

RAPID CONTEXT ASSESSMENT



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The month of January was exceptionally bad for governance and the rule of law. The government ignored the Supreme Court order to reduce the price of petrol. This unprecedented situation was interpreted by many as a declaration that the executive branch was above the law. But an alternative view point is the Court should have limited itself to the strictly legal issue leaving pricing and taxing decisions to the executive. Thus this may have helped demarcate area of responsibility between the executive and the judiciary

With the killing of the Sunday leader Editor Lasantha Wickramatunga media freedom has been dealt a body blow. At least eight journalists have fled the country. Fear and self censorship have become the norm in the media. Even the international news channels BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera as well as the German and Swiss Ambassadors have drawn criticism from government sources for "unfair comment."

The government banned the LTTE and is lobbying the UN to impose a ban. The government captured the LTTE administrative capital of Killinochchi and gained full control of the A9 road that links north and south of the island. Later in the

the LTTE. Three LTTE suicide bombing incidents were reported from the south during the month.

Unofficial reports suggest that there have been significant civilians casualties in the areas where the fighting between the security forces and LTTE is continuing. The fighting has generated at least 200,000 IDPs who are in need of humanitarian assistance. They are boxed in a "safe zone" the government has declared. However, LTTE cadres are bound to spill over leading to fighting that makes the IDPs vulnerable. The government has prepared camps in Vavunia and Mannar to accommodate the IDPs. The INGOs stand ready with resources totally Rs 1.9 billion to assist the IDPs.

In search operations in the south, people, some Tamils, continued to be detained on suspicion for lack of proper identification and documentation. The LTTE had abducted 16 children in the Wannu but had released them after three days.

On the economic front the drop in the rate of inflation to 10.7% in January was the best news. Tight monetary policy and low oil prices helped. On the flip side the nation's foreign reserves had dipped to about two months worth of imports and may be even less. Ex-

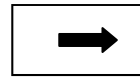
ports are pressing the government to devalue the rupee to about Rs 130 for one US dollar to maintain the competitiveness of Sri Lanka's exports. The government is resisting the demand because it would impact adversely on the cost of living. The Central Bank has launched a campaign to attract capital from expatriate Sri Lankans. The Supreme Court abandoned the case on the oil hedging agreement after the government ignored its order to reduce the price of petrol. The Central Bank claims that the hedging agreement is bad in law. However, one of the banks involved, Citi Bank, is seeking international arbitration. If the agreement is enforced the country will have to pay a sum between Rs 30 billion and Rs 80 billion.

Over 4000 cases of chikungunya have been reported in Sri Lanka from mid-December 2008 through January 2009. An aggressive campaign to combat the diseases in the districts where it flared up appears to have been successful. The dry conditions that reduced water levels in the hydroelectricity reservoirs broke with some rain in the latter part of the month. A national policy on water supply and sanitation aimed at supplying piped water to 40% of the population is under discussion. Legislation to make recycling mandatory is also under consideration.

INDICATOR REFERENCES

No change	→	Slightly improving	↗	Slightly deteriorating	↘
Significantly improving	↑	Significantly deteriorating	↓		

NATIONAL ANALYSIS - 28/12/2008 - 28/1/2009



POLITICAL CONTEXT

The victory in Vanni and the capture of lost territory has boosted the moral of the Security Forces and the popularity of the government. However, the security Forces and the government should not sit on their haunches and think that they have won the worst since the LTTE is capable of anything and nowhere in the world has a terrorist outfit being totally annihilated to the extent the LTTE has been decimated.

Be that as it may, the country started the New Year with military victories, humanitarian catastrophes in the Vanni and elections. By way of elections first it will be the Central and North Western followed by the Western Provincial Councils while Uva and Southern Provincial Councils will come later

and in May a Parliamentary or General Election.

February 14 ironically is Valentine's Day and it will be the date on which elections to the Central and North Western Provincial Councils will take place. March is billed to be the date for the remaining three Provincial Councils excluding the Northern Province which will be held later.

India has stepped in calling for a political solution and that the military solution will not be the end of the ethnic conflict. India is also concerned about her security and a huge humanitarian crisis that they will have to manage. However, the LTTE will not give up, based on past behavioral-patterns of the

LTTE, they will temporary transform themselves into a guerilla outfit and operate in small groups hitting vital targets.

More problems, the government's disregard to court orders are described as an "arrogant" act by no lesser institution than the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. The Judiciary, Executive and the Legislature are three levels of authority but if two – the Executive and the Judiciary – are at logger heads, it sets in motion a bad precedence and weakens the Legislature.

GOVERNANCE



ABOVE THE LAW

The rule of law, which is at the basis of an ordered and civilized society, received a severe blow due to the governments non-compliance with the Supreme Courts decision on the reduction of fuel prices. For weeks there had been public anticipation about what the governments response would be. The fact that the government deliberately chose not to respond positively to the court ruling has sent a signal that the rule of law has broken down at the highest level of society. Even prior to this confrontation between the executive and judiciary, the government had been at the receiving end of much criticism for failing to address the practice of impunity in cases involving political killings and human rights violations. Now in defying a Supreme Court ruling, the government has placed itself above the law, with no institution able to check its power.

Democratic governance depends on systems of checks and balances to keep those who hold power accountable for their actions. The media, which functions as one such check on the power of government, has also been crippled by a spate of violence against it in the past few weeks. The burning of MTV television station, the assassination of the Sunday Leader editor, Lasantha Wickrematunge, and the knifing of Rivira editor, Upali Tennekoon, have instilled the fear of further attack in many leading journalists. It is reported that as many as eight journalists have fled the country in the aftermath of the recent attacks. The government itself has admitted that close upon 50 journalists have either been killed, assaulted or abducted since 2006.

In particular, the killing of Lasantha Wickrematunge was death blow to media freedom to take up the issues of corruption in gov-

ernment and human cost in war as he did. His long survival as a journalist, while breaking his stories and expressing his views without inhibition, gave rise to an illusion. This illusion was that there were indeed broad parameters of freedom within which the media could function. Now with his slaying, that illusion has been shattered. There is fear and self censorship. The impunity with which journalists have been assaulted and killed, and the absence of any progress in police investigations, has eroded the morale of journalists to write according to their conscience. As a result, the willingness of the media to be a watchdog, especially of the government, is much reduced. Good governance is the loser.

SECURITY



With the intention to declare Sri Lanka as a unitary state on February 04 at the celebration of Independence Day, the humanitarian operations were speeded up during the period. President Mahinda Rajapakshe also the Commander-In-Chief announced year 2009 as the "Year of Triumph over Terrorism", and would ban the LTTE if they failed to release civilians who are trapped in the Wannii.

Government did ban the LTTE on 7th January citing the main reason for using civilians as human shields and endangering their lives. It was enforced under the sections of the

Public Security Ordinance – so promoting encouraging or aiding and abetting the LTTE are offence – adding that anyone found guilty under these regulations would be sentenced to 20 years imprisonment." This is the third time the LTTE was banned by the GoSL, 1st ban was in 1978 and then in 1998 after an attack on Dalada Maligawa on January 25th. Ban was lifted on 5th September 2002 following Ceasefire Agreement. 31 countries have banned the LTTE. Following the announced the government decided to lobby at UN to ban the LTTE with the world body in keeping the Security Council resolution on International terrorism.

The biggest battlefield victory for the Security Forces was when LTTE administrative capital Killinochchi was captured at the beginning of the year. Government troops entered Killinochchi town from 3 different directions following the capture of Paranthan. Task Force 1 from the North and 57 division troops from the south and west. Paranthan is the most central intersections of the A-9, connecting 4 important locations and there are Killinochchi to the South, Pooneryn to the West, Mullaitivu to the East and Elephant pass to the North. Killinochchi district covers a land area of approximately 1237 Sq.km. LTTE's military, Political, Intel-

ligence, Police Headquarters, Courts, and Banks, Hospital were located in the Killinochchi town. The other biggest gained was when the Government forces took total control of A-9 after 23 years with the capturing of Elephant Pass. A-9 road links the North and the South of the Island.

As at January 26th LTTE is restricted to a 20x15 Sq.Km area with the liberation of Mullaitivu Town, it was the 59th division troops reached the town first. LTTE so far have lost 5 key bases and they are Viduthalathivu, Pooneryn, Killinochchi, Elephant Pass and Mullaitivu. Army Commander said that to restrict LTTE to said area have been possible all because 80,000 joined the armed forces since launching of humanitarian operations in July 2006. Defence watch charged the Rajapakse regime that due to govt.'s failure to wage the war properly that since 2005 November more that 3000 soldiers have died and more than 11,500 injured and hospitalized. So far Govt. Forces have captured 6 airstrips belonging to LTTE.

As the Eelam war IV is reaching its last phase attacks targeting the civilians by the LTTE has gone down ,only 3 incidents were reported. First incident was when a suspected LTTE suicide bomber tried to penetrate to Civil Defence Security check point in Wattala killing 8 and injuring 18 including

seven CDF personnel causing major damage to the camp, second incident was suicide bomber blast outside the Air Force Headquarters in Colombo killing 3 people injuring 37, second as when a bomb exploded near the Red Mosque at second cross street, Pettah injuring 3 people.

Despite the state propaganda on the policy "Zero tolerance of civilian casualties" it is far from the reality. Due to regular Air strikes by the Sri Lanka Air Force as a support to the ground forces targeting LTTE targets, civilians are getting killed and injured every day caused by bombing and shelling. As stated in the D.B.S Jeyaraj column Government Agent Ms Emelda Sukumar within a week she herself has seen about 100 people have died, more than 300 have been injured.

Unconfirmed reports stated that on January 22nd SL Air Force has carried out air attacks on targets in the Safety Zone in other words Fire Free Zone demarcated by the SLA. While the army accusing the the LTTE for moving in to the safety zone.

It is not only civilians trapped in the Wannai that are vulnerable but also the media personnel. The latest victims were Sunday Leader Lasantha Wickrematunga who was assassinated by an unidentified gunman

while traveling in his car to work and attacked on Rivira Editor Upali Tennakoon. These were followed by when an unidentified gang wreaked havoc at MTV/MBC television and radio station inflicting heavy damages running in to millions.

There were reports that LTTE abducted children from church-run orphanage. According to Ministry of Defence that they have abducted 30 children above 12 years of age to train as child soldiers and suicide bombers, later they have released 16.

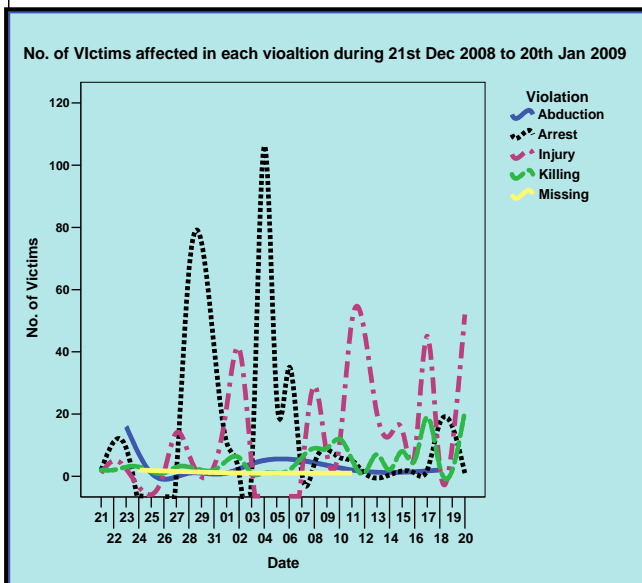
The Opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe defended and claimed that the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement had paved the way for the recent military victories by the Security Forces. He further said that they successfully carried out operations with the weapons brought down after the signing of the CFA. Army Commander Lt.Gen. Sarath Fonseka says " it is shameful " to say when anyone try to connect Karuna Amman leaving the LTTE with recent success of the SL Army on the battlefield against LTTE. Karuna Amman has apparently left LTTE during Peace talks brokered by Norwegians.

Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime. - Ernest Hemingway

HUMAN RIGHTS



Human Rights analysis for the period - December 21st 2008 to January 20th 2009 - The chart below focuses on violations as reported in various news sources available in print media and electronic media. (Daily Mirror, Virakesari, Thinakural, Sudar Oli, Uthayan)



SOME HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE PERIOD

- Lasantha Wickramatunge was assassinated
- 2 Tamil men were shot dead in Monaragala
- MTV attacked
- Re -egistration in Colombo (Srilankancitizens.lk)
- 52 IDPs Came from Mullaitivu to Mannar

Date	Arrest	Abduction	Killing	Injury	Missing
21-DEC-2008	2	.	2	1	.
22-DEC-2008	.	.	2	5	.
23-DEC-2008	9	16	3	.	.
24-DEC-2008	.	.	3	.	1
25-DEC-2008	.	1	.	.	.
26-DEC-2008	.	.	1	1	.
27-DEC-2008	1	.	3	14	.
28-DEC-2008	66	1	3	7	.
29-DEC-2008	.	1	2	.	.
31-DEC-2008	.	.	2	.	.
01-JAN-2009	11	1	5	22	.
02-JAN-2009	1	.	6	41	.
03-JAN-2009	1	4	1	4	1
04-JAN-2009	106	.	1	.	.
05-JAN-2009	25	.	1	.	.
06-JAN-2009	35	.	2	.	.
07-JAN-2009	1	.	.	1	1
08-JAN-2009	4	.	9	29	.
09-JAN-2009	.	.	9	7	.
10-JAN-2009	6	.	12	10	.
11-JAN-2009	5	2	.	50	1
12-JAN-2009	1	.	1	.	.
13-JAN-2009	.	.	7	20	.
14-JAN-2009	.	.	2	13	.
15-JAN-2009	.	.	8	15	.
16-JAN-2009	1	.	5	7	.
17-JAN-2009	2	.	19	45	.
18-JAN-2009	17	2	3	3	.
19-JAN-2009	.	.	2	10	.
20-JAN-2009	1	.	21	52	.

