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Sri Lanka's Post-Conflict Strategy: Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities

by Iromi Dharmawardhane

Abstract [1]

Following the Sri Lankan Government's military defeat of the internationally proscribed terrorist organisation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009, Sri Lanka embarked on an essential and long-term twofold post-conflict strategy: (i) rehabilitation and reintegration of former LTTE combatants, and (ii) the rebuilding of the conflict-affected Tamil communities of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The rehabilitation program was by many counts a success, with demonstrated cognitive transformation in attitudes and behaviour of most of the (formerly) radicalised combatants. Reconciliation initiatives were implemented to fulfill the urgent social, political, and economic needs of the conflict-affected communities of the North and East. These reconciliation efforts continue to be implemented and comprise different measures taken in: (1) resettlement and humanitarian assistance, (2) reconstruction of key transport, economic, health, and social infrastructure for reintegration, (3) political engagement, and (4) various types of peace-building work. Sri Lanka's post-conflict strategy adopts a holistic approach, seeking the contribution of the public sector, private sector, community organisations, international organisations, NGOs, and private individuals from different segments of society in Sri Lanka. However, despite the many effective state-led and other reconciliation efforts undertaken by Sri Lanka, the author is able to present a number of recommendations to the government of Sri Lanka to overcome shortcomings in the rehabilitation and reconciliation programs adopted, as well as other challenges faced by Sri Lanka, such as the relentless disinformation campaign against the Sri Lankan state pursued by the remnant LTTE cells surviving internationally. To understand the complex nature of the Sri Lankan conflict and the skillful disinformation campaign pursued against the Sri Lankan state by the LTTE's transnational network, a comprehensive introduction is provided as a part of this article.

Introduction to the Post-Conflict Circumstances and History of the Sri Lankan Conflict

The three decades long "Sri Lankan conflict" came to a conclusive end in May 2009, following the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers, an internationally proscribed terrorist organisation. The LTTE was notorious for its vile terror tactics such as the use of suicide bombers in carrying out attacks on civilians and the country's leadership[2], the abducting of children for recruitment as child soldiers[3], forced money collection from Tamils with threats to life in case of non-compliance[4], attacks on the country's economic infrastructure such as the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the only international airport, "ethnic cleansing" of Sinhalese and Muslims from the North and East of Sri Lanka[5], the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the assassination of Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, the systematic assassination of more than 40

prominent mainstream Tamil political leaders, including the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar[6], and deliberately inflicting casualties by holding civilians as human shields during the final phase of the war and shooting at those who attempted to flee [7].

However, some news reports that have appeared internationally in the post-conflict years, have attempted to undermine the moral legitimacy of the present Sri Lankan government, by charging war crimes due to alleged high numbers of Tamil civilian casualties and cases of torture. They do not attribute names to their sources[8], and choose not to call for the prosecution of the LTTE cells and front organisations which continue to operate outside of Sri Lanka [9]. These statements have not only dampened Sri Lanka's hard-won victory over one of the world's most lethal terrorist groups[10], it has brought suspicion over some remarkable and globally unprecedented post-conflict reconciliation efforts undertaken by the Sri Lankan government.



It is instructive to explore these grave allegations briefly, so that some very effective reconciliation measures adopted by the Sri Lankan state can be appreciated fully. The number of civilian casualties in the last phase of the war presented by different sources varies greatly. Fundamentally, the civilian casualty figure of the Sri Lankan war remains unknown.[11] Gordon Weiss, a former United Nations official in Sri Lanka, estimated 7,000 civilian deaths in 2009, but this figure was not accepted by Sir John Holmes, the then UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who said this figure was “unverified and unreliable”. [12] The United States government had received information from an unnamed organisation that 6,710 people - civilians and LTTE combatants - had died from January 20 to April 20, 2009. [13] Sri Lanka's Defence Seminar 2013 revealed that the civilian death toll is likely to have been between 2,000 and 3,000 in the final phase of the war in May 2009. [14]

The two “leaked” United Nations internal reports, the Darusman Report in March 2011 and the Petrie Report in November 2012, claimed 40,000 civilian casualties and 70,000 individuals “unaccounted for”. Both gained much media attention. No sources were named in these reports to substantiate this very high number of civilian casualties. [15] Sri Lanka views these two documents as unjust in their treatment of the Sri Lankan conflict and unsubstantiated in their content. [16] An article of the British newspaper *The Guardian* noted that, “...privately, UN staff admitted they were puzzled by the methodology used to achieve the new death toll”, and that one official stated that “Someone has made an imaginative leap and that is at odds with what we have been saying before... It is a very dangerous thing to do to start making extrapolations.” [17] Sri Lanka is also plagued by the call by the United Nations Human Rights

Commissioner for an international inquiry, “in the absence of meaningful progress on accountability” with regard to civilian deaths during the last phase of the war.[18]

Given the fact that the LTTE was a despotically run militant organisation[19] that directly threatened the sovereignty of Sri Lanka and the security of its people, the Sri Lankan government asserts that these views do not take into account the “principles of self-defence or reasonableness of retaliation, proportionality, or a technical analysis of the trajectories of the shells allegedly fired, to determine their source.”[20] It also has to be kept in mind that the LTTE was the only guerrilla-cum-terrorist group in the world which had an infantry (“Military”, which included an elite fighting wing and the “Black Tigers” suicide commando unit), a maritime wing with a shipping fleet (“Sea Tigers”), an air wing (“Air Tigers”), a highly secretive intelligence group (“Snow Tigers”[21]), as well as international political and procurement offices.[22]

The British television station “Channel 4” produced three documentaries in 2011, 2012, and 2013[23] which include video footage of the victims of the Sri Lankan war, among them children and patients in hospitals, from the final phase of the war. It is conspicuous that these reports do not explain that the LTTE deliberately used civilian posts such as hospitals and schools to operate heavy weaponry during the final phases of the war.[24] These videos contain evidence of manipulation such as upside-down editing, sequences being reversed, and individuals likely to be LTTE combatants being depicted as members of the Sri Lankan Army. [25] These Channel 4 productions have also been accused of “mix[ing] footage with comment from unnamed sources with distorted voices and shadowed faces” and that the commentaries were “intemperate and partisan, and it was all held together by assumptions.”[26] Jacques de Maio, Head of Operations for South Asia for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), stated that, “the LTTE had tried to keep civilians in the middle of a permanent state of violence. It saw the civilian population as a ‘protective asset’ and kept its fighters embedded amongst them.”[27] In 2011, the Sri Lankan government stated that, “it was impossible in a battle of this magnitude, against a ruthless opponent actively endangering civilians, for civilian casualties to be avoided.”[28]

News reports of alleged torture, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)’s “Tamils still being raped and tortured in Sri Lanka” by Frances Harrison (November 9, 2013)[29], have also been produced and circulated internationally. In the Frances Harrison video report, twelve people, including former LTTE combatants, are identified as victims of torture and rape. Their faces are shown, but names are withheld. The Sri Lankan High Commission in the United Kingdom has made a statement in response, saying that: “...It is not fair to ask for a response on claims based on anonymous testimony,” the individuals who claimed to be victims were likely “paid to discredit Sri Lanka” and are likely to have been tortured by the LTTE in the past. The Sri Lankan government has firmly refuted that it has engaged in systematic torture and rape or deliberate targeting of civilians during or after conflict, and asserts instead that members of the LTTE have fabricated testimonies to seek asylum in Western countries[30].[31].

It seems that the Sri Lankan government may be battling a propaganda war conceptualised by LTTE elements surviving abroad. It has been assessed that “the LTTE international propaganda war is conducted at an extremely sophisticated level.”[32] In order to counter the LTTE’s “propaganda war effort”[33], diplomats and politicians of the Sri Lankan state have only relatively recently begun to appeal to foreign governments and expatriate Sri Lankans, including politically mainstream Tamils, in an effort to project ground realities in Sri Lanka and expose the systematically propagated disinformation campaign of the LTTE. Presently, the LTTE primarily exists overseas in the form of the Nediyan faction (“Oslo group”)[34], Joe Emmanuel faction (“London group”: Global Tamil Forum and British Tamils Forum)[35], Rudrakumaran faction/ Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (“New York group”)[36], and Vinyagam faction (“Brussels group”)[37].[38] The LTTE has a presence in 44 countries outside Sri Lanka, with established structures in twelve of them.[39] Some of the most active pro-LTTE lobby groups are located in Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, United States, Switzerland, and France.[40] Pro-LTTE front organisations exist also in India, Germany, and Australia, corresponding to the large number of diaspora Tamils that have settled in the respective countries.[41] The Tamil diaspora provided the LTTE with approximately US \$300 million a year[42]; 90-95% of the LTTE’s funds in Sri Lanka came from overseas.[43]

However, despite the LTTE’s powerful disinformation campaign, issues of civilian casualties and incidents of torture are grave allegations that call for an immediate response by the Sri Lankan authorities. Although Sri Lanka’s government is indignant about unscrupulous reporting, to dismantle false narratives and work towards a sustainable peace for Sri Lanka, it must strive to adopt a strategic public relations campaign to portray an accurate depiction of the end phase of the conflict to international audiences. Investigation into allegations is paramount also so that perpetrators of violence, such as rape and torture, can be prosecuted. Like in Pakistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Iraq, isolated cases of atrocities by government forces are likely to have occurred in Sri Lanka as well.

The many facets of the Sri Lankan conflict make its contextualisation complex.[44] This is due to the protracted nature of the LTTE terrorist insurgency, the LTTE’s international network, the ancient, pre-colonial, and colonial history of Sri Lanka, domestic political and social developments in the past 40 years, and the nature of international politics.

The post-colonial grievances of the Sinhalese preceded those of the Tamils. The British pre-independence support of Christianity and the English language[45] had led to the powerful state sector being dominated by the urban class of English-educated Christian Tamils and Burghers[46], as well as Christian Sinhalese in Colombo during colonial rule.[47] