

RAPID CONTEXT ASSESSMENT



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INDICATOR REFERENCES

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The political situation generally remained stable in November. The government continued to maintain its popularity based on military successes in the north. The term of the present parliament ends in 2010. The government is toying with the idea of either calling for a parliamentary election or elections for provincial councils that are due for fresh elections. But the proportional representation system that prevails today works against one party winning a clear majority in parliament to form a strong government.

Civil society was not very active in November. Issues such as good governance and human rights were pursued by a relatively small group of people. One TV channel focused attention on domestic violence that should be combated with more commitment.

The quality of governance deteriorated further during the month. The politicization of state institutions such as the police and the public service continued

unabated. The government has so far ignored the Supreme Court order to immediately appoint the Constitutional Council so that subsidiary bodies such as the police commission could be appointed to help depoliticise the police and other such state institutions.

Government forces capturing Pooneryn from the LTTE was the major war event of the month. The control of Pooneryn allowed the Tigers to control the Gulf of Mannar and part of the Palk Strait that helped them smuggles arms from Tamil Nadu. Now the Tigers will it harder to obtain supplies from this route. But it should be noted that the government does not permit the media to independently investigate and report on the war situation.

The government denied any humanitarian crisis in the Vanni arising from the on-going battles, but that simply is the not case. Food supplies sent to the area are adequate only for about five days of the week. Medicines and health personnel are in short supplies in the area hospitals. The temporary structures that have been erected to function as schools are not adequate for the purpose.

Tension between the Eastern Province Chief Minister Pillayan and the TMVP leader parliamentary Karuna has created a sense of insecurity in the Eastern Province with politically motivated killings on the rise. Between October 21 and November 20, 77 people were reported killed on the Island, and nearly one third this number was in Batticaloa District.

In November, in many respects, Sri Lanka's economy moved in the wrong direction. A poorly conceived hedge on oil prices that denied the country the full benefits of falling oil prices, depressed world tea prices, declining exports in manufactures, growing trade deficit, double digit inflation, high interest rates for bank loans, an over-valued exchange rate, and a depressed share market were among the key negatives. On the positive side the inflow of remittances from Sri Lankans abroad held steady. The EU announced that GSP+ tariff concession for Sri Lankan exports to EU would remain while the EU conducted a probe on human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Heavy rains caused internal displacement of people in several parts of the county. The Western Province started emission tests for vehicles. A meeting was held in London to protest against India's proposed Sethusamudran Shipping Canal that environmentalists claim would have harmful environmental consequences.

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

POLITICAL CONTEXT



Following the fall of Pooneryn and the successful advances towards Muhamalai to the south of Jaffna and Omanthai to the north of Vavuniya – strategic points on the A9 highway – and the successes made at the second reading of the 2009 Appropriation Bill or commonly called Budget 2008, the UPFA Government looks poised to face a general or parliamentary election early next year.

The proposed election could also take the form of a referendum to extend the term of government for a further six years. President J. R. Jayewardene held a referendum in 1982 but although the United National Party (UNP) that was in power continued for a further six-

year term it put in motion the events that created the ethnic conflict remembered as “Black July.”

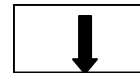
The present term of government expires in 2010. However, government is also looking at the possibility of conducting the Provincial Council Elections to the remaining Provincial Councils as well. Whatever it may be Parliamentary or Provincial Elections, recent history has shown that governments in power have fought elections with its military successes on the ground and won.

The need of the hour is to however reform the prevailing electoral system which has

always been a stumbling block of successive governments in power in parliament, since the Proportional Representative (PR) system does not favour a majoritarian rule, which is a government holding a clear majority in parliament. This is a stumbling block especially in passing much needed legislature in order to move the peace process forward.

The government is also eagerly awaiting the Great Heroes Day address made by LTTE Supremo Vellupillai Prabhakaran on Thursday, November 26, will it make a difference towards holding elections or will it further escalate the war?

GOVERNANCE



The main issues facing the country continued with few if any signs of attempts at constructive resolution. With regard to the humanitarian crisis the government’s approach continued to be based on denial. First hand reports from the LTTE controlled parts of the Wannai indicate that there are shortages in virtually every sphere of human life. But the government has reported that there is no problem that they cannot handle. Another area with tragic consequences to the people has been the continuing impunity with regard to killings and disappearances. Killings and abductions continue to be reported from around the country with arrests being made in most cases.

A prominent victim was the secretary to the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province who was shot dead near Colombo.

In the budget the government made massive allocations for defence, and unusually made unusually high allocations for the President’s office, for building an airport in the President’s home district and for a second national airline under the aviation ministry of the President’s brother. In the context of the economic crisis in the country, as well as the world, this type of budgetary allocations in the face of opposition protests is not indicative of responsible and accountable governance.

In the meantime, the war in the north has escalated with unconfirmed stories of several hundreds of battlefield casualties. But these are not being independently covered in the media. In this context the opposition leader called for media to report the truth even if they get killed as a result, which is hardly an encouragement to the media. The lack of an effective response to the crisis of law and order, and media failure, can be partly attributed to the politicization of the state machinery which is highly partisan towards the government. The Supreme Court has directed the government to appoint the Constitutional Council with immediate effect, but there is no sign of this happening.

SECURITY



The most significant gain was the re-capture of a strategically important military base of LTTE – Pooneryn by the Government troops during period under review. Pooneryn was under the control of LTTE since 1998 when then Commander of the Sri Lanka Army decided to close down defence compound in 1997. Both parties sustained heavy casualties after three days of heavy battles. The Media Centre for National Security has denied the number of casualties, Defence Watch however reports 200 soldiers killed and over 300 injured. Fall of Pooneryn is a big loss to the LTTE, who apparently have used the Gulf of Mannar and parts of the Palk straits to receive equipment from the southern section of Tamil Nadu.

Subsequently, the Government troops re-

captured the first line of guerrilla defences at Muhamalai. This is the area which separates the Government – controlled Jaffna Peninsula and the LTTE – controlled Killinochchi and Mullaitivu. Troops belonging to 574 Brigade have reached the perimeter of the famous Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation transmission tower in Kokavil. While troops of 59 division has gained control of over the Kumulamunari area in the Mullaitivu. Task Force - 3 troops has moved west of the A-9 main road at Vannivilankulam and entered the Mankulam area in Mullaitivu. Air Force continues carrying out with their air sorties targeting strong points of LTTE such as Odusuddan,

A sea battle between SL Navy’ elite Special Boat Squadron (SBS), Air force and LTTE’s suicide Black Tiger sea wing took place in the

shores of Nagarkovil. According to the Ministry of Defence, 15 to 20 Sea Tiger vessels had taken part in the battle. Navy SBS and Rapid action Boat Squadron destroyed four LTTE crafts while Tamilnet reported that Tigers had destroyed two naval vessels.

Tension between the supporters of the leader of Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP), Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan alias Karuna Amman and Eastern Province Chief Minister Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillayan has increased indicated by the incidents that took place in the Eastern Province. According to reports released by Sri Lanka Police. So far more than 15 TMVP members in the Eastern Province have been gunned down by unidentified gunmen, many assaulted and the latest victim was Personal Secretary and aide of the Eastern Province

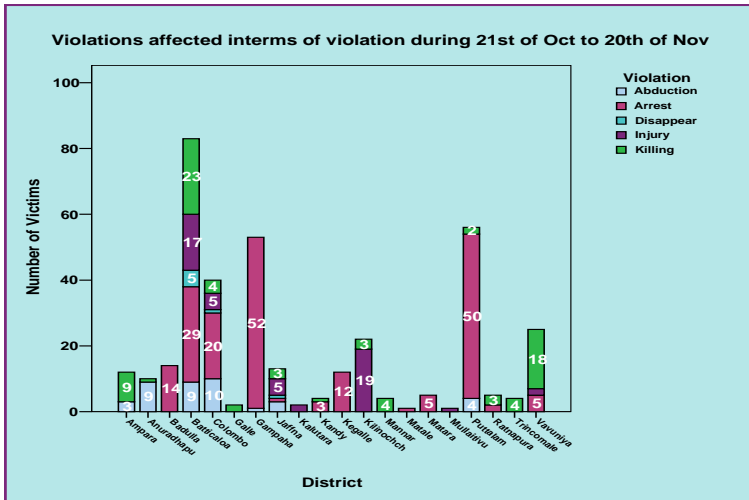
Chief Minister, shot dead in Athurugriya on Friday the 14th November 2008 in broad daylight. Three soldiers were killed and twelve injured during a training session at Army Volunteer Force training camp in Linduwewa, Nochchiyagama. This occurred while 200 army recruits were viewing the military demonstration.

