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GROUNDVIEW

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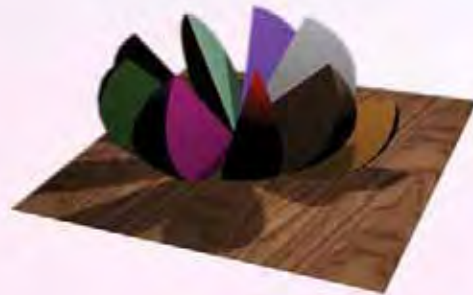
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*Why is this age worse than earlier ages?
In a stupor of grief and dread
have we not fingered the foulest wounds
and left them unheald by our hands?*

-Anna Akhmatova

Quoted by Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam
in the Budget Debate Nov. 16, 1998



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PER CAPITA INCOME:

REAL

**OR
Phantom**

page.....04



Displaced caged in camps at
MANNAR
page.....04

The need for the
17th Amendment
to the constitution
page.....13



Towards Creating a viable
agricultural sector
page.....15

IN THIS ISSUE



UNICEF page.....18
supported Tangalle Water
Supply Scheme completed



Residents who gave up homes for
**Norochcholai plant left
helpless and homeless**
page.....22



Medirigiriya farmers reap the
benefits of home grown
BIO-GAS
page.....24

PREAMBLE

ALLIANCES CAN BE PERILOUS

The Ally Of Today May Be The Enemy Of Tomorrow

Alliances formed on the basis of expediency will last only till one of the partners decides that he is the only competent partner while others are lulled in to the soothing illusion of control of the anticipated benefits of their joint enterprise. Therein lies a tale.

In a part of a forest lived a lion named Thunder-Fang, with three counselors, a wolf, a jackal, and a camel, whose names were Meat-Face, Smart, and Spike-Ear. One day he fought with a furious elephant whose sharp-pointed tusk so tore his body that he withdrew from hunting. Then, suffering from a seven-day fast, his body lean with hunger, he said to his famished advisers: "Round up some creature in the forest, so that, even in my present condition, I may provide needed nourishment for you." The moment he issued his orders, they roamed the wood, but found nothing.

Thereupon Smart reflected: "If Spike-Ear here were killed, then we should all be nourished for a few days. However, the master is kept from killing him by friendly feeling. In spite of that, my wit will put the master in a frame of mind to kill him.

After these reflections, he said to Spike-Ear: "Friend Spike Ear, the master lacks wholesome food, and is starving. If the master goes, our death is also a certain thing. So I have a suggestion for your benefit and the master's."

"My good fellow," said Spike-Ear, "make haste to inform me, so that I may unhesitatingly do as you say. Besides, one earns credit for a hundred good deeds by serving his master."

And Smart said: "My good fellow, give your own body at 100 per cent interest, so that you

may receive a double body, and the master may prolong his life." On hearing this proposal, Spike-Ear said: "If that is possible, my friend, my body shall be so devoted. Tell the master that this thing should be done. I stipulate only that the Death-God be requested to guarantee the bargain."

Having made their decision they all went to visit the lion, and Smart said: "O King, we did not find a thing today, and the blessed sun is already near his setting." On hearing this, the lion fell into deep despondency. Then Smart continued: "O King, our friend Spike-Ear makes this proposal: 'If you call upon the Death-God to guarantee the bargain, and if you render it back with 100 per cent of interest, then I will give my body.'" "My good fellow," answered the lion, "yours is a beautiful act. Let it be as you say." On the basis of this pact, Spike-Ear was struck down by the lion's paw, his body was torn by the wolf and the jackal, and he died.

Then Smart reflected: "How can I get him all to myself to eat?" With this thought in his mind, he noticed that the lion's body was smeared with blood, and he said: "Master, you must go to the river to bathe and worship the gods, while I stay here with Meat-Face to guard the food-supply." On hearing this, the lion went in to the river.

When the lion was gone, Smart said to Meat-Face: "Friend Meat-Face, you are starving. You might eat some of this camel before the old master returns. I will make your apologies to the master." So Meat-Face took the hint, but had only taken a taste when Smart cried: "Drop it, Meat-Face. The master is coming."

Presently the lion returned, saw that the camel was minus a heart, and wrathfully roared: "Look here! Who turned this camel into leavings? I

wish to kill him, too." Then Meat-Face peered into Smart's visage, as much as to say: "Come now! Say something, so that he may calm down." But Smart laughed and said: "Come, come! You ate the camel's heart all by yourself. Why do you look at me?"

And Meat-Face, hearing this, fled for his life, making for another country. But when the lion had pursued him a short distance, he turned back, thinking: "He, too, is despicable creature. I must not kill him."

At this moment, as fate would have it, there came that way a great camel caravan, heavily laden, making a tremendous jingling with the bells tied to the camels' necks. And when the lion heard the jingle of the bells, loud even in the distance, he said to the jackal: "My good fellow, find out what this horrible noise may be."

On receiving this commission, Smart advanced a little in the forest, then darted back, and cried in great excitement: "Master! Run, if you can run!"

"My good fellow," said the lion, "why terrify me so? Tell me what it is." And Smart cried: "Master, the Death-God is coming, and he is in a rage against you because you brought untimely death upon his camel, and had him guarantee the bargain. He intends to make you pay a thousand fold for his camel. He has immense pride in his camels. He is near at hand."

When the lion heard this, he, too abandoned the dead camel and scampered for dear life. Whereupon Smart ate the camel bit by bit, so that the meat lasted a long time.

(From the Panchatantra)

That Sri Lanka is spiralling ever deeper into an economic quagmire of the worst scenario is no secret. Inflation is out of control, money is becoming literally nothing more than bits of paper, and there seems to be no coherent policy to battle the country's economic troubles. To put it simply, the people are hungry. What is surprising however is, the optimistic data being printed out by the reel by the Central Bank and the Department of Census and Statistics. These departments use indicators such as the Gross National Product, Per Capita Income and Household Income and Expenditure Survey. These are however far from indicative of the real ground situation as the data gathering methods employed to compile such statistics are seriously flawed. Firstly, owing to the ongoing war,

statistics cannot be obtained from the entire country, and taking into consideration the massive disparities in wealth distribution between the Northern And Eastern provinces which are beleaguered by the conflict and the rest of the country, the statistics thus collected are not only flawed, but grossly misleading. For example, the per capita income worked out from the national income accounts is deceptive because it includes the income earned by both government and non-government institutions, which does not however filter down to the general public in any meaningful form, while the Household income and expenditure survey (HIES) since it does not take into account the population of the country in its entirety, is lacking in essential data.

Therefore a word of caution seems to be in order. While economic data and statistics is often more or less representative of the real economic ground situation in many countries, sadly, the same cannot be said for Sri Lanka. Politicisation, due to the Government's inherent need to look good at least on paper, while failing miserably in practice, has made the arena of census and statistics at best a comedy and at worst, a tragedy. The need of the hour is for an independent data gathering organisation to be formed, or an existing institution invited in to adequately represent the country's economic situation, and for this organisation to work without undue let or hindrance, so that the wool is no longer pulled over our eyes.



By Muttukrishna sarvananthan
Principal Researcher
Point Pedro Institute of Development,

Per Capita Income: real or phantom?

Per capita income is derived by dividing the Gross National Product (GNP) of a country by the total population of a country. Per capita income is an important yardstick for determining the development stage of countries, viz. low, lower middle, upper middle and high income. There are different income brackets used for the foregoing categorisation of countries by different international organisations over time. According to the latest categorisation of the World Bank, countries with USD 905 or

less per capita income per year are defined as low income countries, between USD 906 and USD 3,595 are defined as lower middle income countries, between USD 3,596 and USD 11,115 are defined as upper middle income countries and over USD 11,116 are defined as high income countries. In 2007, Sri Lanka had a per capita income of USD 1,608 per year, which means it is a lower middle income country.

Per capita income determined by the above method is misleading, because it is worked out at current market prices. That is, Gross National Product (GNP) at current prices (Rs. 3,538,630 million) in 2007, which is called the nominal GNP, is divided by the total population (20 million) in 2007. This gives an annual per capita income of Rs.176,932 (USD 1,608) and monthly per capita income of Rs.14,744 (i.e. average income per person per month) in 2007

If we use the GNP at constant (2002) prices (Rs.2,208,137 million), which is called the real GNP, the annual per capita income in 2007 was

Rs.110,407 (USD 1,004) and monthly per capita income was Rs.9,201 (i.e. average income per person per month). This is the realistic measure of per capita income because it takes into account the rise in prices, i.e. inflation.

Furthermore, according to the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) undertaken by the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) during 2006/2007 the mean per capita income per month was only Rs.6,463 (i.e. the average income per person per month) and the median per capita income was only Rs.4,043 (i.e. 50% of the population in Sri Lanka received less than Rs.4,043 per person per month)

All the foregoing figures pertain to most parts of the country, but not the entire country. There are, of course, district-wise variations in the above figures. The HIES was conducted among a representative sample of households in 19 out of 25 districts in the country. All the

If indeed we take the latest poverty data emanating from the HIES for granted, then why is that nearly 50% of the Sri Lankan population is receiving the poor relief payment of the Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme whilst only 15.2% of the population is deemed poor?

five districts in the North and Trincomalee district in the East were not covered by this survey. Therefore, it does not cover the entire country. Sri Lanka's national income accounts also do not fully cover the LTTE controlled areas in the North.

There are disadvantages and advantages of HIES over the national income accounts. Since HIES is a representative sample survey it does not cover each and every household in the country, which is a disadvantage. The advantage of HIES is that it covers the informal economy as well, in addition to the formal economy. In the case of national income accounts it covers only the formal economy, and informal economy is not captured. Therefore, we could argue that the national income accounts is an underestimation of the actual income of the country.

The per capita income worked out from the national income accounts is deceptive because it includes income of institutions as well (government, non-government, private, etc), which may not necessarily filter down to the household incomes. In contrast, HIES captures solely the income and expenditure of households, which is the real disposable income of households and by extension individuals. Hence, significant part of the per capita income derived from the national income accounts is ghost income as far as households and individuals are concerned, which is reflected in the significant discrepancy between per capita income derived from the two sources, viz. HIES and national income accounts (a'la Table 3).

