

## **Is Human Security In Sri Lanka Declining? Challenges and Constraints for human Security in tsunami and war affected areas in Sri Lanka<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

By analyzing Sri Lanka's performance along the economic, physical and political aspects of human security, this paper examines whether human security in the country is declining and how it related overall social development during past two decades. In this paper human security is defined as the political and social security that allows people to live without any threats and challenges. In other words, human security is concerned with reducing and—when possible—removing the insecurities that may affect people's lives. Human security of people can be harnessed by both protection and empowerment strategies. Governments, international agencies and NGOs can shield people from direct and indirect threats by implementing various protection strategies. Likewise strengthening peoples' abilities to act on their own behalf through empowerment strategies is also instrumental to human security. By empowering themselves they can mobilize resources for the security of others and able to protest human rights violations by the state<sup>2</sup>.

Sri Lanka's human security and social development indicate a paradoxical situation. While the successive governments' strong social welfare policies contributed and translated into some of the highest health and education outcomes in the South Asia region, high levels of human development<sup>3</sup> have not translated into equal levels of social development or human security. Social exclusion, driven by ethnicity, language, religion, and conflict, has been deeply embedded for decades, resulting in reduced opportunities and extreme tensions among different groups. More than 80,000 lives have been lost, and an estimated 300,000 people displaced by the conflict between the Tamil Separatist and the Government of Sri Lanka.

Although a cease-fire agreement (CFA) signed in February 2002 between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Rebels (LTTE) has put a hold to hostilities and opening the way for peace negotiations, it has been violated seriously by both the government and the Tamil rebels and conflict has renewed since July 2006. Hope for negotiated settlement for the ethnic conflict is evading fast as both sides of the conflict violate human rights putting the human security of people in at risk.

The country has further plunged into deep trouble as it experienced its worst natural disaster in 2004. The December 2004 tsunami caused widespread devastation along Sri Lanka's eastern, southern and western coasts, damaging about 87,000 houses and affecting about a million people, out of a total population of approximately 20 million. An estimated 40,000 people were killed, about another 4,000 remain missing, and around 418,000 people remain displaced by the disaster. Of those killed, 27,000 belonged to fishing families. Around 65 percent of the country's fishing fleet—29,700 boats—has been completely destroyed or damaged. Although the tsunami struck indiscriminately, the worst hit inhabitants included poor coastal fishermen, people in

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the findings of the four country studies conducted by the IC Net Consultants (USA) and TEAMS (Sri Lanka) funded by the World Bank. Author acknowledges the contribution made by other researchers for this country study

<sup>2</sup> The key publication on human security is *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, New York, 2003. This independent 3 year Commission was launched at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, and dissolved in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the World Bank's definition of work in human development; this includes education, social protection, and health, nutrition and population.

conflict areas, and other vulnerable groups. In terms of wider economic effects, tourism and fishing were the industries hardest hit sectors by the tsunami. Fishing accounts for 3% of GDP while tourism accounts for 4.6% and is an important source of foreign exchange revenue. Beach resorts in the south were badly damaged and tourist arrivals dropped dramatically, at least initially. Though the government and international agencies have made some commendable efforts to restore the livelihood of people affected by tsunami, the human security of affected people still remain in a poor condition. Following section describes how the condition of human security deteriorated over the past few years.

## 1.2 Status of Human Development

The Human Development Report 2005 (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranks Sri Lanka 93<sup>rd</sup> out of 177 countries. Its composite Human Development Index score (HDI) was 0.751, which puts it firmly among those countries ranked as having ‘medium human development’ levels. Relative to other medium HDI countries, its neighbors in South Asia, as well as low income countries<sup>4</sup>, social and economic indicators in Sri Lanka are significantly higher (Table 2). As is discussed later on in this paper, these strong social and economic indicators have not necessarily translated into a stable society whose citizens are all “free from want or fear”.

**Table 1: Sri Lanka Human Development Index compared to other countries**

<i>Index</i>	<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>South Asia</b>	<b>Low Income</b>	<b>Medium HDI</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Source</b>
Life expectancy at birth (years)	74	63.2	58.2	67	2000-2005	UNDP
<i>Infant mortality rate(per 1000 live births)</i>	13	66	80	46	2003	UNDP
Net foreign direct Investment inflows (% of GDP)	1.3	0.6	1.5	2.2	2003	WDI
Traditional fuel consumption (% of total energy requirements)	41.6	24.5	42.2	17.0	2002	UN
Probability at birth of surviving to age 64, male (% of cohort)	76.1	60.1	52.4	64.6	2000-2005	UN

<sup>4</sup> Sri Lanka is considered a lower middle income country with a GDP per capita of US\$3,778 – PPP method; however the HDI has comparative data only for high, medium and low income countries.