HUMAN RIGHTS



Human Rights analysis for month of October 21st to November 20th)

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)



- LTTE have attacked to Mannar security force head quarters and Colombo Kelanitissa power station.
- 05 Tamils were arrested in Rajagiriya Parliament road, even though they had whole the evident.
- A Buddhist monk was abducted from an internationally famous temple in Ampara, eastern Sri Lanka by unidentified persons and STF have found him after 02 days.
- Former member of the Puttalam Provincial Council Clement Clarence was abducted by an unidentified armed gang came in a

Vanni by boats.

A severe shortage of shelter is brewing in Mullaitivu as more than 300 families cross into the district each day to flee the fighting in Killinochchi.

Arrests & Abductions

In this time period 194 suspects were arrested in search operations on suspicion and lack of proper identification papers or not having a valid reason to be at given location. Security forces have searched in upcountry with face covered informants and arrested

white van.

- Eastern Province Chief Minister Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillayan's personal secretary and an aide were shot dead in broad daylight at Athurugriya.
- No Shelter for 12000 IDP's in Poonagari, their in under trees.
- People were come to Mandaitheevu from

14 persons. According to the sources highest numbers of suspects were arrested in Gampaha (52) and Puttalam (50) District.

During this period the reported number of abduction has increased. 39 abductions were reported in the media. A high number of abductions reported from Colombo (10) district, 3 students were abducted by a gang came in a white van in Panadura.

Anuradhapura (9) and Batticaloa (9) Districts abductions are high between 21st Oct to Nov 20th. For most of the abductions Media says The Perpetrator came in a White van. 05 TMVP members have been missing after attacked to their office in Batticaloa.

Killings & Injuries

Between 21st Oct to Nov 20th 77 persons have been killed and 51 persons were injured.

In Batticaloa District 23 persons killed including the Navakkadu Hospital Doctor and 17 were injured. Human rights violations are increased in Batticaloa district.

17 Civilians were injured due to SLAF Air strikes In Killinochchi District.

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

ECONOMIC CONTEXT



In November, in many respects, Sri Lanka's economy moved in the wrong direction. A poorly conceived hedge on oil prices denied the country the full benefits of falling prices. Depressed world tea prices continued during the month squeezing producer margins. The price fall in tea has brought into sharper relief the serious long term challenges - declining productivity per hectare, falling national output and rising labour cost - which the industry faces.

Exports of manufactures dropped by over 15% in September. The nation's trade deficit increased from \$2.4b in the first three quarters of 2007 to \$4.6b in the same period in

2008. The government is under pressure to depreciate the rupees against the dollar to assist exporters.

The rate of inflation in November was down to about 17% from 20% in October. Double digit inflation and high interest rates continued to constrain the economy. In November the Central Bank reduced the statutory reserve ratio for the second successive month to boost bank liquidity in the hope of reducing interest rates on loans.

The Colombo share market which experienced a sharp decline in recent months remained more or less unchanged in November. One saving grace has been the steady inflow of private remittances from Sri

Lankan's working abroad.

The EU extended indefinitely the GSP+ tariff concession to Sri Lanka until the former completes a probe into human rights conditions in the country. The Mumbai terrorist attack may have played a role in the EU decision. This gives both sides some additional time to settle the matter amicably.

The 2009 budget presented to parliament contained no path breaking features. The more serious issue was the government's attempt to avoid disclosure of Rs. 738b in outlay that it must incur almost exclusively to finance interest payments and repayment of principal on past borrowing. A public interest case filed in the Supreme Court exposed this

ploy. This is indicative of the government falling into a virtual debt trap with more borrowing being incurred to pay past loans. When the newly revealed figure is added to the official budget presented in parliament government spending in 2009 will be around Rs. 1.9 trillion.

The defence budget for 2009 will be Rs 177b, an increase of Rs 11b over the 2008 figure to Rs 166b. The Rs 6.0b allocated to revive the government-owned loss-making "budget" airline Mihin Air defies financial

rationality when resources are scarce for more pressing needs such as education.

The government has succeeded in increasing its revenue as a percentage of GDP from 15.8% in 2007 to 16.0% in 2008 and anticipates it to be 16.4% in 2009. The Budget increased import tariffs in the form of a cess on a range of imports, increased some other taxes such as the telephone levy and also introduced some new taxes such as the Nation Building Tax. These may be revenue raising measures but they also reverse the

trend towards trade liberalization and move the economy in the direction of the failed import substitution strategy of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, many of the new taxes complicate the tax code, increase the cost of tax collection and pick winners and losers in the economy on an *ad hoc* basis. A global assessment of 181 countries on the ease of paying taxes conducted recently revealed that Sri Lanka is ranked near the bottom occupying the 164th position. The budget also announced a new presidential taskforce on tax policy to prepare a new national tax policy.

ENVIRONMENT



Heavy rains in October have resulted in an increase in dengue cases being reported around the island. Colombo District is the most heavily impacted but overall 5600 dengue cases have been reported islandwide in 2008, a substantial increase from 2007. The rains have continued into November, particularly in the north of the island where thousands of internally displaced are facing increased hardships as a result of the weather. These rains were considered to be northeast monsoonal in nature.

After a period of relatively dry weather, heavy rains again hit the entire island in the last

week of November; these blamed on a depression in the Bay of Bengal. Hundreds of people in Trincomalee District have been temporarily displaced by flooding resulting from these intense rains.

Mandatory vehicle emission testing has finally been implemented in the Western Province as of November 17th. All vehicles will need to undergo an emission test before getting renewed registration. Laugfs Pvt. Ltd. And Cleanco Pvt. Ltd. (GreenDrive) both offer emission testing at a number of locations around the island. Already long queues can be seen at these stations.

A top level meeting is being held in London in the last week of November which brings together scientists, academics and religious leaders from around the world to try and make the case to the governments of India and Sri Lanka to ask UNESCO to declare the Gulf of Mannar a World Heritage Site. This is in order to halt the planned Indian initiative to build a shipping channel through the Gulf. The Sethusamudram Ship Channel would require the creation of a deep trench through this shallow, environmentally important ecosystem which harbours a wide diversity of endangered flora and fauna including the charismatic dugong.

CIVIL SOCIETY & MEDIA SPACE



When society is in a state of preoccupation with an ongoing war and an economic downturn, as it is today, commenting on Civil Society and Media Space as dispassionately as one could and should requires a redefinition of both civil society and Media. We need to reconcile ourselves to the reality that Civil Society occupies that limited space between the State and the Private Sector.

The plethora of Chambers of the entrepreneurs that voice the views of the private sector may at times advance the causes that civil society wishes to espouse but they by no means represent civil society per se. It was demonstrated at a recent seminar where the subject was "the post conflict development of the North and the East".

The participants of the private sector had only one principal concern: What is in it for us? It

is understandable. For them profit is the name of the game.

If the Media too subordinates their commercial interests and subservience to coercion either by the state or special interests abdicating their duty to meet their civic obligations, they too cannot be regarded as a part of Civil Society.

In the limited space that is allowed to Civil Society as defined earlier it is by and large exists in a state of hibernation. The concerns for good governance is pursued by a few individuals resorting to public interest litigation.

Matters relating to Human Rights are pursued by a few dedicated organisations with an understandable concern for quiet persuasion and reasoned representations placing

their emphasis on what can be achieved and not on the means of achieving them. Their task is made more difficult by attempts of interested parties to whom political objectives take precedence over ensuring redress to the victims. While this is a regular phenomenon in the month of November there were several such instances.

The main stream print media continued to cater to the public appetite for military gains by the government forces and the antics of politicians. The Sirasa Channel exposed a growing menace that is fast spreading in the country - the plight of women subjected to domestic violence. That the necessary legislation has been enacted to prevent both domestic violence and the protection of children is something that has not received the attention it deserves both from the media as well as civil society.

HUMANITARIAN & DEVELOPMENT SPACE



New Developments in the Vanni Region

From October 2 to November 20, 6 WFP food convoys have been sent in addition to the

several convoys carrying non food items that have been sent through the Commissioner General for Essential Services (CGES). WFP

stated that generally food is transported to three locations in the region: Tharmapuram, Puthukudiyerippu and Kandavalai, from

which point the Multi – Purpose Cooperative Services (MPCS) outlets takes over the distribution of food. This food is usually sufficient for 5 days, and convoys reach these points at weekly intervals, which leave two days during which a shortage could be experienced. It was mentioned that there are difficulties in increasing the number of lorries in the convoys – which comes to about 50 – as this will cause logistical problems where the delivery is concerned. From the sixth convoy onwards, depending on the need, availability and clearance about 2 lorries carrying non food items will be joining in.

Restrictions in shelter materials remain an area of concern. As getting clearance for plastic sheets is difficult, the use of cadjan is being encouraged.

Where health needs are concerned, it was informed that while the Emergency Unit of the Killinochchi Hospital was functioning, the Maternity ward and some staff are situated at Tharmapuram and Vishvamadu and are assisting in medical matters. However there is a shortage of specialists in Mullaitivu and Killinochchi districts, and due to this serious patients have been transferred to Vavuniya via ambulance which is difficult due to restrictions. A request has been made to ICRC for specialists whom they have agreed to provide. An increased need for fuel due to increased movement of ambulances in the Vanni was also highlighted.

It was also mentioned that while there is a stock of medicine in Vavuniya, these needs to be shifted to the Vanni as stocks are running low. As hospitals/medical care is on the move with the people, around 16 tents need

to be set up to house patients. GA Trincomalee agreed to dispatch extra tents from Trincomalee for this purpose. Some shortages of Vaccine, Anti Malaria Drugs, Anti Snake Venom Serum etc. could be sorted out once clearance for these items are obtained.

With regard to education needs, there is an urgent need for 20 shelters for Temporary Learning Centres. Though assistance could be provided subject to approval of shelter materials into the Vanni, alternate arrangements using cadjans is an option that is being looked at depending on the availability of funding. Meanwhile 5 lorry loads of text books and uniforms in respect of re-issue for this year for the displaced children has been approved into the Vanni.

In terms of protection for IDPs, Secretary, Defence Ministry stated that the areas for IDPs to come out of the Vanni would be through Puthukudiyirippu, Vishvamadu, Odusudan and to Vavuniya. This has been communicated to the IDPs through dropping of leaflets.

Mannar, Trincomalee and Jaffna

Shelter needs were also emphasized in the Kallimodai and Sirukondal welfare camps in Mannar. IDPs continue to come into these camps but it has been decided not to accommodate any more IDPs due to overcrowding. These IDPs will be sent to identified camps in Vavuniya.

In Trincomalee, out of 11 GN Division in the High Security Zone, 6 have been released for resettlement. Gazette notification earmarking in the area that fall within the High Security Zone is expected shortly. Shelter needs and livelihood assistance were reported to be

progressing well. The Chief Minister of Eastern Provincial Council together with FCCISL and SCOPP were to meet with MOD to request for additional time for fishing in eastern province.

In Jaffna, due to the reduction in fuel prices, the food prices were reported to have come down. It was also mentioned that the production of fish is enough to meet the current needs of population in Jaffna

In view of the monsoon and the lack of continual goods transport by ships to Jaffna it was suggested that buffer stocks be maintained in Jaffna. It was stated that 90% of the food needs of the region have been dispatched this year, and emphasized that the priority of distribution should be to the 20,000 IDP families as opposed to distribution to the 70,000 families who are provided under the economically affected category.