Poverty of Statistics

The latest HIES 2006/7 reveal that only 15.2% of the Sri Lankan population is poor a dramatic drop from 23.0% in the last HIES 2002/3, which is unbelievable given the galloping inflation since mid-2006 and international experiences in poverty reduction. The regional headcount

poverty indices are also untrustworthy because, accordingly, Eastern Province (10.8%) has the second lowest incidence of poverty after the Western Province (8.2%) (see Table 4). That is, while 15.2% of the Sri Lankan population was deemed poor in 2006/7, in the Western Province only 8.2% and in the Eastern Province only 10.8% of the population was deemed poor. Besides, according to the HIES 2006/7, Ampara (10.9%) and Batticaloa (10.7%) districts had the lowest incidence of poverty after Colombo (5.4%) and Gampaha (8.7%) districts which is again unbelievable.

The Eastern Province poverty incidence data is very misleading because the HIES was not undertaken in one of the three districts in the province, i.e. Trincomalee. Besides, HIES does not cover the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in welfare camps who are the most poverty stricken people. Further, I am curious to know how the provincial and district poverty lines in the East were worked out, because for the past 17 years the DCS has not collected consumer prices in the Eastern and Northern Provinces that is essential for determining the district and provincial poverty lines. If indeed we take the latest poverty data emanating from the HIES for granted, then why is that nearly 50% of the Sri Lankan population is receiving the poor relief payment of the Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme whilst only 15.2% of the population is deemed poor?

Conclusion

Until mid last year (2007) both the Central Bank (CB) and the DCS used to prepare the national income accounts and most of the times it has been the case that DCS growth figures were higher than that of the CB. Presumably due to this fact the CB has entrusted sole responsibility for compilation of national income accounts to the DCS. Due to the above noted surprises in the poverty figures derived from the HIES it is high time to make the collection of socio economic data independent of the

government departments and ministries which are susceptible to political interference. The Central Bank, which is statutorily supposed to be independent of the government, has become a pawn in the hands of the government under the present Governor. DCS being a government department is even more susceptible to political manipulation.

For example, I have serious doubts about the fourth quarter 2007 GDP growth figure (7.6%). My doubt is compounded by the negative net remittance received (USD -63 million) during December 2007, according to CB data, which is unusual because usually remittances are high during December due to the festive season. Fudging of economic data appears to have become part and parcel of the development strategy of the present government. Inflation data is another key suspect in the phantom growth figures churned out by the DCS and the CB. For example, compilation and dissemination of the Sri Lanka Consumer Price Index (SLCPI) was discontinued after November 2007, because in November 2007 the point-to-point rate of change in inflation in terms of the SLCPI hit a record 26.2%, and was replaced by the new Colombo Consumer Price Index CCPI (N) (2002=100). Moreover, there was no official announcement of inflation data in terms of the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI 1952=100) for the month of April 2008, reportedly because it hit almost 30%. Why is the government hiding the economic reality of the country from the masses?

Due to the foregoing apprehensions, it is high time to entrust the collection and dissemination of socio economic data to an independent authority like the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in India and Great Britain. People of this country cannot trust the socio economic data of the DCS and CB because they appear to be subjected to politicisation.

REACH OUT TO THE MINORITIES

By K. Godage

As is well known fighting a war without good intelligence is like fighting blindfolded. Almost two years ago it was suggested to a very high official of government that the government introduce 'Community Policing, in Wellawatte, Kotehena and Wattala --- three areas generally inhabited by our Tamil citizens. I also informed the official that there was a report to government by an Irish Police expert Fleming, on the subject, and also that the Japanese had this system (the Koban or local Police post) in their major cities where the Police befriended the people and made crime prevention easy. It was pointed out that if the Police reached out to the people they in turn would feel that to ensure their own security they should keep the Police informed of any suspicious activity in their residential areas. The official's reaction was "it's a great idea, I shall speak to high authority and implement the concept".

The official was told that we could arrange for the Buddhists and Hindus to have common 'pujas' at Bellanwila or at the Kovils in temples and bring the two communities closer. "Great idea" was once again his reaction but after two years "the great idea" appears to be dead in the water. There is no question at all that unless we reach out to the Tamil people living in our midst we shall not be able to counter terrorism in the city.

A majority of Sinhala buddhist do have faith in Hindu deities. There is hardly a Buddhist temple in the country which does not have a 'Devale' dedicated to the deities God "Vishnu" and God "Skanda". For

instance at the Bellanwila Temple there are shrines dedicated to God Skanda, God Vishnu, God Ishwara, Goddess Paththini. One has only to visit the Hindu Kovil at captains garden on a Saturday to see the Sinhalese far outnumbering the Hindus attending the "Nawagraha Pooja". There are always shrines dedicated to the benign Vishnu, The powerful and benevolent Kandaswamy or Kartikiyan as he is known in South India or Kataragama deiyo by his Sinhala name (he is undoubtedly the most popular of them all); there are also other Gods, Ganesh (the guardian deity of the NCP), Saman (the guardian deity of Sabraganuwa) and Goddesses Pattini, Lakshmi, Saraswathy and the much feared Kali, considered the Goddess of destruction in Lanka and also worshipped as the Goddess Durga in North India where she is considered a benevolent deity. Hindus consider the Buddha as the tenth avatar of Vishnu and the Buddhists consider him to be the protector of Buddhism.

Visit Kataragama, Bellanwila, Kuppiawatte temple near Ananda College, the Lunawa temple and one would realize the extent to which the Sinhala buddhist has assimilated Hinduism. Development of Seela, Samadhi and Pragna does not serve the practical purpose to acquire wealth health and prosperity in any tangible form here and now. The 'Sinhala Buddhist' is very much a believer of the Hindu Pantheon. It is only that they worship the same Gods but at different temples or places of worship. The only place where they jointly worship is at Kataragama, where the shrine has

in fact been taken over by Sinhala Buddhist Kapuralas or priests who officiate over the 'poojas'.

As stated earlier the God of Kataragama is undoubtedly the most popular of all the Hindu Gods adopted as their own by the Sinhala Buddhists; they flock in their thousands not only in August for the festival in honour of the God but on a daily basis seeking his protection and favours from him, they dance the 'Kavadi' and even walk on burning embers to repay vows.

Yes we the so-called Sinhala Buddhists have much in common with our Tamil brethren; it is only the language. The Sinhala Only Act shut them out of economic opportunity and that was indeed the beginning. We need to work with them to end this insurrection.

As stated earlier In Japan there is a Police post with two constables at the top of every street they visit the people living in the area~ befriend them and see where they could help and the people respond to them. The Police may be a law enforcement agency but unlike the Services they are expected to work with us citizens and relate to the community. There is no question that preventive action is the need of the hour, and this is possible ONLY if our sources of Intelligence is good and we therefore need to address this matter on an urgent basis.

It is 25 years since what has often been described as pogrom of 1983. It was this horrible crime that has created the Tamil Diaspora consisting of almost seven

hundred and fifty thousand which today singularly supports the LTTE insurgency both financially and mobilizes international support for the effort despite the terrorism of the LTTE. We have and are still paying a heavy price for the sins of a few racist supremacists. Let us first accept that every Tamil is NOT a supporter of the LTTE --- there are thousands people who may like or dislike Mr. Anandasangaree but who share his commitment to seek a negotiated settlement by peaceful means.

Let us reach out to them to make them feel secure. Without a hearts and minds approach to the minorities we cannot crush the insurgency. In this regard it must be realized that our fellow Muslim citizens who live amongst us should also not be alienated; I accuse Muslim leaders too of not reaching out adequately to those who have been affected by this conflict. For example it is now 25

years since thousand of Muslims were evicted from the Jaffna peninsula by the LTTE. They are still living under horrible conditions in Puttalam, and neither their own leader nor the garrulous politicians nor the government has relieved them of their misery. The same could be said for the Muslims who suffered from the Tsunami in the Eastern Province.

Let us be proactive, reach out to the Tamil people living amongst us who have made the south their home and have no interest whatsoever in living in Prabhakaran's Eelam



Quality seed paddy

A LOOMING SHORTAGE

-Karunaratna Gamage.

Farmers of most parts of the island have faced immense hardships as a result of the scarcity of seed paddy for them to sow in this yala season. The Department of Agriculture attributes this scarcity to the damage caused to the harvest by the heavy rains during the last 'maha' season. Laboratory tests have revealed that most of the samples obtained from farmers registered for seed paddy were not fertile and it has become a problem for the Department of Agriculture too, when providing good quality seed paddy to farmers.

150,000 bushels reduced to 50000 bushels

The quantity of seed paddy produced in each season in Polonnaruwa which is one of the front line seed paddy producing districts in the island, is said to be 150,000 bushels

approximately. This quantity is produced by the seed paddy farm owned by the Department of Agriculture situated in Kaduruwela, Polonnaruwa as well as by other registered farmers. Palugasdamana Multipurpose Co-op Society provides more than 100,000kgs out of this quantity in each season to farmers of the area. T.G. Weerathunga, Chairman, Multipurpose Co-op Society points out that however, the new institutes have not been able to produce even 50,000 kgs of seed paddy. He attributes this failure to unfavourable climatic conditions which prevailed in the maha harvest season.

"In every season we provide over 100,000 kgs of seed paddy to the farmers. Palugasdamana Co-op Society is in the fore front of supplying good quality seed paddy and the farmers of the area have confidence in us. But the heavy rains that prevailed in during the previous season became an intense threat to our production. As a result over several weeks the regenerative factor of paddy faded. Only 40% of regenerative paddy remains. Consequently we failed to

produce the amount of seed paddy expected in contrast to the previous seasons," said Mr Weerathunga.

Nearly 17,000 bushels of seed paddy are being produced each season by the seed paddy farm of the Department of Agriculture in Kaduruwela. But Chandima Jayasingha, Manager of the farm who is also the Assistant Director of Agriculture (seed) said that they have failed to produce more than 8,000 bushels of seed paddy for this season. They also face immense problems when providing the amount of seed paddy required by farmers for this season.

According to Mr. Jayasingha as a solution the Department of Agriculture has decided, to purchase a certain quantity of seed paddy by identifying varieties from private cultivators whose harvests have not been adversely affected by rains. These purchases will be carried out after the relevant samples have been duly examined. He said a sum of Rs. 300,000 has been earmarked for this purpose



T.G.Weerathunga



Chandima Jayasinghe



R.P.Upali

and one kilograme of Nadu is expected to be purchased at Rs. 40/= per kg .and Samba at Rs. 42/50 per kg.

The severe scarcity of seed paddy prevailing in Polonnaruwa, one of the front line rice and seed paddy producing districts, has badly affects the other part s of the island as well.

Good quality seed paddy.

It is well known that the use of low quality seed paddy has been a major reason for the drop in harvest that we experienced recently. According to R.P.Upali, Deputy Director of Agriculture (expansion), it is only 20% of the total farming population that are engaged

in the cultivation of paddy approved by the department. "Countries such as Japan and Korea have been successful in obtaining very satisfactory harvests in consequence of using 100 % good seed paddy," Mr. Upali said.

scarcity may be inevitable

The damage caused by the rains may result in scarcity of food within the country along with an increase in the price if rice as well.

The only solution to the food crisis at present is to uplift the paddy cultivation in the country. The farming community claims that the consequences of the eruption of problems such as a scarcity of seed paddy in an

era which needs to explore new ways to uplift the production of our staple food may come in the guise of empty ears of corn instead of so called golden ones.

Fishing in troubled waters

Some agricultural organisations have resorted to capitalise on this opportunity of a paddy shortage by selling paddy to farmers at rates between Rs. 1,400/= and Rs.1,500/= per bushel. What is unfortunate is that the farmer does no have a powerful hand to take action against those who exploit them despite the fact that there are so many personalities who hold ministerial positions in agriculture.





Displaced caged in camps at

MANNAR

Melanie Manel Perera

According to Government statistics, about a quarter of the population in the Mannar district comprising mostly of Tamils and Muslims, have been displaced. The residents have faced many a hardship due to the civil war which has claimed a history of twenty five long years. Of the five district Secretariat divisions, three of these divisions are under governmental control and two are within terrorist controlled areas.

Due to the heavy fighting, travelling to Mannar is difficult and is permitted to those who are able to prove their identity. In April this year a group of clergy of the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist congregations and two laymen from the South entered Mannar. The following is what each of the participants gathered from their visit.

The participants were Father Sarath Iddamalgod, Baddegama Samitha Thero, Father Sathivel, and Rukshan Fernando, Coordinator, Law and Society Trust.

Father Sarath Iddamalgod of the Anglican council involved in organizing the trip said the foremost objective was strengthened by a Buddhist monk joining the trip. "Those soldiers of the army who could not go home to celebrate the Sinhala New Year were overwhelmed with joy to see a Buddhist monk. Their happiness brought us some joy

too. Except for one or two soldiers, most of the others spoke to us courteously."

They said due to stringent inspection by the forces those who enter Mannar are directed to the register. There are two access routes to Mannar. The A-30 Vavuniya-Mannar route and the A-14 Medawachchiya-Mannar route.

"We travelled from Colombo to Medawachchiya by train. Permission is not granted to any vehicle arriving from the South to travel further than Medawachchiya. A Father from there had come to escort us. After travelling for one hour, we reached the first Army checkpoint, that is the Kattaadampan Army check point and they informed us that we could not be allowed to travel further. They told us that, any one who is not from Mannar would not be allowed to enter Mannar. Although we decided to turn back, after discussing this issue for close upon two hours in the searing hot sun, we were granted permission to enter Mannar due to the intervention of the Mannar Bishop's Residence.

Alone at the Check point.

"There were several people apart from our group. Some labourers who had come with the idea of finding jobs in Mannar had to turn back. There was also a woman who had come to

visit her husband who was working in Mannar. However she too was not given permission and remained at the Checkpoint, wondering what she could do, and was left alone."

During their three day tour, the group met refugees who had been displaced from Arippu and Silawatura areas as well as residents of the Manthai West area, residents of Mannar, representatives of the fishing and business communities, chief organizers of local and foreign non-governmental organizations, Mannar sector Catholic clergy and the Mannar Government Agent.

Apart from the town of Mannar, they toured the Naanattaan, Pesalai Kalimoddai areas and met the displaced people living there as well. "Most of the people in the Kalimoddai camp were those who had arrived from LTTE controlled areas. They had reached Mannar in boats. Those who arrived had been sent to this camp named Kalimoddai by the Army," said Mr. Fernando. Adding that the camp was infested with poisonous snakes and posed a threat to the people in the camps as no such medical facilities existed in the area.

Young children who are acquiring an education

"We met a number of young children who were doing higher studies and also studying at universities. They were worried that their education had been disrupted due to the



Rev. Fr.Sathvel



Rev. Fr.Sarath Iddhamalgoda



Ven.Baddegama Samitha Thero

“People who live in refugee camps are imprisoned, economically, politically and socially. These camp dwellers are tired of all the pressures they have to face. These sufferings are not reported to the Government. Today, innocent people in the camps are affected mentally as well as physically. All their hopes and plans have been dashed and only despondency remains,” says, ex-parliamentarian Baddegama Samitha Thero.

from 8 am – 4pm. But, what the fishermen told us is that, even though they do go to the deep sea at in the morning there are no fish to catch. The reason being that, although the fishermen are banned from going to sea at night, Indian trawlers come to our seas and catch the fish.

Tired of all the pressures

“Another law that has been laid down for the fishermen, is that all the boat engines have to be handed over to the Navy camp by 6pm. These boats are in the custody of the Navy until the following morning. These fishermen stated that, the fish they catch have to be taken through several Army Check points and at each and every place they are subject to a thorough inspection and as they do not get sufficient ice and time spent checking usually leads to spoiling of the fish on a large scale,” said Father Sathivel.

“People who live in refugee camps are imprisoned, economically, politically and socially. These camp dwellers are tired of all the pressures they have to face. These sufferings are not reported to the Government. Today, innocent people in the camps are affected mentally as well as physically. All their hopes and plans have been dashed and only despondency remains,” says, ex-parliamentarian Baddegama Samitha Thero.

The venerable thero said, that soldiers have been trained for battle and not to attend to welfare work. They do not have any training regarding welfare activities in camps. If soldiers are appointed for this, they should be provided with some training.”

war. We also met, at the camp, teachers as well as government employees who had not even received their salaries. At the same time we met, fishermen and paddy farmers whose livelihoods had been destroyed by being restricted to the camp and unable to earn any sort of an income. We also met a young woman who was engaged to be married. Although the dates for the wedding had been fixed the bride was not allowed to leave the camp.”

Mr. Fernando revealed that, several people at the camp arrived at Government controlled areas, from Tiger controlled areas, with the objective of living a productive life, placing faith in the promises that certain people made to them, but now they are disgusted of living and being imprisoned in these camps and had they known that they would have had to live in camps like this, they would never have left. “It is quite understandable that what these people want is not to be penned in like this in a camp but to live with their relatives in various places. What they require are not dry rations, but the ability live in freedom,” Mr. Fernando said.

Destroyed hopes

More than 4000 people who live in the Naanattaa camp, have been displaced due to an operation launched in the Musali area during September of last year. It was revealed by the camp dwellers, to the group that twelve civilians had lost their lives during these operations and that although security forces had promised them, before the commencement of the operation, that they would be able to go back to their homes within two or three days, now 7 months have elapsed and they are still living in the camps.

Fishing is the main livelihood of those in Mannar. The group from the South had met with representatives of the fishing community from Mannar as well as Pesalai and exchanged opinions. Anglican Father Sathivel who joined the trip commenting on the plight of the fisherman said, “These fishermen face a number of problems. The most serious problem is that they have been prohibited from going to sea at night. Even the large net drag type of fishing has been banned. They are permitted to do their jobs, only in boats which have an engine between 10 and 15 horse power. The other problem is that they are allowed to fish only



“My uncle, grandfather and grandmother died after consuming “kassippu”. When my uncle died he was 24 years old. My Grandmother was 42 and my Grandfather was 45 when he died, and because of this I do not drink,”

Feeding an addiction

Ravichandran - Ingiriya

Families living in Ingiriya driven by poverty turn to illicit liquor as a means of surviving.

The quality of life for the 40,000 people in and around the estates of Perth, Anduru, Raigam and Anduragala in Ingiriya are nothing to brag about.

In some homes as many as five families including the married children live in the same house. These people have 10 or 12 children. They manage their daily expenses, on the money they earn by working on the estates and also by working as labourers.

Most of the parents and even the children in the area are addicted to illicit liquor - kassippu which has plagued the lives of those in these families. While children in these estates suffer from malnutrition, the

majority of the men and women have been reduced to walking skeletons.

The children languish at home without any schooling and follow in the footsteps of their parents, and become accustomed to consuming alcohol and resort to stealing plantains or coconut from the nearby gardens and sell them to earn money.

Having not attended school and being unable to write R. Shivarani (33) says, “I am married for the second time. The previous man died after drinking illicit liquor. Most people here are not legally married. I pluck tea at the estate while my husband plucks coconuts, to earn money. My husband has two children from his previous marriage. We cannot send them to school because we have no birth certificates for them. I have a child too who has a birth certificate.”

Ravanan Pushpalatha (29) is Shivarani’s sister she too is uneducated as well and claims they are unable fall asleep at night, unless they consume kassippu.

“It was our mother who taught us to drink,” she says. “Now, we cannot do without it. My elder sister and I both go to work on the estate. If we do not drink a little in the morning, we cannot pluck the tea leaves. I have not married legally although I have a spouse and three children. The children live with his mother and he works as a labourer.

Although A. Madhuraveeran lives amongst these people he is someone who does not consume illicit liquor.

“My uncle, grandfather and grandmother died after consuming “kassippu”. When my uncle died he was 24 years old. My Grandmother



was 42 and my Grandfather was 45 when he died, and because of this I do not drink," says A. Madhuraveeran. "I am legally married. I have not been to school either and can't read. However, I do have a national identity card. My son is three and a half years and we are considering sending him to a Sinhalese school."

Speaking on the plight of the people in Ingiriya, Secretary, M.G.G.F. Dharmasena said, "I accept the fact that there are many without national identity cards living around the estates. Once, the Police and the Grama Sewa Officer put into effect a special process to issue temporary identity cards, I will make arrangements to issue permanent identity cards." He said, "the Police who have to take action regarding the increasing menace of alcohol in the area. We have totally suspended those who come to office to carry out their duties, after consuming alcohol. The

Samurdhi Authorities have teamed up with the Social Welfare Division and are in the process creating awareness among these families."

Chief Police Inspector, Chameera Thilakaratne, Ingiriya OIC said many raids were conducted in connection with this matter, in conjunction with the national drive to reduce alcohol consumption and taken into custody persons as well as articles and produced in Courts.

"To a great extent poverty and ignorance are the main causes for the consumption of illicit liquor. As the hawkers of "kassippu" get children to participate in their business activities, the children unknowingly get into the habit of consuming liquor. A plan is needed to deal with this situation. Birth certificates or related documents should be prepared for these children of school going age and they should be directed to a vocational training institution.

If a methodical plan is not followed it is possible that this will become a massive social problem in the future," he said.

Adding that the attention directed towards the protection of these children have been overlooked to a great extent by their parents. This has also become one of the reasons that the children are on the wrong path.



"To a great extent poverty and ignorance are the main causes for the consumption of illicit liquor. As the hawkers of "kassippu" get children to participate in their business activities, the children unknowingly get into the habit of consuming liquor.



The need for the 17th Amendment to the constitution

Melanie Manel Perera

Groundview' held a discussion on the implementation of the 17th amendment with a few academics among those were senior lecturer of the Sinhala studies division of the university of Colombo Venerable Agalakada Sirisumana Thero, well known attorney S.G. Punchihewa and senior lecturer of the Colombo Joseph Vaz Theological Seminary, Rev. Father Reid Shelton Fernando.

Venerable Agalakada Sirisumana Thero



"The most significant period in the country's political history was when the Executive Presidency was created after 1978 during the era of President J. R. Jayewardene.

An executive president proposed through the 1978 Constitution, in the backdrop of a changing Constitution meant there was no possibility of implementing any permanent policies and also Members of Parliament, on their personal agendas changed groups as opportunists and as a result the

power of the Parliament weakened and there were instances when the Government collapsed.

In actual fact the executive presidency and the powers that come with it are good. However, we have to decide on what is good or bad and its suitability to the person who occupies the position. Of late, everything is being politicized far more than is required, through these powers. It is apparent that organizations which acted with integrity have been politicized as well. One example is the Police who have become a mallet in the hands of the politicians. The Defence Secretary is a close associate of the President. The Police and the armed forces have an important task in protecting the law and peace of the country, but have now begun to act according to his requirements.

The trust of the public has been taken away from the Police. It is the same with the Election Commissioner's duties. In actual fact, all the Election Commissioners who have held this office so far, have done their utmost to carry out their duties within this large election network successfully. We have a vast election network consisting of a number of polls such as, The Presidential Election, The Parliamentary Elections, The Provincial Council Elections, Local Government Elections. The

activities here should be carried out independently. When we look into the background of elections the need of an independent elections commission for the Elections procedures is extremely essential.

A constitutional council is essential especially, when the President and the Parliament, take decisions, against the opinions of the public and when the constitution has laid down laws, in a way so that the President's powers cannot be challenged and the public are left helpless. What we require is an independent constitution which can control and a constitution which represents every sector and one that can bring about a solution to the national problem.

Nonetheless, under a President who acts without any foresight and is power hungry, using his powers needlessly, the country could be dragged into a bottomless pit. Actually, this is why we needed a constitutional council to change this state of affairs. However the amendments which were prepared with the greatest difficulty were not built up. These are as yet to be implemented because of a fear that following the implementation there would be more of an opportunity for people to interfere in the powers of the President as well as the Parliament.

Reverend Father Reid Shelton Fernando



The main reason for discussing this issue is the limitlessness of the executive powers. The candidate who succeeded at the Presidential Election in 1994 promised that she would limit the powers of the executive presidency which was passed in 1978, making use of the two third majority that was received in the 1977 elections and bring about better governance. The then President promised that if she was elected to power, she would put "a full stop" to this executive system. However that was limited only to her word. The creator of this constitution which declared ludicrous statements to the fact that not only a change in gender cannot be brought about, knew full well that no leader in the entire world had the power accorded in this.

Hence, the Members of Parliament who understood the possible destruction that could be caused by this came forward to present

an amendment that would bring about an essential change. In 2001, this amendment was passed with the agreement of all. This was in effect until 2006. Everyone accepted the fact that there were shortcomings in it. The problem now is that the present government nor the opposition want to implement the recommendations included in this.

See, even the people who talk of a free and fair election do not want to implement the Elections Commission. All elections are conducted through the Commissioner General. When declaring the results of the 2005 Presidential Election, the Elections Commissioner made a request asking for the Elections Commission to be implemented. However, today in 2008, an election in the East was held under the same Commissioner. If we review the background since the commencement to the end of this election, a fact that can be well construed is that, if this Election was held under an Elections High Commissioner that it would have been far more impartial.

Implementing these amendments which have been passed with the agreement of all, immediately, is what is essential today, in order to put a stop to the situation regarding, retaining of undated resignation letters of the Members of the Parliament and that there is power exceeding the power of the law and to limit such powers of the President. Today, no one is taking into consideration the difference between the Executive and the Constitution and do not act accordingly. Everyone is interfering with the Constitution and making the country unstable, from every angle. Therefore, how unfortunate is it that, the independency of the Constitution has been dishonoured? In reality, if the proposed amendment is implemented properly, the political intervention in the field of administration will decrease. Even if the appointments

made by the President are given to appropriate people, they are appointments that are made through close contacts of party politics. However, although, it is within this amendment, that the chief appointments of the government are made by the President, it would be a requirement that these appointments have to be ratified by the Constitutional Council. So, it will not be possible for the President to appoint anyone of his own will. The President will have to make appointments under the recommendations of this group, subsequent to assigning the power which is centered around one person to another Council.

At the same time, the President's powers which have been substantiated by the Constitution of 1978 can be restricted. It becomes apparent that the impunity the President could also be limited. By creating independent commissions and councils and by appointing suitably qualified people, the opportunity will arise for them to carry out their duties in keeping with the law as well as the fact that promotions cannot be given according to the discretion of the politicians and being evicted from their posts all of a sudden. Here, I can recall, that during the past, when appointments irrelevant to the law were made, certain persons rejected the appointments. We should respect and value that. This is the perfect time, for intellectuals in this country to get together and stand up and be heard, so that the amendments are implemented.

Attorney - S.G. Punchihewa

This 17th Amendment was submitted because of the corruption and the irregularities that were on the rise, within the then administration. Since the authorities had not been disseminated to each department in a formal manner and also due to the fact that there was no state administrative structure where the authority was shared and where the ability/right for the appropriate

people to implement their authority was not in existence. Instead, what took place was that for a long time the system of authority remain in one place. Through this, Executive authority, the Constitutional authority and authority of the Courts are all manipulated from one place, the opportunity for the general public to raise legal questions in connection with this, as well as the freedom to do so is lost to them.

Subsequent to the dialogues that took place among various people inclusive of political parties, newspapers and scholars it came to be highlighted that what was required in connection with this issue, was an amendment to the constitution. It was through this that the 17th amendment came to be. Through this amendment, it was proposed 07 commissions would be appointed. Namely, the Independent Elections Commission, Commission for Human Rights, Bribery and Corruption Investigation Commission, Public Services Commission, Police Commission and Commission to determine restrictions.

A Supreme Court judge, at that time, was appointed as the High Commissioner of Elections but as this person was of a political belief not in keeping with her political views, the former President objected to the appointment. This was a serious violation of the Constitution. Anyhow, this commission was not appointed at the time and the present Elections Commissioner, implemented some of the powers of the Election Commission during certain elections and that should be appreciated. If the Independent Elections Commission had been established, it would have been considered as the head of the Commission, the High Commissioner of Elections who would have made all the decisions regarding the period when the elections should be held, what manpower would be contributed,

the number of vehicles, the manner in which the media should conduct themselves during the time of an election, etc., and everything else in connection with the election. However the disaster of not establishing an Independent Elections Commission was seen through the Elections in the East. Several serious allegations were made regarding this election. However, it would not have been necessary to make such accusations had an Independent Elections Commission been established. The High Commissioner would have had the power to determine, the number of armed forces and Police personnel who would be deployed for the Elections and if there were armed persons how to disarm them etc., and implement these procedures. The other fact was that, the National Identity Card which was deemed to be compulsory was not taken into consideration and as a result a number of election malpractices took place. Representatives at the polling booths were chased away and certain anomalies took place as well. All of these factors would have had an impact on the final result and this was the retribution for not having an Independent Elections Commission.

The Human Rights Commission is also another Commission of timely value. During the past, this Commission, held inquiries into arrests and disappearances but their deduction was that no one had disappeared and that there were no complaints regarding disappearances. But, the question arises as to whether people would go to lodge a complaint, if the people who go to make complaints disappear. The devastation of not implementing the amendments have spread throughout the country into every field and the general public have no voice and democracy is trapped in a disgraceful place. Not implementing these amendments, proves very well that there is no proper governance and rightful administration within the country.