## 2. Human Security Levels in Sri Lanka

The measurement of human security differs from measurements of human development, such as that captured in the UNDP's Human Development Index. Based on the HDI, Sri Lanka is a country with 'medium human development' as measured along three basic dimensions: life expectancy, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. For this study 12 indicators have been developed under three aspects: physical, economic and political. Table 3 shows the trend of human security against such indicators

**Table 3 : Long-term Trend of Human Security**

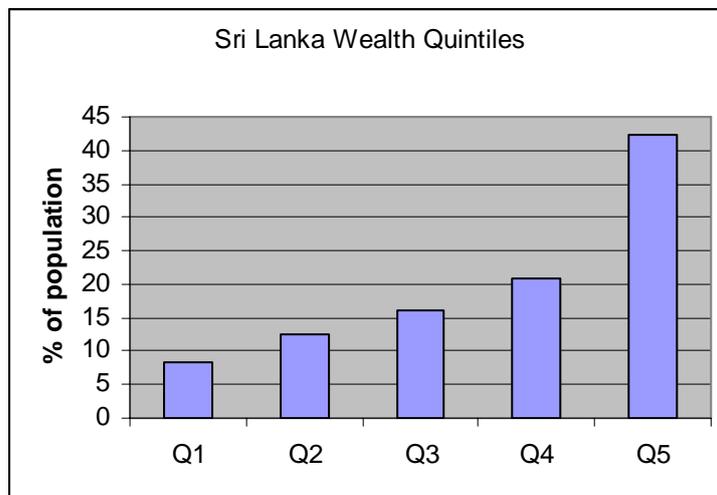
Dimension		Indicator	1980	1990	2000	2003	2004
<b>Physical (Survival)</b>	1	Access to Food (FAO) <i>Population undernourished (% of total population)</i>	20% (1979-1981)	28% (1990-1992)	22 (2000-2002)	NA	NA
	2	Access to Water (WB WDI) <i>Access to safe water (% of total population)</i>	NA	68%	NA	78% (2002)	NA
	3	Conflict Vulnerability (University of Maryland)		NA	5 (2001)	5	5
				-1 (1991-2000)			
	4	Access to health services WB WDI <i>Immunization, measles (% of children ages 12-23 months)</i>	NA	80%	99%	99%	99%
<b>Economic (Livelihoods)</b>	5	Access to education UNESCO <i>Youth Literacy Rate (15-24 years old)</i>	NA	NA	96% (2001)	NA	NA
	6	Access to income WB WDI <i>GNI per capita US\$ (atlas method)</i>	\$280	\$490	\$850	\$930	\$1010
	7	Poverty WB WDI <i>Poverty headcount (% of population living below national poverty line)</i>	NA	20% (1991)	25% (1996)	NA	NA
	8	Access to electricity WB WDI <i>Access to electricity (% of total population)</i>	NA	NA	62%	NA	NA
<b>Political (Dignity)</b>	9	Participation WB Governance Indicators	NA	NA	-0.37	-0.06 (2002)	-0.16
	10	Corruption Vulnerability WB Governance Indicators	NA	NA	-0.09	-0.13 (2002)	-0.16
	11	Access to justice WB Governance Indicators	NA	NA	-0.17	+0.22 (2002)	-0.03
	12	Gender integration UNDP					0.37

As far as physical security (Survival) is concerned Sri Lanka scores well on the four indicators of physical human security. In fact, access to health services scores above 100 (the normative top score) and supersedes that of the average health service access for even "high human development" countries.

The economic aspect (Livelihood) of human security in Sri Lanka is relatively better compared to other countries in South Asia. Per capita income levels (as measured by GDP per capita) are in the lower range and one-quarter of the population is living below the national poverty line. However, the challenge for Sri Lanka is to distribute income and wealth more equally. As seen in Figure 1, the richest 20% of the

population controls 42% of the nation's wealth. Conversely, the poorest 20% hold only 8.3% of assets. In education, even with very high youth literacy rates, the quality of education delivered and equitable access is still an issue.

**Figure 1: Skewed distribution of wealth in Sri Lanka**



Source: World Bank, 1999-2000 data.

Political aspect of human security indicates a mixed picture. Although the indicators on political aspect show relatively high empowerment and access to justice for Sri Lanka's population, qualitative data obtained during field research in the country appears to indicate otherwise. In particular, access to justice and the feeling of a lack of participation was prevalent in the communities studied for this paper. In addition, corruption and financial mismanagement is a persistent issue in Sri Lanka, such as in irregular distribution of tsunami aid funds. The Sri Lanka Auditor General published a report in September 2005 that highlighted for example, that in one divisional secretariat where 599 families had been recorded as being affected by the tsunami, 15,843 households received assistance<sup>5</sup>.

However overall, levels of human security appear to have remained relatively stable in Sri Lanka for at least the past 10 years. One significant improvement has been the country's GDP per capita that grew by 3.6 times between 1980 and 2004. However, as mentioned above the issue is one of equity in distribution of wealth. In addition, magnitude of conflict as measured by the University of Maryland's index has been at a constantly high level. This means that for those parts of the country most directly affected by conflict, levels of physical security are low.

## 2.2 Challenges to Human Security

The ethnic divide between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils, and the ensuing conflict of more than twenty years, is the source of most human security concerns in Sri Lanka. These include: violent conflict; refugees and displaced populations; high mortality rates; poor provision of social services to populations in the north and east (LTTE controlled zones); lack of effective government. However, natural climate factors also contribute to vulnerability in food security, a basic measure of the physical aspect of human security. Two annual monsoon rains divide the country into two agro-ecological regions – the so-called 'dry zone' (yala) of the north and east, and the more fertile 'wet zone' (maha), of the central highlands. The

<sup>5</sup> Interim Report of the Auditor General, September 2005, retrieved on 30 November 2005 from <http://www.auditorgeneral.lk/selectReport.php?sections=12&submit=Select>.

dry north and east is vulnerable to poor harvests and food shortages, which is being countered by a slew of irrigated agriculture projects, supported primarily by international development agencies. This both affects the food security as well as the livelihoods of the people of this part of the country, as there is little agricultural surplus for them to trade. Hence, both natural and man-made factors (conflict) particularly affect the populations of the north and east.

One of the key findings of literature review of this study is that factors supporting human development may not automatically sustain human security. This supports the Amartya Sen's argument which he emphasizes of human development is on upward growth, whereas the priority of human security is protection and safeguarding against "downside risks". One explanation for the paradox in Sri Lanka may be that while in general, the majority of its population is faring fairly well, there are minorities whose lives are adversely affected by both by conflict and by wider exclusion driven by ethnicity, religion and language. These groups include the minority Sri Lankan Tamils whose grievances are well known; also the Indian Tamils who were brought over by British colonials to work on tea plantations roughly two hundred years ago and who remain highly marginalized; and the Muslims, who make up about 8% of the total population. Neither the Indian Tamils nor the Muslim population is involved in the armed struggle for a separate Tamil state. But a considerable number of, Muslim communities living in the North and East of the country are affected by the overall violence in that region. Although the Indian Tamils are concentrated in the central upland tea plantations and are therefore not directly affected by communal violence, they are considered the most marginalized ethnic group in Sri Lanka.

### **2.3 State sponsored programmes to promote human security**

There are no national level policies or agenda by the Government of Sri Lanka to enhance the human security of the people in general. It has not mainstreamed the concept of human security into its poverty reduction policies and programs. However, the work of some line ministries does attempt to address many of issues associated with the concept of human security; in particular the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation which implement nation wide poverty reduction programme called 'Samurdhi' are noteworthy to mention.

The Samurdhi program consists of three components, the main one being cash transfers to low income households. The second component is a savings and credit scheme, and the third is a workfare program based on construction of community infrastructure. However, Samurdhi has come under criticism for weak targeting of intended beneficiaries (the poorest households), resulting in an inefficient program.<sup>6</sup> For example, a World Bank review of the program found that about 44 percent of the total Samurdhi transfer budget is spent on households from the third, fourth, and fifth quintiles—those who are well-off in relative terms. In the wake of the tsunami, the Ministry issued new Samurdhi coupons to all Samurdhi beneficiary families who lost their Samurdhi coupons in the disaster<sup>7</sup>. Feedback from qualitative field research conducted for this study was that many fishing households, now among the most vulnerable of the tsunami-affected population because they lost both homes and livelihoods, are however not receiving Samurdhi benefits. This is because distribution of Samurdhi benefits are based on proven wage levels. Since fishermen

---

<sup>6</sup> See Glinskaya, E., 2004.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily News*, 10 January 2005.

earn money through sales of their catch and do not receive regular waged income, most fishing families in need (both before and after the tsunami) are excluded from Samurdhi because they cannot prove their income levels. On other hand the Shamurdi is not in place in most part of the conflict affected northeast region or so called “ubnclear4ed” areas controlled by the Tamil rebels. Thus as a nation poverty relief programme Shamurdi has number of political and distributional shortcomings.