- 350,000 people have been displaced due to war and floods in Wannai.
- Neth FM Radio station Mr. Mahinda Roopasinghe received death threats
- 74 Families were moved to Menikfarm from Vanni.
- 15 Civilians came to Visvadamu from Vattakachchi 28 Refugees from Vavuniya arrived Arichamunai Raameswaram
- One woman was abducted in Vavuniya
- School Principal of Vavuniya Ganesapuram Maha Vidyalaya was shot.
- LTTE abducts 16 children from church-run orphanage
- LTTE Police person was arrested in Poonagala estate in Bandarawela.

Arrests & Abductions

During the reported period 295 suspects were arrested in search operations on suspicion and lack of proper identification papers or not having a valid reason to be at the given location. According to the sources highest numbers of suspects were arrested in Colombo (202). After the Wattala Civil defence force check point and Slave island Air force head quarters attacked many suspects were arrested in Colombo, 106 people were arrested on

04th Jan when the Re-registration for Northern and Eastern province people. Highest number of search operations and Arrests were from Colombo and second being Gampaha were 40 people were arrested in search operations.

During this period there is a decrease in the reported number of abduction. On Dec 23 LTTE abducted a group (16) of children from an orphanage run by a Catholic Church in the Wannai and released them few days later, Mannar Diocese Vicar General Rev. Fr. Victor Soosai told Asia News. The children, aged around 12 were reportedly taken away to be trained as child soldiers by the LTTE.

02 Sinhalese were abducted in this time period in the Monaragala District, the last report of missing persons being of 03 Farmers reported in Oct 2008.

03 persons were reported missing in Colombo and 02 from Jaffna District in Jan/ Feb '09.

Killings & Injuries

According to Tamil newspapers 62 people have been killed in Mullaitivu and 20 in Kilinochchi Districts respectively. Killings due to Shelling and Air strikes. Injured 202 and 65.

During the reporting period Colombo re-

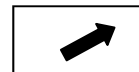
corded 25 injuries in 02 bomb explosions which occurred in Wattala and Slave Island. 40 people were injured due to shell attacks east of Vadamarachchi .

A group of 57 civilians including men, women and children fleeing from uncleared areas were fired upon at Kanchipuram. Seven of them including two children were killed and four injured in the shooting. In Batticaloa District Violations have decreased compared to previous time periods. 03 Tamils have been killed by unknown individuals and 03 villagers were hacked to death when suspected LTTE cadres attacked a group of villagers, 03 villagers were also injured in Monaragala District. It's been two months since the last report of HR violation in the Monaragala district..

• Killing of Individuals	26
• Deaths due to explosions	78
• Killing carried out against specific person	1
• Deliberate killing non combatant	7
• Recovered Dead bodies	20

(Further info and statistics could be obtained from hrac1@cha.lk)

ECONOMIC CONTEXT



In January 2009 the principal good economic news was a 28-month low of 10.7% in the rate of inflation during the month. The Central Bank's tight monetary policy and the fall in the price of oil helped. However, celebration is premature. The Oil prices will go back up when the global economy recovers. There is no sign of long-term fiscal discipline. The Central bank reduced the its penal rate of interest charged on reverse repurchase transactions by 200 basis points to 17% to ease bank credit. In any event, in 2008 prices rose by over 20%. That has reduced people's real wages and made the country's exports less competitive.

In January most attention was focused on the country's external finances. The Central Bank claimed that the country had foreign reserves worth about \$2.6b at the end of November 2008 that would finance about two months' imports of the country. However, official data that the Bank itself has released suggest that the reserves were a little over \$2.0 billion only. Today reserves are likely be even lower.

Import restrictions of the 1970s type are not economically feasible today to conserve reserves. On the contrary last month two senior Central Bankers publicly advocated a liberalization of the capital account.

