you consider taking action if your rights are violated?” 65.1% stated “Yes”, 0.5% stated “No” and 34.4% stated “Cannot say”.

<sup>59.</sup> Multiple Responses

### 3. Implications for development and poverty reduction Strategies

The concept of human rights thus is neither static nor predictable. Although rights talk has become ubiquitous especially at the level of transnational civil society, the present study suggests that human rights are complex and subjective and in order to understand how they can be interpreted for development strategies, it is critical to assess rights consciousness at grass root level.

As discussed in the paper, the human rights approach to development emerged under particular historical circumstances. It was during the 1980s and the 1990s that a convergence of human rights and development, together with ideals such as good governance and democracy, took place. According to Donnelly (1999) this recent interest in fusing human rights, democracy and development is a hegemonic exercise, reflecting the ideals of Western liberal democratic welfare states which glosses over the inherent tensions in other socio-political contexts. Moreover Donnelly states *'interdependence, even synergy, between human rights, democracy, and development is both possible and desirable. However, realising such affinities is largely a contingent matter of context and institutional design; it is not automatic or inevitable'* (Donnelly, 1999: 610). Yet, the emphasis on these political ideals are prominently addressed at conferences and meetings of international civil society arena. In addition, international legitimacy of a state or regime is now dependent upon its record of human rights. As Merry rightly states "human rights is an open text, capable of appropriation and redefinition by groups who are players in the global legal arena" (Merry, 1997: 30).

Against this backdrop, the findings from the current study indicate a few challenges to practitioners of rights-based approaches. As discussed at the outset, the rights based approaches to development and poverty eradication advocate empowering the poor, focusing on building capacities and capabilities that enable them to enjoy and participate in the development process. The first step towards this empowerment then is the *'recognition of the existence of legal entitlements of the poor and legal obligations of others towards them'* (OHCHR, 2002: 1). However, as the current study revealed, there exists a very limited and low level of awareness of human rights in terms of both formal as well as practical sense. Under such circumstances how would these individuals know what their entitlements are? The recognition of these entitlements thus should not be limited to policy makers and development practitioners; the poor, or the persons at whom these efforts are aimed at should

also be made aware of these rights if development projects are to be made meaningful to them.

In addition to the limited rights awareness at the local level, the study also found that the concept of human rights has different meanings to different individuals. Human rights, in other words, is not a clearly defined concept and is open to interpretations and debates. Moreover, 'rights talk' can take on different meanings depending on the social context within which it is situated (Wilson, 1997a). Yet, the advocates of rights-based approaches to development and poverty reduction claim that the underlying principle of their approach is the adoption of '*international human rights*' or '*international normative standards*' (OHCHR, 2002). It can be argued that such universalising would rob the subtleties of social life and the fluidity of the concept of human rights while imposing a standard that may or may not be acceptable in the local context. Such hegemonic ideals could even backfire "disempowering" those meant to be empowered (Gledhill, 2003). Similarly Jennifer Schirmer argues, though from a political perspective, that '*intervening in the name of the universal good without recognising the political and legal realities of local life may not just backfire but may even worsen human rights violations*' (Schirmer, 1997: 179). As the current study indicates, human rights operate within social contexts and not in a vacuum and are embedded in social networks. Individuals give meaning to the concept through subjective understanding and experiences. These "subjectivities" therefore cannot be ignored in trying to assess human rights discourse at the local level. For instance, Wilson's study on human rights reporting shows how rights violations become an "event" through subjective reporting and "decontextualization" by reporting agents, and that by removing the social context in which violations occur, the very purpose of human rights reporting is lost because '*by situating social persons in communities and contexts, and furnishing thick descriptions of acts of violent exercise of power, it can be seen how rights themselves are grounded, transformative and inextricably bound to purposive agents rather than being universal abstractions*' (Wilson, 1997b: 155). Thus, in so far as rights are context-dependent, a sensitisation to the local context becomes a necessity in promoting sustainable and meaningful empowering of the poor.

Most respondents in the survey who were able to express themselves on the topic of human rights described human rights as individual rights, relegating common or collective rights to a secondary position. As mentioned above, this individualistic perception derives from an earlier understanding of rights where the emphasis was on the "individual". Moreover, as human rights discourse is spoken in a legalist

language with its embodied notions of the individual and the self (Hastrup 2003), it becomes imperative that human rights are perceived from an individualistic perspective. However, this individualistic perception could potentially affect the efforts of development and poverty reduction. The low level of collective rights consciousness among the respondents corresponds with the relative lack of interest in improving common resources/ facilities and consequently to the lack of responsibility for development in a holistic sense. In other words, the sense of responsibility towards the community and in turn to society within the framework of human rights is lacking and thus could undermine development efforts and hinder sustainability of such endeavours. Also, this individualistic understanding of human rights could potentially aggravate and increase inequality and injustice among the already marginalized population. The trend of ensuring one's own rights in an atomised context would further divide communities and could lead to social conflicts and schisms within communities. The low level of interest in CBOs together with the fact that most villagers are close kin who are detached and uncooperative towards collective efforts indicate an already divided community which can be made worse with ideals imposed on them.

## 4. Conclusion

Summing up the findings from the survey, the local awareness and knowledge of human rights in terms of both informal and formal levels seems to be low in the two areas studied. And the local conceptualisation of rights can be interpreted as individualistic, context dependent and legalistic. While the understanding of rights in an individualistic and immediate contexts could promote individual empowerment which could lead to reduction in poverty, it also has the potential to fuel social unrest and disintegration due to lack of interest in collective and community upliftment and development. Hence, these opinions and attitudes of the local people cannot be ignored if human rights are going to be invoked in development and poverty reduction efforts among these people. Although these findings are limited to a specific locality with specific characteristics and cannot be generalised in a broader sense, it can be seen as the first step towards gaining an insight into how discourses at supra-local levels are perceived and practised by local people. Finally, further research into the local understanding of human rights in a more qualitative and an in-depth manner is deemed important for the proper assessment of the efficacy of development interventions if empowerment of the marginalized and the poor is envisaged through realisation of human rights.



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