National Consultations on the Status of IDPs

As a follow up to recommendations made at a workshop on National Consultations on the Status of conflict IDPs that was held in September together with Prof. Walter Kalin, a national consultant will be appointed to formulate an Action Plan with key Ministries in order to find durable solutions for the old IDPs. It was mentioned that preference will be given to the new IDPs when it comes to resettlement, although needs of the old IDPs will also be looked at. It is hoped at this point that those responsible are fully aware of the fact that any differentiation between fulfilling the needs of 'old' and 'new' IDPs would hardly constitute a durable solution to the IDP issues in Sri Lanka, and that steps will be taken to ensure a fair and equitable treatment for both categories.

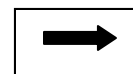
EXTERNAL ACTORS

The role of external actors touches on financing, trade, political interventions, non profit sector work, development and technical assistance. The impact on financing due to global turmoil is yet to be felt full yet. Some have begun to ask if development assistance and grants would be reduced due to domestic preoccupations in home countries.

Trade has seen volatility with further shocks projected. Within which lies the debate on GSP plus facility for the country.

Our conversations with India and sentiments within, on war and peace in SL continue to be seen. INGO's continue to be in the eye of the storm.

With much effort to ensure transparency agencies continue to attract negative public comment and press. It has led to the reduction of confidence on the part of all stakeholders in dialogue. Amnesty International weighed in with an opinion which drew an equally robust response from government. Development assistance holds steady. On the whole somewhat of flat month.



DISTRICT ANALYSIS

(PERIOD OF REVIEW-28TH OCTOBER TO 28TH NOVEMBER 2008)

AMPARA

STRUCTURES

The recent LTTE attack on the district of Ampara bespoke security tensions in the days to

come, while the incidence of killing, abduction and communal violence also continued unabated.

The continuing internal conflict between the president of the TMVP Karuna, and the Chief Minister of the Eastern Province Pillayan,

compounded by the appointment of Karuna as a Member of Parliament created further issues of contention among the people of the district.

This seems to also have had an impact on the development of the district, as a number of development projects initiated by the Government are not showing visible signs of progress.

Human rights violations instigated by paramilitary groups active in the area are adding a considerable amount of tension to the atmosphere of the district.

ACTORS

The President and the Chief Minister of the TMVP are both significant actors in the current context. Politicians, local government officials, the Security Forces and the LTTE can be considered the other main actors in the district.

DYNAMICS

The LTTE attack on the district created a great degree of tension in the district and fear among the people. Conflict between paramilitary groups and the resultant violence such as incidents of murder and abduction are some of the main issues currently affecting the dynamics of the district.

Mounting tensions within the TMVP have also contributed to the unstable atmosphere within the district.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

Action needs to be taken to solve the conflict within the TMVP, if the situation in the district is to be kept stable. The relevant authorities also need to work on stabilising and strengthening relations between the Tamil and Muslim communities at this time, in order to avoid any possibility of an inter communal uprising.

The grievances of local government authority members need to be addressed promptly and efficiently in order to enable the progression of development activity.

BATTICALOA

STRUCTURES

The overall situation in the district seems to have deteriorated, with the number of human rights violations such as abductions and murders reportedly seeing an increase. The increased tensions are having an adverse impact on the mindset of the people.

The intensifying conflict within the TMVP, compounded by the appointment of TMVP President as a Member of Parliament, has resulted in an increase in inter communal tension, as well as increased activity by paramilitary groups operating in the district. This has led to the reluctance of civilians to venture out of their homes, and a resultant drop in commercial activity in the district. Small scale enterprises are in turn finding it increasingly difficult to stay afloat.

The development projects initiated by the Government seem to be stagnating as a result of the disharmony among the communities. Local government officials claim they are under threat and unable to carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily.

ACTORS

Key Government officials, both the President and the Chief Minister of the TMVP, members of the Eastern Provincial Council, paramilitary groups and NGOs are the main actors in the district in the current context.

DYNAMICS

The internal conflict within the TMVP and increased activity by paramilitary groups has created a tense atmosphere in the district.