Depreciation of the rupee by about 15% to

20% to make a dollar worth about Rs130 is another option. Exporters want it but the Central Bank is resisting the idea because it will increase the cost of living. This is a shortsighted policy for two reasons. First, because sustaining the export sector is vital for long term growth. Second, postponing depreciation by supporting the rupee with short term measures such as foreign borrowing only postpones the day of reckoning.

Seeking IMF assistance will be a last resort because conditionalities such as depreciation of the rupee and eliminating wasteful spending such as the Mihin Air project would be anathema to the government. The Central Bank launched a campaign with an ambitious \$500m target to persuade Sri Lankan expatriates to invest in government bill and bonds and offering a 20% premium on the interest income on their foreign currency deposits.

The Supreme Court decided not to proceed with the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) hedging case because the government ignored the order of the court to reduce the price of petrol. Some saw this as a break down in constitutional governance. But it can also be seen as a necessary demarcation of responsibility between the executive and the judiciary.

The Central Bank claims that the oil hedging

agreement is illegal. One of the five banks involved in the deal, Citi Bank, is seeking international arbitration to enforce it. The CPC may have to pay a sum in the range of \$300m to \$800m if the agreement is enforced. Last month Prima Flour Milling Company won an arbitration award of \$35m against the government.

The Finance Companies reported that their deposits were down following the collapse of Golden Key Credit Card Company where depositors have lost an estimated Rs14 billion or more. The Central Bank's claim that it has no responsibility for Golden Key has not helped the situation.

Total tourist arrivals to the country in 2008 were 438,475, down by 20% on the 2007 figure of 494,008. The government is creating a Rs 400m fund to help the industry in lean times. Bharti Airtel entered the local mobile phone market further intensifying competition.

In exports cinnamon, jewelry and rubber continued to report poor market conditions but Tea prices improved slightly.

The government launched an intensive lobbying campaign in Europe to get the GSP+ concession extended for another three years.

ENVIRONMENT



Over 4000 cases of chikungunya have been reported in Sri Lanka from mid-December 2008 through January 2009. Cases seemed to be spiking in early January but an aggressive campaign to combat the disease in the Northwestern, Uva, Sabaragamuwa and Eastern provinces has successfully reduced the number of new cases emerging. The campaign was aimed at eliminating mosquito breeding places (garbage, tires, pots etc.) and was aided by fogging operations in Moneragala, Polonnaruwa, Embilipitiya and Kalmunai. Mosquito borne diseases are linked directly to environmental activities as mosquito breeding

sites tend to occur where the environment is neglected.

A minor landslide occurred in Gampola with the onset of late January rains. It is estimated that 180 persons have been displaced and 5 homes destroyed due to this landslide. Rains earlier in the month caused flooding in Batticaloa and surroundings. Most of the month, however, was characterized by dry conditions, especially in the south and central portions of the country. This resulted in a reduction of water in the main reservoirs which in turn threatened to reduce the power supply and result in power and water cuts. However rains late in

the month seem to have reduced this possibility.

Invitations for comments/observations on the draft National policies on water supply and sanitation were made for the month of January 2009. The stated goals of these policies are to supply piped water to 40% of Sri Lankan households and piped sanitation to 3% of households by 2011.

Legislation was introduced which will make it mandatory to separate garbage and recycle as well as making littering punishable by a fine.

HUMANITARIAN & DEVELOPMENT SPACE



The month saw dramatic developments in the Vanni with the entirety of the civilian population of Killinochichi and Mullaitivu becoming displaced joining those from Mannar and Vavuniya who had moved across as IDP's. They are for now found boxed in a 'safe zone' spilling out of it with LTTE cadre spilling into it. This caused regular civilian casualties given the fighting continues. Supplies are maintained by the GA convoys with UN convoys. Conditions are primitive with

urgent movement out a necessity. Injured persons are with great difficulty being transported to Vavuniya. The GoSL has planned to host upto 200,000 persons in four camp villages in Vavuniya and Mannar.

On secondary note the aftermath of the floods still shows needs in Jaffna.

A dire need for voluntary services has been noted. Monitoring difficulties to be over-

come by Agencies sharing information among each other. Agreed on meetings and regular communication to improve with CGES in order to explore alternative to send food convoys to the effected.

The safety and security of camp sites, access to humanitarian Agencies, IDP's freedom of movement and children's education were also tabled at the IASC Country Team Meeting last month.

EXTERNAL ACTORS



With efforts to bring and end to the long running internal conflict in the North counting down, the impact on civilians has drawn the attention of the UN, several bilateral donor governments and India.

The INGO's have shown a total of close on

Rs.1.9Bn made up of stocks, funds in hand and expected to support any movement of IDP's and their immediate needs to stabilize.

With impact on civilians, BBC,CNN and Al Jazeera have come under direct criticism as

have the Ambassador for Germany and Switzerland with swipe at INGo 's for perceived unfair comments. The imagery on the three global news channels along with YouTube uploads have been a feature. These shape opinion globally.

DISTRICT ANALYSIS

(PERIOD OF REVIEW-28TH DECEMBER TO 28TH JANUARY 2009)

AMPARA

STRUCTURES

In Ampara, the situation continues to be relatively stable, with inter communal relations and the political atmosphere also being on a stable footing. Several organisations as well as Government institutions are actively involved in community building processes. In terms of security, confrontations between the LTTE and the Security Forces have reduced as the Forces concentrate on their northwards push. There has also been a reduction in paramilitary activities such as abduction and robbery throughout the district.

Security in the Kanchkudicharu and Badulla Chankaladi road areas has improved,

thereby improving civilian mobility in these areas to a certain extent.

One incident which marred the relative peace was the murder of three civilians in the Maligawila area by LTTE members. The Police has instructed those civilians living in border villages to temporarily vacate their homes in order to avoid such incidents.

ACTORS

The TMVP and other political parties and the Government Security Forces are the main actors.

DYNAMICS:

Incidents in border villages such as the at-

tack on civilians in Maligawila can affect the dynamics of the district, as they threaten to upset the delicate and relatively peaceful balance the district has achieved. It could once again increase tensions among the people, as well as stall developmental work being carried out in the district.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS:

Security Forces need to be on a constant high alert and not lapse into a false sense of security lulled by the relative calm in the district, as illustrated by the attack on civilians in Maligawila.

BATTICALOA

STRUCTURES

As the overall situation in Batticaloa improves, despite a strengthened security presence, the atmosphere is less tense, and the people are a little more confident to step out of their homes in the evenings.

The TMVP leader Muralidharan stated that the issue of child soldiers would come to an end in the Eastern Province within the next three months, under a joint agreement signed by Government, UNICEF and the TMVP. The party handed over 14 underage cadres to the new Child Welfare Office opened in Batticaloa, while a few child soldiers remain in TMVP custody in the Batticaloa district. Under the agreement, the child soldiers will also be provided with rehabilitation facilities, to help them deal with any physical or emotional trauma they may have suffered.

A move by the Mosque Federation of Kattankudi along with other community organi-

zations to collect and send dry rations to war victims in the Vanni, has been lauded as a move towards building relations between the communities in the district.

Meanwhile, the British High Commissioner, following a visit to expressed his concerns over civilian safety after the attack on a border village in the Ampara district.

ACTORS

The TMVP, members of the Eastern Provincial council, the Tamil and Muslim communities as well as NGOs can be considered the main actors.

DYNAMICS:

The apparent solution to the pivotal issue of child soldier's made big news in the district. The issue is a pivotal one as far as the dynamics of the district are concerned, as parents often live in fear that their child may be forced to join either the LTTE or TMVP as a child soldier.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The Government and local authorities should encourage moves such as the one made by the Mosque Federation, in order to facilitate the strengthening of inter communal relations.

The Government should also divert resources towards speeding up the process of taking over child soldiers and rehabilitating them and handing them over to families as soon as possible – as this move is bound to greatly increase public confidence as well as satisfaction.

COLOMBO

STRUCTURES

The year 2009 started off disastrously for the media in Colombo, with three major attacks on the media within a month. The Sirasa television station was completely destroyed by thugs, an editor of a leading Sinhala newspaper badly attacked and the shocking murder of the editor of a leading Sunday newspaper. The media held several heated protests on what was seen as an attack on the freedom of information in the country.

Meanwhile, several parts of Colombo erupted in celebrations as the capture of Mullaitivu and Killinochchi was announced, and several homes and buildings displayed the National Flag.

Preparations for Independence Day celebrations continue amidst heightened security, as intelligence reports indicate a possible

LTTE attack in Colombo on Independence Day, reinforced by the discovery of a suicide kit found in Dehiwela.

The Western Provincial Council was dissolved soon after the announcement of the capture of Killinochchi, and the election date is to be announced at a future date.

ACTORS

The key actors are the Security Forces, political parties and the media.

DYNAMICS

As the war seems to be nearing an end according to reports, the people of Colombo are eagerly awaiting an end to the decade long war which has adversely impacted the economy and civilian life in general for over two decades.