Towards Creating a viable agricultural sector

During the last five decades there has been a considerable emphasis on the Agricultural sector. Though it appears that there is less of an influence of the agricultural sector in the Gross Domestic Product; agriculture represents one fifth of the total output. One third of the work force is employed in the agriculture sector. Yet, the relative importance accorded to non plantation agriculture is a dismal picture. According to the present trends, there is a crisis in the local agriculture sector that calls for a revolutionary change to remedy or arrest this decline. More emphasis should be paid as to how the present form could be transformed back into export oriented ventures, and to identify the necessary financial requirements to do so.

Agriculture in Sri Lanka consists of small scale production units, where more emphasis is on paddy cultivation. Human resource are in the form of family labour and not as paid labour. Production is mainly for home consumption and for the local market. There are no technological advance and sometimes, out dated technology and modes of production are adopted. Enterprise management practises are inefficient as it is often carried out by a single individual.

The above mentioned transfor-

mation, could be implemented through a programme based on a study and recommendations submitted to the government in 1995 by a team of local scholars and representatives from the World Bank.

Market and marketing problems are the main constrains facing the sector. There are a large number of small scale producers. A monopolistic or an oligopolistic nature is seen on the demand side. Hence, every purchase is made with the maximum benefits being enjoyed by the traders; which is not passed on to the consumer.

During the last few decades successive governments have had welfare oriented attitudes towards the public but not as an authoritative one intended to keep pace with advances in the field of science.

Land alienation and other allied services pertaining to agriculture were given more as welfare assistance, under the close supervision of the government; as these were very sensitive public issues. Politicians and other officials in Sri Lanka felt that it was vital to solve problems pertaining to agriculture since contribute to the economic development of the country. Thus, the importance of developing the agricultural sector was accepted in principle as both a political and social imperative. The establishment of colonies in the dry zone was done with the fullest support of the government.

The political aim of this venture was to create a self supporting land owning class in the agricultural areas. Some were of the view that a large number of people in the upcountry lost their traditional land holdings due to the unfair land policies of the colonial period. During this time Marxists disliked the creation of a successful land owning class. Accordingly, the accepted opinion during the last few decades was that priority be given to the welfare of the rural community than formulating land policies.

Colonisation schemes, land extension schemes, distribution of land among the middle class, distribution of marginal lands, youth colonization schemes, highland colonization and establishing cooperative farms etc. are some of the projects which were undertaken. Equality was a criterion that was considered in identifying problems of the people specifically in agricultural development during the post independent era. The concept of using personal discretion in taking decisions pertaining to the economic development of agriculture is more suited only for intensive economic undertakings rather than a participatory approach.

A large extent of land was distributed during the 1930 to 1990. One hundred and five irrigation development projects were completed by 1997. During this period the area under cultivation increased by 104 percent. By 1993 - 114,666 families were settled in a land area

of 508,372 hectares.

The Paddy Lands Act of 1958 was an example of government policy which did not contribute to the agricultural development as expected. Though, this act gave legal security to the tenant cultivator; even at present, the traditional land tenure system is in existence. This is due to the close relationship that existed among the paddy land owners and the tenant cultivators. This step which was implemented as a welfare policy measure, prevented the agriculture sector becoming a completely a market oriented enterprise.

Under these conditions the agricultural sector experienced a capital shortfall. The lands which were acquired by the Government under the land reforms policy were less productive. The Corporative Production Institutes which were formed at the governments' initiative were unsuccessful, due to poor management, excessive intervention by the government and the use of unskilled labour etc.

The government that came into power in 1977 was of the view that agriculture development needed an entrepreneurial approach. Yet, government policy was to allow the continuation of the existing pattern. Incentives in the form of tax concessions were offered to the private sector, but it did not attract many investors as expected.

Steps were taken to hand over the establishment of Settlement

Schemes once again to the private sector; but this too was unsuccessful due to various political reasons. The government which came to power in 1994 brought about policy changes for this sector; but failed to prevent the monopoly in the agricultural marketing system, and to rescue

the producer and the consumer from the clutches of the middleman. Even with the attempts of the government to develop the infrastructure; it failed to attract the expected number of new comers to this industry. The government also failed to develop a suitable land market.

According to the agricultural census of 1982, 31% of lands of Sri Lanka are under cultivation. Around half of this extent is under major export crops. Thirty one percent is under paddy and the balance 13% consists of other crops. Accordingly, exactly half of the land area is under non planta-

tion agricultural activities.

In 1952, the extent under paddy cultivation was 479,000 acres. This was increased to 930,000 by 1994. Between the period of 1950-1990 the area under irrigation facilities increased by 68 percent.

Table 1

Material Gross Domestic Product and the Relative Component of Labour

Year	Contribution of the Agriculture Sector in the Gross Domestic Product	Employment component in Agriculture of Total Employment
1963	32.1	52.9
1973	27.8	50.1
1981	24.6	45.9
1990	19.9	44.7
1993	17.6	43.7
1994	17.3	34.6
1995	17.0	36.8

Table 2

Composition and Growth of the Agriculture Sector

2

Crop	Percentage of Annual Growth			
	1970	1980	1985	1990
Tea	12.5	8.8	9.7	11.6
Rubber	6.9	4.5	3.0	2.8
Coconut	15.9	10.6	13.5	12.7
Paddy	28.0	29.1	23.9	24.8
Other Crops	36.9	47.0	49.9	48.1
Ag. G.D.P	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In 1963, the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product was 32.1 %. That figure reduced to 17.0% in 1998.

Table 3
Annual Growth of the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product -1960-95
 (At current market prices)

Period	Percentage of annual economic growth	
	Agricultural Gross Domestic Product	Gross Domestic Product
1960-65	2.4	3.9
1965-70	3.8	5.2
1970-77	1.8	3.1
1977-84	4.1	5.5
1985-95	1.7	4.8

During the last two decades, there has been a rapid decline in the agricultural productivity in the country. Relative to the total Gross Domestic Product, Agricultural Gross Productivity is at a very low level.

There are a number of basic problems that can be identified due to the policies adopted in the development of agricultural lands; which were done on a welfare basis. Accordingly, all benefits from agricultural lands go to the farming community, though a large portion of the input cost is born by the government. A system in the form of a tax levy should have been introduced by the government. The government finds revenue from productive sources to meet these expenses. This distorts the normal marketing system. Crop diversification too does not occur in a normal manner, as paddy is considered as the main crop.

Non availability of a labour force with a fixed wage structure and the high risk involved in paddy cultivation and the non availability of a proper land market due to the prevailing legal system, which further strengthens pre-capitalistic systems ; has prevented the development of the agricultural sector to a desired level.

Though the material income

has increased, there is a relative decrease of the income of the persons involved in agriculture. A drop in the output per unit area is also seen due to continuous cropping without any steps being taken to sustain the soil fertility.

Though it is observed that the use of organic fertilizer and biotechnology is more beneficial for small land holdings rather than the advanced technology and agro chemicals; a reasonable progress has not been made in this regard.

There are shortcomings in the methodology and process adopted to protect the small scale farmer from the fluctuations prevailing in the market for their inputs and outputs. Markets and marketing are the main constraints facing the agricultural sector.

Though most of the children of the rural farming communities do not choose farming as their vocation, there is a tendency for the land holdings to get divided into smaller portions. This too is a result of the small scale agriculture not becoming a capitalistic enterprise. According to the Upcountry Peasantry Commission Report 85% of the aswaddumized lands in Matale, 77% in Badulla and 75% in Nuwara Eliya have undergone fragmentation by 1997. This is due to generations being dependant on the original land allocations.

According to a critical discussion it was inferred that agricultural lands should be allowed to form into larger extents. It is necessary to encourage the formation of Cooperative farms, Company lands and to have land markets so as to assist the establishment of larger farms. A single individual is expected to take decisions regarding all aspects of enterprise development, which are practically impossible; as he will not be competent in all the areas concerned.

Paddy production has increased significantly during the last few decades under the agricultural development programmes. But the cost of irrigation and colonisation projects is at a level which exceeds the benefits that reaped from an

increase in paddy production. Thus the cost of the investment and also the productivity is poor and it is necessary to bring about a total transformation of the local agricultural sector.

It is clear that the present problems in this sector are due to the undue emphasis that was made to bring in social benefits to the rural masses, disregarding the essential economic considerations. Firstly, this sector should be made economically viable. Although these steps could be politically disadvantageous they must be taken for the advancement of the sector.

(This article is based on a research paper by Dr. O.G. Dayaratna Banda- Senior Lecturer of Economics - University of Peradeniya)





UNICEF supported Tangalle Water Supply Scheme completed

Water is the source of all life. Millions of years ago, the first forms of life slowly crawled their way out of immense oceans and began to adapt to life on land, in much the same way, human beings spend their first months ensconced in water, and in testament to these facts, two thirds of the entire world is made up of water. How then is it possible that in today's world, with all our development, modern conveniences and luxuries, that so many of our country's people have little or no access to safe drinking water, and tragically, that so many are dying due to this very cause.

In Hambantota and Tangalle, for example, people trek many kilometers daily in search of water. Many of them resort to drinking unsterilised water from roadside taps or streams, water which from time to time unbeknownst to them carries the deathly cholera or hepatitis diseases.

It is in view of this that UNICEF, which works in over 150 countries in the areas of water supply, sanitation, health care, education and nutrition among others has successfully collaborated with the National Water Supply and Drainage Board to initiate and construct several schemes for the provision of a sustainable supply of safe drinking water to tsunami affected families in the tsunami hit areas of Hambantota, Ampara and Tangalle.

The National Water Supply and Drainage Board's Hambantota Regional Manager, Mr. RKLD Soysa, says " .. I have been here for the past nine years and know fully well the travails of the people because of the severe drinking

water problem. The hardships they had to undergo are inexpressible..... with women sometimes having to trek e almost kilometer in search of water.... and now, after 54 years, thanks to the tsunami, it has become possible to provide safe drinking water to the people living in these areas – Seenimodera, Kadurupokuna, Hunapuruwa, Unakuruwa, Polommaruwa, Palapotha, Pallikodawa, Sitin amalawa, Kambussawela, Tangalle and Beliatta AGA's divisions.