Specifically addressing the effects of the tsunami on people’s livelihoods and physical security, is the country’s Task Force for Rebuilding of Nation (TAFREN). However, this actually consists of 12 separate task forces covering sectors from housing, to tourism, to livelihoods, education, roads and bridges and so forth. One weakness of TAFREN is that there is no single coordinating task force between the 12 separate sector task forces. TAFREN has dissolved in 2006 and the Ministry of Natural Disaster Management has taken over the key responsibilities of tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks

**Table 2: Sri Lanka Government Human Security-related Policies**

<i>Human Security Category</i>	<i>Key Government Policies</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<i>Physical (Survival)</i>	Rebuilding of, and financial support to households for reconstruction of houses damaged by tsunami.	Aid for reconstruction aimed only at tsunami victims; internally displaced populations, caused by ethnic conflict, left out.
<i>Economic (Livelihoods)</i>	“Samurdhi” program ( cash transfers and other benefits targeting poor households)	Shortcomings in targeting of ‘poor’ households and limited coverage in certain parts of the country in the North East.
<i>Political (Dignity)</i>	Policies and programs implemented by the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Social Welfare	Wide mandate, limited coordination between programs and donors.

#### **2.4 Programmes by donors and international organizations for human security**

With regards to human security, donors and international organizations focus their efforts on two areas: tsunami relief and assistance to conflict affected areas. For example, the United Nations Transition Programme in Sri Lanka focuses on the re-integration of returnees to former conflict areas. This includes support in livelihoods, health and education. UN agencies are active in all provinces, and a host of NGOs, both local and international, swarmed into the country during post-tsunami.

Especially UNCHR and the World Bank actively involved in assisting internally displaced persons by providing humanitarian and infrastructure development projects..

German International Cooperation (GTZ) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are the only international agencies to explicitly use the concept of human security, and to spell out this concept in certain projects. GTZ has an impressive food security projects in the North East during past few years. However, the human security concept is very new to operational field projects for JICA, having been introduced during the past year. There are two 'human security' projects currently funded by JICA in Sri Lanka that follow a community-based approach, and which were in fact designed before the human security framework was issued by JICA headquarters in Tokyo. In addition to its ongoing development assistance to Sri Lanka, the Japanese government also gave a US\$80 million grant to Sri Lanka for emergency rehabilitation following the tsunami, and also a US\$100 million loan for reconstruction. JICA works together with the Ministry of Finance to disburse these monies, and so far has contracted out 80% of the \$80 million grant. This is a very high proportion of grants disbursed, especially when compared with the Sri Lanka Auditor General's report that found that only 13.5% of all foreign aid directed for tsunami assistance, had been disbursed between December 2004 to June 2005<sup>8</sup>.

Besides JICA and the GTZ, UNCHR is the other organization which uses human security as a working concept. Since it is an approach structured by the United Nations UNCHR applies human security framework in assisting people affected by the war and tsunami.

## **2.5 Status of Social Development**

As far as social development is concerned the government had spent a large sum of funds to improve on health, education and social welfare of its population since independence (1948). However there are some critics and shortcomings on this welfare approach which net benefit of such expenditure has not translated into necessarily high levels of social development. This issue has been discussed under three aspects in this section

*Inclusion:* The active exclusion of the main ethnic minority group, the Sri Lankan Tamils, is the most visible example of a lack of inclusion in Sri Lankan mainstream social development.. Although there are no active policies that exclude Sri Lankan Tamils from social, economic and political life, restrictions on traveling without national identity cards, and the alleged blocking of Tamil voters from participating in the elections, coupled with the unwillingness of both the Sinhalese leadership and certain political blocs from finding a acceptable solution to the ethnic conflict; are examples of systematic exclusion.

The Indian (Estate) Tamils, who make up the majority of the population of some provinces are also excluded in certain aspects of mainstream society. Indian Tamils make up 51% of the population, notably the tea-growing area of Nuwara Eliya.<sup>9</sup> The ethnic Tamil workers were originally brought by the British from south India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to work on the tea estates. For example, the issue of citizenship for

---

<sup>8</sup> Interim Report of the Auditor General, September 2005, retrieved on 30 November 2005 from <http://www.auditorgeneral.lk/selectReport.php?sections=12&submit=Select>

<sup>9</sup> Census 2001.

Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka still remains partially unresolved. Although the majority of so-called Indian Tamils were granted citizenship in 1964 (nearly 20 years after Sri Lanka became independent from Britain) Also about 30,000 Indian Tamils living in refugee camps in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu remain citizenless. This group of people had fled to India to escape ethnic conflict, and is now caught in a stateless bind. The majority of Indian Tamils were not granted Sri Lankan citizenship in 1948 at the time of independence, because the Sri Lankan government felt they had Indian ancestry.

The major segment of population that suffer from lack of social and human development is the internally displaced people ( IDP) affected by the war. Especially around 300,000 Muslims of northern districts were evicted by the Tamil rebels in 1990 onward and now are residing in welfare centers and camps in Northwestern district of Puttalam. Their basic rights such as votes, land rights and basic needs such as housing and health are still not satisfactory compared to other people in the country.

*Cohesiveness:* The lack of inclusion for certain segments of the population automatically implies a lack of cohesiveness amongst different population groups. The more than 20 year long civil war in the north and east of the country is an obvious indication of this. In addition, among the Sinhalese majority, there is no consensus as to how to approach the ethnic conflict constructively. Within Sinhalese majority community people are divided along caste, regions, and political party affiliations. One of the biggest challenges or lack of political courage from Sinhalese governments to solve ethnic problem is difficulties in uniting extreme and moderate Sinhalese groups. The All Party Representative Committee (APRC) established by the President of the country is still unable reach a consensus among its members. This is a clear indication of lack of cohesiveness. This is not only among Sinhalese even among Tamils and Muslims have no common agenda to find a lasting solution for the current conflict. These conflicting perceptions were well displayed in the field studies carried out where different ethnic groups blame each other for poor performance in tsunami rehabilitation activities in their areas.

*Accountability:* Corruption is a significant problem in both politics and everyday transactions.

There are about 120 public institutions under review for alleged corruptions and mismanagement of funds. Recently some ministers and ministry officials have been charged for misuse of public funds and favoritisms. There is also a perceived lack of transparency in government decisions. For example, the creation of a 100 meter buffer zone along the coast was declared by the government within days after the tsunami struck. However, this was done without public consultation and what the government now concedes as without a proper technical assessment. The above facts revealed in the secondary data and literature clearly reveals the status of social development at macro level. The following discussions based field level data further illustrates how this situation manifested in public life.

### **3. Findings of field Research in two locations affected by the War and Tsunami**

Field research has been carried out in two locations. The first was in the southern coastal district of Matara. This is a district which was severely hit by the tsunami. Before the tsunami, the coastal communities of Matara enjoyed relatively secure livelihoods based on commercial fishing, both for seafood and from the sale of ornamental fish found in the coral reefs that thrive in the warm waters off the coast. In addition, the tourism trade was a source of income for some segments of the population, noticeably from running guest accommodations and rental of scuba diving

equipment. Many of these small hotels and guesthouses were damaged in the tsunami, and diving equipment lost.

The specific community chosen was Polhena, a village of 815 households located directly next to the sea. It is a predominantly Sinhalese area. Of this population, 97% are Sinhalese/Buddhist and 3% Muslim. The Muslim population mostly lives close to the main road, away from the immediate beach area. The residents of the village were generally considered “middle class” before the tsunami hit. Residents included civil servants, teachers, tradespersons, fishing families, and persons working in tourism, and reportedly, there was not much inequality in wealth levels between residents. That has changed in some ways since the tsunami hit. 102 villagers lost their lives in the tsunami, and every single household was affected in some way, either by the death of a household member or damage to property and livelihoods.

The second site chosen was in Eastern part of the country: Ampara..This District was chosen for the severity of the tsunami as a shock, and also because its ethnic and religious make-up is different from Matara’s predominantly Sinhalese/Buddhist population. This is predominantly an ethnic minority region. The population of Ampara is 39% Buddhist, 17% Hindu, 41% Muslim and 3% Christian, out of 589,344 persons.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3: Scope of Tsunami-Affected Persons in Ampara District**

<b>District</b>	<b>Affected Households</b>	<b>Displaced Households</b>	<b>Persons in Welfare centres</b>	<b>Persons living with Relatives and friends</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ampara	58,729	38,866	24,179	75,322	99,501

The specific community chosen was Periyaneelavanai village, a village that was previously displaced in 1990 due to the war, and then displaced a second time by the events of 26 December 2004. The village actually consists of two communities, one predominantly Tamil, the other Muslim dominated. Muslims (who practice Islam) comprise 60% of the total population of the village, while of the remaining 40% Tamils, 85% of them are Hindu and 15% Christian. The two villages are divided by a trunk road that is off the main road between Ampara and Batticaloa districts. The residents of Periyaneelavanai village were poor even before the tsunami hit them. 62% of the total 786 households received government “Samurdhi” assistance before the tsunami.