Following the intensified attacks against the

media, several leading journalists have fled the country, affecting the free flow of information to the public on several crucial issues such as security and the economy.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The Government needs to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of the media, while the Police and relevant authorities should actively pursue the perpetrators of attacks against the media, if public confidence in the rule of law is to be maintained.

JAFFNA

STRUCTURES

As the battle for ultimate control of the North intensifies between the Security Forces and the LTTE, the security situation in the district of Jaffna remains unstable, especially during the push for the capture of the crucial Elephant Pass, with both sides reportedly suffering heavy casualties. During operations, Security Forces uncovered over 100 suicide boats, some packed with ammunition, during opboats which some of those had been fully equipped with ammunition.

For the first time in over two decades, Jaffna

peninsula is now under Government control, and the LTTE FDL was pushed back to Mullaitivu. The Government announced that the Jaffna Kandy A9 road was also under Security Forces control after two decades.

While a large number of IDPs were expected from the Wannu due to the increased confrontations, very few IDPs in fact actually arrived in Jaffna following the LTTE withdrawal from the Muhamalai area. The Government and relief agencies continue to provide essential items and services to the IDPs arriving in the district.

Due to the harvest of many vegetable crops being ruined by floods in December, the price of vegetables in the open market increased temporarily, but has now begun a gradual decrease. No food shortages were however reported in the district.

ACTORS

The Security Forces, the LTTE, ICRC and NGOs were the main actors in the district during the reporting period.

DYNAMICS

The capture of the A9 road was important for the dynamics of the district, as the road

is a crucial one connecting Jaffna, Colombo and other parts of the Island. Civilians are expecting ground transportation to Colombo to significantly increase, while also hoping that the prices of commodities will decrease due to the transport of goods being easier on the A9 road.

The forward push of the security forces has also given hope to a majority of civilians, who are eagerly awaiting an end to the war and a return to a normalcy of life they have not known for over two decades. It remains to be seen however whether the LTTE will

give up their struggle, even as they withdrawn from their positions.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The people of Jaffna, who have been perhaps the most affected by the civil war, need to be rehabilitated in a number of ways. As the LTTE withdraws further, the Government and relevant humanitarian agencies should start sketching proposals to provide technical and financial aid to civilians, in order to enable them embark on some form of income generating activity, through small and medium businesses and

agri based income sources.

The Government should also expedite the opening of the A9 road, enabling the civilians to enjoy the many benefits this would bring, such as easier transport to other parts of the island, as well as reduced commodity prices, among others.

Inter communal relations as well as security in the district need to be improved and maintained, in order to ensure order and the protection of civilians.

MANNAR

STRUCTURES

As the Government pushes further North in a bid to end the separatist war, the district of Mannar is on a tense footing, with heavy fighting at Killinochchi and Mullaitivu. Heavy shelling and aerial bombing resulted in the deaths of over 50 civilians, with hundreds more injured, according to reports. The number of IDPs has also seen an increase, as civilians flee the heavy fighting. The fishing sector has seen some improvement, as fishermen are now permitted to engage in deep sea fishing as well as night fishing, which yields a larger catch than daytime fishing. The restriction on the use of certain building materials has been relaxed, while the reconstruction of the two and a half kilometer long Mannar - Thall-day causeway has resulted in a number of employment opportunities. Paddy cultivation however is taking place at just 50% of its potential, as the land available for cultivation has reduced due to heavy fighting.

The number of abductions and other paramilitary activities during the month has also increased, according to reports.

ACTORS

The Security Forces, the LTTE and local and international NGOs can be considered the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

The increasing number of IDPs flowing into the district is bound to affect the dynamics of the district, as an additional burden is placed on the Government as well as relief agencies providing essential services and items.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The Government together with the ICRC could explore the option of running a limited marine service between Poonahair to Pesali in Mannar, in order to enable IDPs to leave areas where heavy fighting is taking place.

A similar service between Kurrikatuwan in Jaffna to Pesalai, would make it easier for civilians to reach Jaffna, eliminating the need for civilians to pay exorbitant sums of money and undergo much hardship to make this journey.

The burden placed on the Government and relief organizations providing essential services and supplies to IDPs could be somewhat reduced by permitting them to seek shelter at the houses of friends or relatives, and may also contribute to an improvement in their emotional welfare as well.

Measures to subsidize the rising cost of the living could include supporting home garden cultivation by providing seed, fertilizer and other support, which could lead to the district, in time, gaining some degree of self sufficiency.