Construction work of the Tangalle Water Supply Scheme in the South of the country has recently been completed and tests have proved successful, while the Tirukkivil Water Supply Scheme is making steady progress.

The 18 month Tangalle project, costing nearly US dollars 10 million is due to be commissioned shortly. The project entails increasing the current capacity of 2500 cubic meters to 6500 cubic meters thus enabling a total output of 9300 cubic meters per day. 52,000 persons will soon have access to safe drinking water and this number is expected to increase to 65,000 in 2025.

The main components of the project include : the rehabilitation of existing treatment plants and construction of a new Treatment Plant at Nalagama, ensuring the extension of the existing water supply to Nalagama, Palapotha, Beliatta and Hathbodiya areas, construction of four new reservoirs at Palapotha, Hathbodiya, Nalagama, Tangalle town and Beliatta. Developing an additional water source by building a new bund at Navayanvila to

supplement the raw water supply. The laying of 42 kilometers of pipeline for transmission and distribution is also included.

Tangalle is a tsunami hit area with a limited number of water sources to provide safe drinking water. The existing facility has been in operation since 1953 and provides an intermittent supply of water less than 24 hours a day. The lack of fresh water resources along the coastal belt has for many years been a major constraint in providing drinking water to the people of the area.

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Quality assurance

UNICEF works in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and progress from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water supply and sanitation, quality basic education for all..... boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.





Monaragala District

The Monaragala District is the largest district in Sri Lanka, with a land area of 7,133 square kilometres. It is one of the two districts of the Uva Province. The total population of the District is approximately 420,000. The Monaragala District is considered to be one of the poorest districts in Sri Lanka economically. The district population comprises 94% Sinhala, 2% Tamil, and 4% Muslim and other. Bibila, Monaragala, Madulla, Medagama, Siyambalanduwa, Badalkumbura, Wellawaya are the main towns in the district.

Economic Situation Report of The Monaragala District

Economy

In the Monaragala District, the majority of people depend on agriculture. Paddy is the main agricultural product, followed by vegetables and grain. The Monaragala District also grows and processes large quantities of cane sugar, notably in the Pelwatta area. The Pelwatta Sugar factory has provided many employment opportunities in the district. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture supports people working in plantations, and has enabled them to sustain their livelihoods, and to sell their crops at reasonable prices. Timber is one of the main natural resources in the district. Unfortunately, the majority of the timber – such

as teak – is transported direct to Colombo, and consequently industries like furniture-making, which are further down the value chain, are limited and undeveloped. Tourism is not a significant source of income generation in the district. Other than in agriculture, the workforce is employed in carpentry, and masonry, often on construction sites in Colombo. The district also has a considerable number of people who have joined either the Sri Lankan Army or Navy. Another segment of people are self-employed, and various cottage industries can be found in the district, although opportunities for employment in the private sector are negligible. Finally, there are a significant number of people

who work in the public sector. Banks and Hotels

Mostly government banks, such as the Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank, have branches in all the main towns in the district, while the Commercial Bank and Sampath Bank have branches in the Monaragala Town. Amongst the private banks, only Hatton National Bank has a presence in most of the towns in the Monaragala District. Loans have been granted to government servants, as these workers are able to offer the banks relative security on their investment, but have not been granted to many in the agricultural sector owing to the perceived higher risk of recovery. The Bank of Ceylon is an exception,



and has granted loans of 8% - 10% interest for self-employed people under a special scheme (the prevailing interest rate is around 25%). Hotel facilities are very poor in the District and very few good hotels can be found.

Recent Terrorist Attack

One of the worst incidents to take place in the district was the brutal attack by terrorists on innocent civilians at Helagama, Buttala. The attack was carried on 16th January 2008, and resulted in 27 civilians, including office workers, school children, and laborers, being killed. On the same day, five farmers were killed as the terrorists retreated back to the jungle. A few days after this incident, terrorists carried out another attack in Thanamalwila, in which five civilians were stabbed to death. These acts of terrorism have caused fear amongst civil society, and have had a negative impact on people’s lifestyles and outlooks. Currently, people are scared and reluctant to go into the fields to continue farming or to collect the harvest. This is indeed a huge economic blow as the harvest, mostly chille, corn and vegetables is ripe and ready for picking. However this rich crop remains unpicked as the cultivators still believe that terrorists are in the jungle, and the security forces had failed to find them. Shop keepers close their businesses by 5 o’clock in the evening. The reduction in economic activity has resulted in a decline in income and wages. The tourism industry, even though small, was severely affected after the incident. Schools were required to close in the week following the attack and many children remain hidden behind the bolted doors for their homes afraid to venture out to their schools.

Current Situation

The price of essential goods has risen during the past few years. This has had an impact on consumption levels, and on savings, both of which have declined. There is little support for the district in terms of INGO or NGO activity. ‘Gami Diriya’ is the only significant Non Government Organisation functioning in the district. The Government has invested in basic infrastructure, such as roads and electricity. A bus station and a shopping complex are being built in Wellawaya, and a District Secretariat Office is being built in Buttala. The Government has appointed Home Guard soldiers, in addition to security forces, to uphold security in the district. The Government has also distributed weapons to civilians as a security measure. The administration of the district has almost returned to normality following the terrorist incidents, although there are casualties still in the hospitals and schools are not yet functioning properly.

Key issues preventing economic recovery

- Lack of investment by the private sector
- Insufficient loan facilities granted to the agricultural sector
- Poor levels of education (and poor knowledge of English)
- Poor transportation and logistics

Potential Solutions

- Provide security for cultivators to harvest produce
- Urgent humanitarian assistance to victims of recent terrorist attacks
- Develop the furniture industry, as timber is a major resource in the district

- Increase the infrastructural capacity in the district
- Reduce the number of intermediaries involved in selling agricultural products
- Facilitate value addition for agricultural products, develop agro based industries and introduce market linkages
- More flexible banking facilities to support economic activities
- Investment in industry / factories to tap into the surplus labour pool

Conclusion

The majority of people in the district yearn for peace and a lasting solution to the ongoing conflict. The people in Monaragala District do not lead complicated or sophisticated lives; nor do they have great expectations or ambitions. Their lives are relatively simple, and their predominant wish is to see a peaceful country where everyone can live in harmony.

The Business for Peace Alliance member chambers island-wide express their solidarity with their counterparts in the Monaragala District, the Moneragala District Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and the Uva -Wellassa chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, who are facing a myriad challenges in their efforts to improve business and economy and contribute to a better life for the people of Moneragala.

The BPA appeals to policy makers, large scale business in the private sector and the international development organizations to look into the urgent needs of Moneragala and contribute pro actively to address these needs.

Compiled by the Regional Support Unit of The Business for Peace Alliance

Recognising the long term benefit and opportunity afforded by the programme, investment and donations have been received in terms of funding, and of people's time and expertise.



Mohammed Arshad who's now studying at St. Thomas College. Mount Lavinia getting instruction about the placement test

Unique scholarship programme for under privileged children

At the start of 2008, The Business for Peace Alliance (BPA) launched 'Learn & Lead', a pioneering scholarship programme designed to provide quality education to bright underprivileged children with perceived leadership potential from regions affected by poverty and conflict. The programme was established as a public service initiative in collaboration with a broad base of stakeholders, and steered by a Committee of eminent persons representing academic, civic, and commercial fields.

Working in close collaboration with regional Chambers of Commerce, educational authorities and schools, applications were sought from boys and girls who had recently completed their O/level studies in Anuradhapura, Badulla and Trincomalee. Applications were assessed by an independent committee against a common

set of criteria, including academic excellence, and attributes which separated out those children who might have the potential – with the right education, guidance and support – to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Following the initial short-listing, 21 candidates were invited to Colombo at the end of April for in-depth interviews with an acknowledged panel of educational experts. During the long weekend, candidates were shown round St. Thomas' College and Ladies College – the two schools of excellent academic repute, which have very generously agreed to participate in the programme and make places available for students – and met with the Principals and existing students. The applicants also participated in a broader itinerary of events, designed to develop a rapport between the group, and to prepare them for life in Colombo.

On the basis of the interviews, and a medical check up, a final six students – three boys and three girls from across the three districts – were selected for entry in the schools in May. As part of the programme, a comprehensive range of support has been provided. This includes the provision of Guardians – being local Colombo families, who are taking on the pastoral care and responsibility for the children, on behalf of their parents, during term time – groups of peer mentors within the schools themselves, to support the children adapting to and integrating into their new environment, and the provision of uniforms, books and other equipment necessary for the children to have all that they need on their first day at school.

The whole programme has been made possible through the extraordinary generosity of public and private organizations and individuals, both within

and outside Sri Lanka, acting through a sense of individual and corporate social responsibility. Recognising the long term benefit and opportunity afforded by the programme, investment and donations have been received in terms of funding, and of people's time and expertise. School fees have been raised through the generosity of private donors, of the Sri Lankan diaspora, and of international NGOs, whilst BPA is indebted to a range of individuals for providing support in kind – too diverse to name – without whom this programme could not have succeeded.

As this article is being published, six deserving children from less privileged backgrounds have commenced a course of study which will culminate in a first class education, and with the potential to go on and give back to their communities and their country in terms of intellect and leadership.

Regional business leaders visit Australia to network with biz community of Lankan origin

A group of regional business leaders of the Business for Peace Alliance (BPA), visited Australia recently on an economic development promotion mission, in order to address imminent social issues such as rural poverty and youth exclusion in Sri Lanka, amongst the business community of Sri Lankan origin in Australia. This visit was facilitated by International Alert.

The regional business leaders represented different geographical clusters in Sri Lanka and were accompanied by corporate businesses and other resource persons.

Considering that 51% of Sri Lanka's GDP is from Colombo and the balance 49% from the rest of the country, it is clear that greater

attention should be paid to the development of areas outside Colombo with active regional involvement. The private sector can play an important role to address such regional and structural disparities and to strengthen recovery capacities in all parts of the country.