The two villages of Polhena, Matara and Peryaneelavanai, Ampara, were thus chosen because of their differing socio-economic situations before the tsunami. The analysis of research findings strives to identify any significant differences in the way the two communities responded to the tsunami emergency, and what this might imply for human security and social development.

### **3.2 Analysis of Research Findings**

---

<sup>10</sup> Care International et al, 2005.

### **i) Impact of the Tsunami at the Community Level – a Comparison of Two Villages**

The aftermath of the tsunami saw the rise of many problems in the two villages studied. The types of problems encountered and the way communities responded to these issues had both similarities and differences. Unfortunately, there is no method to directly compare the way the two communities viewed the severity of the problems they faced. According to focus group discussions, number of problems that are common and some are specific to each communities studied.

The two communities cited irregular aid distribution as the common problem. While those in Polhena saw it as a failure of the overall mechanism (at national and community levels, from both external agencies such as NGOs, as well as their own community-based systems) to distribute aid effectively, people in Periyneelavanai seemed to see it as a more insidious problem of actual discrimination in aid distribution by NGOs. Discussions with villagers – held separately with the Tamil and Muslim communities of the village<sup>11</sup> – revealed that distrust and tension between the ethnic groups had increased post-tsunami, because each felt that the other was receiving preferable treatment in aid. The Muslims felt that the Tamils were receiving more aid from Tamil relief organizations, while the Tamils believed that Muslims were benefiting from Islamic charities.

Other problems cited by both villages were loss of income and employment, general housing problems, and loss of schools and education for children. In Polhena, the ones with their livelihoods most affected were the fishing families. Due to the 100 meter buffer zone restriction, these families who lived close to the coast because of the type of economic activity they pursued (i.e. fishing and ornamental fish capture) were impacted by first, the loss of physical equipment such as boats and nets, and second, the buffer zone restriction that has prevented them from rebuilding both their homes and livelihoods after the tsunami.

Interestingly, aside from the fishermen, some villagers (perhaps with other skills) saw the post-tsunami situation as an opportunity to seek other work, outside of their traditional livelihoods and away from the village. However, tourism in the Matara area has slowed down considerably in the past year, and the few households in Polhena engaged in tourism-related activities, such as guesthouses and diving equipment rental, have seen their incomes fall. However, since these families had earned relatively higher incomes pre-tsunami, they have savings that serve as a financial safety net.

Periyneelavanai had some problems not present in Polhena. The one that stood out was the congestion and bad sanitation in refugee camps and welfare centers. Due to the widespread devastation and high numbers of casualties and damaged homes in Ampara district, many more people had to be housed in camps, as compared to Matara district on the southern coast. Although parts of Sri Lanka's southern coast were severely affected, the impact was varied according to the coastal topography. Therefore, more tsunami-affected persons might have been able to stay temporarily with friends and relatives, rather than to be moved en masse into refugee camps.

---

<sup>11</sup> Separate discussions with the two ethnic groups were held on the second day of the study, after a common community workshop on the first day did not generate much open discussion.

In addition, some residents of Periyaneelavanai were “double affected” by both prior conflict and the tsunami, and were already housed in welfare centers. Due to the crowded conditions in refugee camps, concerns over sanitation and spread of diseases were much higher in Periyaneelavanai than in Polhena. In addition, high cost of food and access to clean food were concerns in Periyaneelavanai, that were not cited in Polhena.

The lack of safe drinking water was also rated as being a serious problem by all community groups in Periyaneelavanai. In Polhena in comparison, every household has access to piped water, but villagers were anxious that the piped (drinking) water might have become contaminated by the effects of the tsunami. They felt that they had no way to test water quality and were on the one hand, fearful, and the on other hand, feeling powerless to do anything about the possible contamination.