TRINCOMALEE

STRUCTURES

Following the fall of Killinochchi to the security forces, the security situation in Trincomalee is tense. Cordon and search operations are carried out regularly, many with the aim of establishing the presence of persons whose names are not registered in family cards issued by the police. Several security incidents have however taken place, including minor explosions and claymore mine attacks, resulting in the death of a few security personnel and some civilians being injured.

Gaining access to the Chief Minister is very difficult, and security surrounding him is also high, with the roads leading to his office have a heavy security presence, while anybody entering the office is subject to body searches.

As income generating activity such as fishing is curtailed, many civilians are affected in particular children attending the higher grades in school cannot afford to attend tuition classes, which are necessary if they are to be successful at the examinations.

As such, several students have dropped out of school and are now seeking employment in order to supplement the family income.

The Chief Minister of the Eastern Province stated in an interview with the BBC Tamil Service that the Security Forces are taking certain measures, such as photographing civilians and requiring them to hold on to the photographs as a sort of temporary identification, without consulting the Provincial Council. He had also stated that there was a need for democratic systems to be put in place now that the Eastern Province had a democratic system of governance in place.

ACTORS

The Security Forces, Government authorities TMVP and NGOs are the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

Due to new regulations in place with regard to humanitarian agencies, these agencies find their effectiveness restricted as far as project implementation is concerned.

Strengthened security in the area has also created some tension, since an increased number of Tamil youths have reportedly been arrested on suspicion.

IDP resettlement activity is continuing with the support of the Government and NGOs, with the only retarding factor being the difficulty in finding suitable land for relocation. Other development activity in the area seems to have taken a backseat to the ongoing conflict between the central and provincial government.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

NGOs need to work together to formulate a plan which will enable them to work with maximum efficiency within the ongoing restrictions.

The relevant authorities also need to develop an efficient mechanism which will ensure that the parents or relatives of persons arrested on suspicion are notified at the time or following the arrest.

VAVUNIYA

STRUCTURES

The increase of paramilitary activity such as abduction, robbery and murder has placed the district of Vavuniya on a tense footing. Security forces remain on high alert with regular cordon and search operations being carried out. Meanwhile, over 60 civilians have died and several more been injured according to reports.

The increase of IDPs from the Wannu, has placed a great burden on the Government as well as humanitarian agencies trying to provide essential services and items. A large number of temporary shelters were constructed in anticipation of an influx of IDPs. Meanwhile, the closure of the Omanthai road for a few days inconvenienced civilians wishing to travel to Omanthai.

Roughly 400 students as well as eight university students are currently languishing in IDP camps, with little or no access to educa-

tion, a source of continuous worry to parents in the camps.

Farmers are engaged in cultivating a limited number of high land crops as floods have ruined the harvest of a number of other crops. With only 60% of the available paddy land being cultivated, and a number of NGO and private companies laying off staff due to the global economic recession, unemployment in the district has risen marginally.

ACTORS

The Government authorities, the Security Forces, LTTE, IDPs and NGOs are the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

Heavy fighting in the border districts of Mullaitivu is the main issue affecting the dynamics in the district. The number of IDPs entering the district is bound to increase, placing a greater burden on the Government

and relief agencies providing aid, as well as tax the district's supply of pulses and vegetables, already in short supply due to an unsuccessful harvest.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The Government needs to make some arrangements to issue at least some temporary identification to IDPs in camps, thus enabling them to leave the camps during the day time for essential activities, such as schooling, medical needs, marketing and most importantly, employment.

The relevant authorities could also look into the feasibility of letting IDPs seek shelter with friends and relatives, in order to reduce the burden of providing for them, while the Government should work together with aid agencies such as UNICEF to ensure that children are provided adequate health care and schooling.

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The Rapid Context Assessment (RCA) aims to provide useful information for humanitarian and development agencies to plan and implement more effective interventions addressing various humanitarian and development needs based on a profound understanding of local dynamics.

At the same time, the RCA aims to enhance prospects that interventions are sensitive to the peace and conflict dynamics in the districts and that agencies at a minimum avoid creating or exacerbating conflict (Do No Harm) at a maximum contribute to conflict mitigation/transformation and peace building (Do Some Good).

Risk assessments aim to enhance agencies' efforts to stay operational while increasing safety of staff and people in implementing areas.

At an external level (general public, international community) RCA will serve advocacy purposes in providing comprehensive and balanced information about the situation in Sri Lankan districts.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on the contents of this report. Please mail us at feedback@cha.lk

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