The purpose of the visit was to network with the business community of Sri Lankan origin. Presentations and meetings were held in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

The visit has opened a window of opportunity for Sri Lankan business people living in Australia to forge trade links with regional business people in Sri Lanka. In addition, several Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of the business community in Sri Lanka were

presented as options for collaboration.

The BPA is collaborating with International Alert to carry this programme forward.





Residents who gave up homes for

Norochcholai plant left helpless and homeless

Text and Photographs –
Hiran Priyankara Jayasinghe

Electricity Board Engineer in charge of the housing schemes construction, accepted the fact that there were many shortcomings in the housing project and said higher officials should be contacted for a comment.

We donated our lands to the Thermal Power Station. But the Government cheated us," lamented the crowd who were gathered near the main entrance of the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant that was being constructed, in the scorching sun holding their children.

In March last year, the Government, relocated residents from the Naarakkaliya and Paniadiya areas in order to construct the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant. They acquired close to 300 houses and as a result they had to evict 68 families living in this area.

These people who were thus

evicted, had to be resettled in a housing scheme constructed in the Maampuriya, Nirmalapura areas, through the intervention of the Minister of Power and Energy, John Seneviratne.

The Electricity Board said the cost of each house was Rs.1.2 million. These houses consist of a living room, two bed rooms, kitchen and a toilet each. In addition, a well was also constructed on the land which was 20 perches in extent.

Likewise, every house was supplied with electricity. And each house was promised a television set and electrical home appliances. These people who were deprived of their

lands, were given a two acre land per family in an area in close proximity to Nirmalapura. However, the walls of the houses have begun to crack and the doors and windows are in a dilapidated condition.

At the same time, the officers in charge of this housing scheme had to replace the timber used for the roof of the houses with new timber as they were infected with termites.

Even the furniture provided has been built using a low quality timber and has been attacked by termites as well.

Last weekend when residents arrived to clear their lands, men who arrived in vans assaulted them and warned them not to return claiming ownership of such lands.





Sananayake Vishvanadan Lionel Lalitha Kalaivani Nageshwari Anthony

Subsequently, they began their protests at the front of the Norochcholai coal power plant. As the approach road in front of the entrance to the Coal Power Station was blocked for about three hours, vehicles entering and leaving the Power Station premises were unable to move.

Finally, the Officer-in-Charge of the Kalpitiya Police Station, Inspector Lakshman Ranwala Arachchi arrived at this location and following a discussion arrived at an agreement. **GroundView** also caught up with some of the areas residents who came out to protest.

Secretary of the Community Development Society of Daluwa, Maampuriya, Nirmalapura, Lourdu Maatha – Lionel Warnakulasuriya

"We moved out, losing all our houses and land allowing the

Power Station to be constructed believing that the Government will provide us with all facilities. However the houses that were constructed for us are in a very bad state.

Although we informed the authorities of the shortcomings of the houses, we have not yet received any positive response," he says.

Anthony Murdhas

"The Power Station acquired, more than 02 acres of my land with more than 200 coconut trees I had. But we received a land with only mountains of sand. It will cost more than two hundred thousand rupees to bulldoze the land. I decided to start clearing the land last week when a group of persons who arrived in a van, pulled me away and assaulted me. We face uncertain situation now," he said.

Ms. Kaleyivani

"We have not received any of the facilities that we were told would be given to us. In addition, the beds, tables and chairs that were given are infested with weevils. Its because the authorities are cheating us that we decided to protest at the Power Plant," she said.

Ms. P. Lalitha

"Although we lived at Naarakkaliya in cadjan thatched houses, we were happy. Today, when it rains, our houses get wet, as if we have been caught in a flood. The tiles that have been fixed to the roof are poor and the rain seeps in. In addition, the walls of the houses are cracked," she says.

Ms. R. Nageshwari

"There is no place to even follow our religious beliefs, in this housing scheme. So, we take part in religious activities in a small place constructed out of cadjan," she, says.

Kalpitiya District Secretary, M.H.M. Riyaldeen expressing his views on the situation said, "The lands that were given to these Nirmalapura residents belong to two District Secretariat divisions. That is, Kalpitiya, Mundalama. We have paid compensation for the land belonging to Kalpitiya and finalised the acquisition. However, we have not yet finalized the payment of compensation for the land at Mundalama. I feel that the previous owners of these lands, would have threatened the Nirmalapura residents. We sort out this matter regarding the land," he said.

Electricity Board Engineer in charge of the housing schemes construction, Mr. Bamunawala, accepted the fact that there were many shortcomings in the housing project and said higher officials should be contacted for a comment.



Medirigiriya farmers reap the benefits of home grown

BIO-GAS

Text and Photographs

Karunaratne Gamage

Amid the rising prices of fuels a group of farmers in Medirigiriya, Polonnaruwa, have found alternative means of fuel generation using raw cow-dung, hay and branches of leafy trees to produce bio-gas for their household needs.

The Mahaweli Authority has provided the guidance for the farmers on how to produce

bio-gas through a simple bio-gas unit constructed within the compound.

M.S. Polduwa (52) a resident of Viharagama who rears a few milk cows in order to supplement their income from paddy farming told us that the bio-gas unit has made things easier in the kitchen of the house.

Producing the gas

"Gas is produced by using the dung from the cattle shed," explains Mr. Polduwa. "Gas is available in order to enable us to use it for anything while cooking three meals. I earn an income from only two milk cows. I collect about Rs. 9000 once every 15 days. I get this amount in addition to the income made from paddy farming."

H.M. Yasandhawathie Kumarihamy (48) is a mother of one residing in Maha Ambagaswewa. She too, states that her daily activities have been

made so much easier due to the bio-gas unit that was constructed in the garden.

"Prior to this, we were only involved in paddy farming. Three years ago, the Mahaweli authority got us to join the project of rearing milk cows. Now, I have three good variety cows. It is about a year since we began producing bio-gas. Now, I do the kitchen work with ease, without getting spattered with soot and dirt.

M.A. Jayasekera (57), a resident of Yudhaganawa Irrigation works





Junction uses hay as the raw material for his bio-gas unit. And says, that producing bio gas for the kitchen is a very simple task.

“An eleven and a half foot deep pit with a nine feet diameter is constructed out of bricks. What is packed into the pit is about a ton or a ton and a half of hay, 200 kilograms of raw cow-dung, about 200-300 kilograms of giniseeriya branches. Another pit is required. It is in this pit, four feet deep with a diameter of seven feet, that the gas collects and builds up pressure. We obtain gas from this for a period of

eight to eight and a half months continuously without any problem. Then the decayed raw material is removed and it is re-filled. What is removed is also a very good organic fertilizer.”

Using gas was only a dream before this, for the farmer folk of these distant, deprived villages with many hardships in Medirigiriya. It is a cause for real pleasure to see that the gas cooker which was a tool of, the urban and partly urban dwellers’ kitchens, making work easier for the housewives of these farming villages.

“Now we have more than enough gas. We cook three meals and boil water and yet we have more than enough gas left over. We are now considering, earning an additional income through this gas, by preparing some foods, such as hoppers and string hoppers for sale,” said S.K. Amara (37).

A fertile garden plot at home using organic fertilizer

She also said that, she has set up a fertile



Polduwa



M.A.Jayasekara



Yasadawathi Kumarihami



S.K.Amara

garden in her compound, by using the organic fertilizer which is discarded from the bio-gas unit which uses raw materials such as hay, raw cow-dung and leafy branches.

“Around hundred plantain plants have been cultivated in the compound of the house. In the vegetable plot, there is almost everything including brinjals, bitter gourd, snakegourd, green chillies, long beans. We use only the organic fertilizer. We do not use any chemical fertilizer,” Amara, says.

It was Kumara Ubhaya Kalyana, the Resident Project Manager of the Medirigiriya Mahaweli Authority who told us that, of the cost of Rs. 35,000 to Rs. 40,000 required to construct such a unit, a large amount is borne by the Mahaweli Authority.

More than fifty percent of the costs

“We have promoted farmers to take to various sources of income in

addition to the paddy farming which is common in these areas. Especially rearing of milk-cows, cultivation of flowers, cultivation of subsidiary crops is foremost among them. It is about two years since we promoted the production of bio-gas. We specifically chose those farmers who were rearing milk-cows. We provided more than 50% of the cost required to construct a bio-gas unit through the Mahaweli Authority. Now, these people are successfully maintaining their bio-gas units. At the same time, there is a big saving and it is a pleasure to see that housework is done with ease,” Mr. Kalyana said.

Gas at a lower cost

In an era, where raw materials such as hay are going to waste and being destroyed in paddy fields, this effort by the farmers of Medirigiriya to produce gas at a very low cost for their domestic needs is an achievement.



Kumara Ubaya



SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH BUSINESS (SIB)

Alert Sri Lanka's Pilot Project with Regional Business Chambers

Social Integration through Business (SIB): Alert Sri Lanka's Pilot Project with Regional Business Chambers

As an important measure towards improving peace building capacities of the regional small and medium size business sector, Alert Sri Lanka is supporting Business Chambers to initiate CSR pilot measures to actively improve inter-ethnic and community relations within their respective districts. Such pilot projects can also be instrumental in increasing understanding of the peace building potentials of local businesses and to strengthen respective sensitization and training efforts on CSR by providing practical opportunities for Chambers to engage in this field. As the CSR concept is often difficult to conceptualize at the level of small and medium size businesses in the Districts, participants of an in-house planning workshop proposed the promotion of social integration through business (SIB) as the main focus of the program.

As such eight such pilot projects

are currently underway with few reaching completion. In order to facilitate the implementation of these pilot CSR measures, Alert is also conducting additional in-depth workshops with the regional Chambers to increase their understanding on CSR and peacebuilding. The events will also be instrumental to announce the availability of seed-money for small CSR pilot activities, and the opportunity of an award ceremony for the best CSR and peacebuilding ideas developed by the participating Chambers towards the end of 2007.

To enable implementation of the SIB pilot projects in a Conflict/context sensitive and sustainable way, a training on Institutionalising Conflict Sensitivity and Do-No-Harm principles to all SIB project implementers both at the regional staff level as well as at a higher level for the Boards of Directors are carried out simultaneously.

Promoting social integration and inclusivity through different activities from an integral part of the SIB project. The Following are examples of

such SIB activities.

Batticaloa: Bridging Ethnic Cleavages by Addressing Common Problems

Batticaloa is an eastern district with severely fragmented Tamil polity, that also challenged LTTE dominance, than in any other Tamil speaking area. The Muslim polity here has strained due to lack of proper leadership. The intercommunity relationships between the Tamils and the Muslims too has been affected severely. The SIB project here carried out by the Batticaloa chamber enables both Tamil and Muslim traders to come together and discuss the common issues faced by the traders such as taxation, ineffective communication with the local authority etc. In a deeply divided place like Batticaloa, this intervention will create a good interaction between both communities.

"Giving legal recognition to the small business," is part of the SIB work that is underway here. Batticaloa chamber initiated this project with the support of GTZ to empower the small entrepreneurs by

giving training and material support. This project formed around 15 nuclear groups in the district. Alert's SIB project in Batticaloa is supporting this effort by registering them. The chamber has successfully completed the preliminary work to register small business groups (nuclear groups) under the Company's Act, in its efforts to strengthen small scale business groups. Eventually, these small companies will become members of the chamber. This new inclusion has helped widen the chamber network.

The Batticaloa chamber's SIB project has also carried out one workshop with the participation of Muslim and Tamil traders to discuss some of the common issues that affect their business such as problems of taxation etc. Workshops of this nature were organized after a long time in Batticaloa as the business community remained divided deeply along the ethnic lines. This effort will also pave ways to bring small business into the chamber membership

Trincomalee: Expanding Chamber Services to Conflict Affected and Marginalized areas

The Trincomalee chamber, in the east, which is currently predominantly Tamil, has taken steps to extend membership to Sinhala and Muslim communities to promote solidarity under its SIB project. (The activities of Trincomalee chamber was limited to Trincomalee town area only before the initiation of the project).

In order to achieve this, the chamber expanded its

activities to Muttur, a Muslim majority area, to Kanthale a Sinhalese majority, to Kinniya and Kuchchaveli (where there is a mix of Tamil and Muslim traders). Some awareness raising programmes about the services provided by the chamber to business communities were carried out in those areas. Such activities are expected to positively impact on the Sinhala-Muslim membership. An improved relationship between the different ethnic groups that is facilitated through these workshops would allow for greater negotiation and conflict management opportunities when faced with precarious situations that threaten peace and security (as was the case in April 2007 when a market massacre took place).

Trincomalee chamber conducted 10 Workshop in conflict affected and marginalized areas to make a strong link with the traders' associations and business people in those areas. As a result of this project 53 traders outside Trincomalee town obtained the membership from the chamber.

Expansion of chamber activities has integrated businesses from all the locations. At the same time, people from different ethnic background have become members and were encouraged to become active within the various committees to promote inclusivity among different ethnic groups.

The above example shows the multitude and multi-dimensional ways in which the regional chambers have begun their involvement in regional CSR activities, many of which are oriented towards promotion of social integration

and peacebuilding.

Matara : Working Together with Local Academia

Matara chamber (in the South) has also launched a program linked to the Career Guidance Unit, Ruhunu University. This programme was intended to create youth and business dialogue. This opportunity enables graduating students to explore job opportunities with the private sector.

The Chamber here is working with the Ruhuna University (Conflict studies centre) on a research to identify factors that promote ethnic tension in the district. As the business community believed that the prevailing ethnic tension between the Sinhalese and the Muslims in this Southern District has a negative impact on the business the research carried out by the University attempts to understand the roots causes of region specific tensions.

The Research is almost reaching completion. University students who are involved in the research were trained on research methodology and survey methods, under this project. So far, two Focus Group discussions were completed and data is being analysed.

Through this project, both the Matara chamber and Ruhunu University understood the importance of working together. As the expertise of one institution can compliment the other (regional business and local academia). The chamber has initiated a few activities with the Management and Arts faculty to link graduates to employment opportunities in the area.

The objective of the project is to educate rural youth on available opportunities and direct them towards the state owned vocational training institutes that are most of the time offered free of charge. It has been identified that the lack of knowledge about these institutes and their services is one of the reason that prevent rural youth from accessing them. The project also provides career guidance to youth.

**Wayamba (Kurunegala):
Addressing Social Problems**

This district which is centrally located records highest unemployment rate in Sri Lanka. Wayamba also has one of the highest numbers of youth employed in the armed forces. The Wayamba Business Chamber through an SIB project has intervened to address this social issue through its social integration project by initiating activities to provide alternatives so that business can convince youth from Wayamba that viable employment is available should they develop the right skills. This project works with Vocational training institutes that are in the district and youth from rural areas with limited economic opportunities.

The objective of the project is to educate rural youth on available opportunities and direct them towards the state owned vocational training institutes that are most of the time offered free of charge. It has been identified that the lack of knowledge about these institutes and their services is one of the reason that prevent rural youth from accessing them. The project also provides career guidance to youth.

So far 3 such awareness programmes were conducted with the participation of 120 youth. This project also provided an opportunity for Wayamba chamber to build a strong relationship with the vocational training institutes.

The project activities aim to build bridges between youth and vocational training institutes which is a necessary social integration activity here.

Badulla: Facilitating the Pursuance of Education

The Badulla chamber, for example is promoting an educational programme under this category along with capacity development training for chamber members. As support for education is also a compelling need in this hill district, that is most backward in education, the business chamber is working closely with a local organization Modern Educational Establishment for Guruthalawa Area (MEEGA) to better prepare GCE (O/L) students to face the examination by conducting number of crash courses. This will enable the Badulla chamber to build a good relationship with MEEGA which is liaising with many educational institutions in offering courses that are otherwise not available in schools. Both MEEGA and the Badulla chamber are in the process of planning projects that address some of the challenges faced by the students from the rural village and plantations.

**Vavuniya and Mannar:
Addressing the Environmental Pollution**

The SIB project in Vavuniya and Mannar (two northern districts) address the issue of

environmental problem in the town area. Huge amounts of garbage disposed of every day by different traders and households in Vavuniya and Mannar towns was causing social disharmony and much distress. Among them, the waste dumping of small and medium hotels was significant.

Vavuniya and Mannar chambers' under the SIB project facilitated dialogue between hotel owners and farmers in their respective districts and collaborated with some government departments such as the Divisional Secretariat and Pradeshiya Saba to address this environmental issue. This is another case in point where successful outcome in terms of government and business sector activities linkage was possible in addressing a social issue.

This process has provided farmers with the knowledge to convert waste products into fertiliser and has also helped them immensely in their own vegetable cultivation where the fertiliser is used.

One of the successful outcomes of the project is the linkage created between the business chamber and the government institution in the two districts. The Vavuniya and Mannar chambers work closely with their respective local environmental authority and local government bodies in their town under this project to carry out the garbage disposal issue successfully.

Practitioners Course on Social Integration through Corporate Social Responsibility

For the first time in Sri Lanka, Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre (SPARC), Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo offers a three-months' Practitioners Course with a Social Science Perspective on Social Integration through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), beginning January 2008. The certificate programme analyses and evaluates complex factors contributing to good CSR practices of private sector industries, especially in the Sri Lankan context where more focused Conflict Sensitive CSR is expected to give a new dimension aiming particularly to support companies' contribution towards social integration through CSR for social stability and peace building. It also aims to introduce various components which comprise socially responsible behaviour of companies to positively respond to Sri Lankan social conflicts such as structural discrimination, regional disparities, gender discrimination, youth exclusion, poverty etc in a conflict/ context sensitive way. Its aim is also to provide a framework for external and internal CSR best practices, to constructively

engage in planning and evaluating actions and impact as per Sri Lanka specific CSR needs.

The programme is particularly relevant for those working at CSR Units of corporate sector organizations to develop expertise and a career in managing critical CSR issues in this fast-growing field in the corporate sector. It has specific relevance to those seeking to develop their own CSR programme for their companies.

The certificate course consists of 5 modules including presentations, written reports, critical reflections, lectures, tutorials, panel discussions and workshops coupled with directed reading and research based assignment on 'Planning of Strategic CSR for Social Integration and Peace Building.' Certificates will be awarded to successful candidates who have attained stipulated level of participation in lectures and completed the assignments based on field work.

Some of the main areas covered in the course are as follows: concepts and understanding of CSR; principles, values, ethics of CSR; CSR and peace building; CSR and social integration: Best practices: selected examples

on CSR and social integration from Sri Lanka; Conflict Sensitive CSR; Social Issues of CSR in Sri Lanka; Planning of Strategic CSR for Social integration and Peace Building etc.

Faculty comprises eminent national and international academics and guest lecturers. This certificate course is conducted by the Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre (SPARC) at the University of Colombo. The Centre was established in 2004 in the Faculty of Arts. The Centre undertakes research, training, teaching and advocacy in areas related to Social Policy and Social Development.

Course details can be obtained from

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Prof. S.T.Hettige Director, (Hony), SPARC, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo and Dr. Markus Mayer, Country Director, International Alert and Prof. Nira Wickremasinghe, Dept. of History and International Relations, addressed the participants at the inaugural session.



First batch of student participants from CSR units of leading companies at the inaugural session held at the Faculty Board Room, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo in January 2008

UNICEF supported Tangalle Water Supply Scheme completed




Samiru Udayanga, 8 yrs old, crosses a temporary bridge over the stream that feeds the Tangalle Water Plant. Samiru's father was killed in an industrial accident 6 months ago. One worry the boy will not have is access to fresh clean water.

Sedimentation tanks begin to fill at the new treatment plant



Treated water tank at the new treatment plant



A group of boys gather water from a well in Tangalle. In just a few short weeks, this time consuming and costly daily chore will just be a memory.