Overall, basic survival – one of the three human security ‘pillars’ – is much more at risk in Periyaneelavanai than in Polhena. Most people have their basic needs met in Polhena, although housing remains a problem, in particular for those living within the 100 meter buffer zone, and livelihoods are not assured for many. The sentiment in Polhena is more one of frustration and a feeling of not having control over aid distribution or a say in government policies such as the buffer zone. While not necessarily clearly captured in community deliberations, the concerns of Polhena villagers had more to do with the political aspects of human security, rather than the physical. However, it could be argued that Periyaneelavanai’s weaker ‘survival’ indicators on the human security measure stem from initially having weak *political* security. Low social integration between ethnic groups, leading to low levels of participation and voice and possibly limited access to justice, resulted in violence that escalated on a larger scale into civil war between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils in the North and East. This is the war that the residents of Periyaneelavanai got caught up in, and which has now, together with the tsunami, greatly affected the physical and economic aspects of their human security.

Psychological problems and lack of support for female headed households were of greater concern in Periyaneelavani. While the latter two problems were cited by Polhena residents, they were not priority concerns. Possibly because firstly, a psycho-social support program run by the American Red Cross was successful in Polhena, and secondly, fewer female or single-parent households existed before the tsunami. In Periyneelavanai, there were already many female-headed households before the tsunami, due to ethnic conflict. In contrast in Polhena, single-parent households increased only after the tsunami due to the death of one parent, usually the mother rather than the father, since women (and children) were disproportionately killed by the tidal wave that swept the coast.

## **ii) Community Response and Coping Strategies**

The tsunami was obviously a devastating experience in the lives of all people affected, including those in the two villages studied. The way the communities reacted to the emergency did seem to be influenced by the level of social capital they had before the tsunami.

In Polhena, the community reported that they worked very well together in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, for example, clearing up both large and small-

scale debris, and sheltering relatives and friends whose homes had been damaged. Some positive developments from the tsunami were the rise of a younger generation of community leaders, and the entry of external organizations into village life. The latter gave villagers access to health and social services which did not exist before the tsunami. Overall, villagers reported that community-based organizations were strengthened, partly by this exposure to external agencies, and partly in response to the emergency situation that they had at hand. After the immediate emergency however, some new problems have arisen in the community. As mentioned before, one is the exclusion of residents living within the buffer zone from receiving any housing reconstruction aid. Since the Government's policy is not to build or rebuild within 100 meters of the coast, NGOs both local and international, have had to adhere to the Government's policy and have not been able to extend reconstruction assistance to these villagers. These villagers are then also "doubly affected", first by the tsunami, then as victims of an ill-conceived policy.

Another social problem arising from the tsunami is the increasing difference in economic status among villagers. Essentially, there is a rich-poor gap emerging in Polhena, which did not exist before in this predominantly middle class (relative to the rural Sri Lanka situation) village. Among those living in the buffer zone who depend predominantly on fishing for their livelihoods, this rich-poor gap arose from the erosion of fishing producer groups, and the exploitation of smaller fishermen, by larger scale fishermen. In other parts of the village, there is a different situation in that the social structure has been overturned since the tsunami – the rich were more greatly affected by the tsunami due to losses of physical assets (house, fishing boat, car), whereas the poorer households had less to begin with, and so suffered a relatively smaller economic loss.

In Periyneelavanai, the ability of the village as a whole to deal collectively with the tsunami emergency was weakened by a lack of cohesion between the Tamil and Muslim residents of the village. Relief efforts soon became directed to either Tamil or Muslim audiences, depending on the agency that provided the assistance. This was more the case for the numerous local NGOs that came into the village, and less among the international agencies. It was evident in the filed observations that ethnic tensions worsened as a result of this perceived bias in aid delivery.

### **iii) The Role of External Agencies**

Both local and international non-government organizations (NGOs) are active in Polhena and Periyneelavanai following the tsunami. In both villages, a swarm of NGOs entered to help but with mixed and differing results.

There are about 20 active NGOs in Periyneelavanai, some of whom were already present in the community before the tsunami and were working on conflict relief activities. A number of these are also working on post-conflict issues. This overlap is coordinated within each organization with varying degrees of success in ensuring that aid is equitably distributed between tsunami-affected residents, and conflict-affected residents, or those which are affected by both.