The murder of a doctor belonging to the majority ethnic Sinhala community, and the evacuation of doctors and medical staff from Batticaloa, has also created tensions in the district.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

Meaningful action should be taken by the political parties and the Central Government to mitigate the conflict and violence in the district. The Government should press for the disarming of all paramilitary groups operating in the Eastern Province.

Security should also be beefed up, and adequately provided to emergency service providing personnel such as medical personnel.

COLOMBO

STRUCTURES

As the November heralded the coming of the LTTE Heroes' Day commemorations on November 27, security was tightened in expectation of security incidents throughout the country. The district was tense, especially following the regaining of hard won LTTE territory, and the possibility of the LTTE striking out at civilian targets in the city in retaliation. Public protests against issues such as the cost of living temporarily abated in view of such tensions.

Several main roads leading to the Parliament were closed at specific times during the morning and evening, for the duration of the budget debate, causing a degree of inconvenience to the people. Continuous train delays especially during the rush hours continue to be a source of frustration to a large section of the general public who depend on train services.

Petitions were filed in the Supreme Court against the CPC's hedging agreement, urging that the Government reduce fuel prices in accordance with the price decline in the world oil market.

A total of twelve people were killed in the district in connection with robberies and other human rights violations. Meanwhile, heavy rain and flooding resulted in nearly 200 families being displaced.

ACTORS

The Security Forces, the LTTE and political parties were the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

The ongoing battle in the North continues to be a cause for concern to the people of the district, as the possibility of retaliatory attacks on civilian targets looms large.

The people are also hoping that the unpopu-

larity of the Government's hedging agreement with regard to fuel prices, and the petitions filed against it in the Supreme Court will result in the reduction of local fuel prices. According to media reports, the total loss caused to the Government by the fuel agreement would stand at around four billion rupees.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

Aid also needs to be diverted towards those displaced by the floods in Colombo, as the district does not generally tend to be a focal point of NGOs when it comes to the distribution of humanitarian services, when compared to the Eastern and Northern districts.

JAFFNA

STRUCTURES

The security situation in the Jaffna peninsula remains tense with intensified fighting as Government troops continue to advance the FDL towards Pallai.. The intensified fighting led to an increased number of people fleeing LTTE controlled areas and arriving at IDP camps in the district.

Meanwhile, following the highly celebrated capture of Pooneryn, the Government has reportedly eased restrictions imposed on fishing, expanding the available number of hours for fishing in the North.

The annual LTTE Heroes' Day celebrations also lent to tensions in the district, as security was stepped up and an increased number of cordon and search operations were carried

out.

The heavy rains lashing the district caused heavy flooding and displaced a large number of people.

ACTORS

Security Forces, the LTTE, political parties and NGOs operating in the district can be considered the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

Following the recapture of Pooneryn, the people of Jaffna are anticipating the reopening of ground access from Colombo to Jaffna.

The skyrocketing cost of living is also having a crippling effect on the peninsular, with many small scale enterprises shutting down,

and causing a potentially greater burden on the Government in terms of welfare assistance to be provided.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

As the war intensifies and the number of IDPs increase, urgent attention to IDP needs such as the provision of shelter and food and other essential services, is as always, the need of the day.

The relevant authorities also need to take action to provide adequate security and support services in view of the forthcoming O/L examination.

Black market operations also need to be clamped down, and the provision of adequate essential items and services at market

MANNAR

STRUCTURES

Civilians in Mannar are tense as more and more search operations continue and being conducted in the Town, Moor street and hospital street.

It was reported that the paddy cultivation in Mannar has been reduced considerably due to the war. This land area measured 15000 acres of non production land.

Transportation through the Mannar bridge had been stopped due to floods and caused many a people to undergo inconvenience. The heavy rains and flooding continued to

effect the district and its people forcing residents to take shelter in schools and other public buildings.

ACTORS

The government troops, LTTE and the GA, INGO's and NGO personal. Could be considered the main actors in this context.

DYNAMICS

It is not an easy task to foresee what is to come. The civilians struggle in the day to day of their activities, the constant crowding and easing of the IDP's situation also remains to be addressed.

However as human being they live in hope. Although there is no indication of an outbreak of violence in the district Mannar would still have along way to go in its infrastructure development and reconstruction of damaged and affected public/schools

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

Government and humanitarian agencies should work close together in coordinating assistance during disasters/emergencies. A mechanism to alert the people during the monsoons could also be useful as the country arrives the season of rain. This could be an indicator to minimize unforeseen events.

TRINCOMALEE

STRUCTURES

The situation in Trincomalee was relatively stable during the reporting period, except towards the North of the district, in the Mullaitivu area where intense fighting is going on. Cordon and search operations continue, while abductions and killings also occur unabated.

Heavy rains have disrupted the ferry services operating in the area. NGO operations have also been affected by the storms which lashed the area during the month, making roads impassable. The rains have also affected IDPs, with reports of shelters leaking water and unsanitary living conditions, while several civilians have been displaced from their homes due to heavy flooding in the district.

IDPs are gradually returning the Echilampatru area, as much of the area demarcated for resettlement has been cleared by the Government. The authorities together with humanitarian and relief organizations are currently

attempting to provide the resettled IDPs with basic facilities until they are able to generate independent incomes.

ACTORS

The Government, Security Forces, the LTTE, paramilitary groups, members of political parties and NGOs can be considered the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

The recapture of Pooneryn led to security in the district being tightened in anticipation of any retaliatory attacks.

The heavy rains have also badly affected the district, with temporarily constructed IDP shelters providing little or no protections to the families residing in them. The civilians displaced by the floods have also placed an additional burden on the Government and humanitarian assistance in terms of the provision of essential items and services.

Transport services were also continuously

disrupted as roads became impassable and ferry services inoperable in view of the heavy rain and frequent storms.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

The provision of adequate shelter to the IDPs has yet failed to be adequately addressed by the Government. The issue cannot be put on the back burner any more, as the hardships undergone by the IDPs during the recent heavy rains illustrated. Adequate shelter and sanitation must be provided, as well as food and essential services.

A needs assessment should be carried out in the resettled areas in order to plan long term livelihood activities for the resettled IDPs so that they can become self sufficient as soon as possible and ease the burden on the Government and aid agencies. The children of the area also need to be provided with adequate education opportunities, in terms of facilities, services and support.

VAVUNIYA

STRUCTURES

As in several Northern and Eastern districts, cordon and search operations are carried out frequently, as intermittent shelling continues in areas close to the FDL and security forces remain on high alert.

Paramilitary groups are reportedly becoming more active in the area, with several reports of shootings, grenade attacks and killings being reported.

Due to a number of security incidents and concerns, the ICRC temporarily suspended operations at the Omanthai Entry Exit point on 12 November, but resumed operations following security reassurances from the two parties to the conflict assuring the safety of civilians using the Entry Exit point and ICRC staff present there.

At the Interagency Meeting the UN OCHA briefed humanitarian agencies on the meas-

ures agreed upon in order to improve Cluster Coordination and the information flow in response to the situation in the Vanni. The measures include more regular cluster meetings and cluster-specific reporting on emerging issues.

ACTORS

The Security Forces, LTTE, political parties, paramilitary groups, the UN, ICRC and NGOs can be considered the main actors in the current context.

DYNAMICS

Tensions are high among the general public due to a seeming increase in paramilitary activity, including abductions, grenade attacks and killings. The people of the district are reluctant to venture out of their homes and business activity has been adversely affected as a result.

Government authorities and humanitarian

agencies are meanwhile marshalling more resources to deal with an expected influx of IDPs from areas where heavy fighting is taking place. Families displaced by the recent floods in the district are also in need of welfare assistance, which has placed a greater burden on relief agencies, and spread the available resources thin.

STRATEGIES AND OPTIONS

A proper coordination mechanism and emergency plan needs to be put in place to support the increasing number of IDPs, especially in view of the fact that a large influx is expected from the war torn areas as the conflict intensifies.

The Police Force needs to more thoroughly monitor and investigate reports of human rights violations and mobilize itself more to provide adequate protection to the people of the district.

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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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