The weak point is coordination between agencies, and in particular, coordination between the many NGOs, especially smaller local NGOs, who in the villagers' minds at least are serving only specific groups. That is, either the Muslim community or the

Tamil community, but rarely both. Both the Muslim and Tamil communities within Periyneelavanai explained the presence of a large number of NGOs as being a) because of the extent of destruction in the village; b) because the NGOs – those with religious and ethnic affiliations – were responding to personal appeals from members of their communities. These divisions – real or perceived – has caused tension between the Muslim and Tamil residents of Periyneelavanai, and has substantially weakened their will to work together to rebuild after the tsunami. In addition, lack of coordination among NGOs in Periyneelavanai has resulted in duplication of relief efforts and relatively limited visible progress, in terms of reconstruction of the village, ten months after disaster struck.

Polhena also has a fair number of agencies and NGOs working inside the village, although not as many as in Periyneelavanai. Initial tsunami relief and temporary shelter was provided by UNHCR and later international NGOs arrived as well. One of the most active ones in the village is the Hungarian Church Aid group, which is funding the reconstruction of 43 houses in the village. On the one hand, this was viewed as very positive, on the other hand, people originally living within the buffer zone feel discriminated against because none of their houses are marked for rebuilding and this is causing some tension within the community.

One of the interesting observations in study locations is the meager role played by the political parties and the government organizations that should deliver services to affected groups. In both villages, the work of Government ministries or offices was rarely mentioned. Government was seen in Polhena as providing funds for housing reconstruction, but other Government actions were regarded as negative. In Polhena, the 100m buffer zone policy was the most contentious, and villagers also mentioned that Government had not rehabilitated access roads into the village. Government's activities towards post tsunami rehabilitation are very weak in Periyaneelavanai and NGOs are taking upper hand in such activities.

#### **4. Conclusions**

From the case study of two villages affected by the tsunami (and ethnic conflict in one case) in Sri Lanka, a few broad observations can be made on the relationship between human security and social development. First is that “levels of social development, in particular social capital, affect the ability of communities to cope with the tsunami disaster, thus affecting overall human security”. The social tension between ethnic groups, Tamil and Muslim, in Periyneelavanai is an indicator of this observation. Secondly, levels of transparency and accountability of agencies, both external and internal to the community (the political dimension of human security), are important to ensure efficient and equitable distribution of aid (the physical dimension of human security). At the community level, the lack of transparency in aid distribution and coordination among different groups in Periyneelavanai and Polhena indicate this. At the national level, the low disbursement of total foreign aid received shows how these elements of human security are linked.

Thirdly, access to livelihood (economic) is a function of both physical and political dimensions of human security. There must be both physical access to economic activities, as well as a policy framework that promotes appropriate economic sectors and job creation. This was seen in Polhena where fishermen could not carry out fishing activities because first, they lacked equipment, and second, were also

hampered by government policy from doing so, because they were not allowed to build the infrastructure they needed.

Overall, secondary data and field findings strongly supports the argument that higher level of social development not necessarily ensures human security of people in a highly volatile political context of the society. The study also found that both at macro and micro level, human security is at a declining trend and warrant careful investigation and policy reforms to arrest this situation.

## References

Auditor General, Sri Lanka, 2005. "Interim Report of the Auditor General on the Rehabilitation of the losses and Damages caused to Sri Lanka by the Tsunami Disaster on 26 December 2004, carried out up to 30 June 2005". Retrieved on 30 November 2005 from <http://www.auditorgeneral.lk/selectReport.php?sections=12&submit=Select>

Care International, Christian Aid, Jaffna Social Action Centre, Oxfam, Norwegian Refugee Council, Zoa Refugee Care, UNDP , OCHA, UNHCR, 2005. "The Internally Displaced in Sri Lanka, draft discussion paper on Equity, October 2005". Sri Lanka.

Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2001. Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka.

Commission on Human Security, 2003. "Human Security Now". United Nations, New York.

Glinskaya, E., 2003. "An Empirical Evaluation of Samurdhi Program, background paper to Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment." World Bank, Washington D.C.

Kaufmann D., A. Kraay and M. Mastruzzi, 2005. "Governance Matters IV: Governance Indicators for 1996-2004". World Bank, Washington D.C.

NORAD Development Cooperation Manual. Retrieved on 30 November 2005 from [http://www.norad.no/default.asp?V\\_ITEM\\_ID=3131](http://www.norad.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=3131)

PTI, 2005. "Tsunami aid misused in Sri Lanka: Auditor General, 25 September 2005". Retrieved on 30 November 2005 from <http://www.rediff.com/news/2005/sep/25sl.htm>

UNDP, 2005. "Human Development Report 2005." United Nations, New York.

World Bank, 2004. "*Empowering People By Transforming Institutions: Social Development in World Bank Operations*", December 16, 2004. Social Development Unit, ESSD, World Bank.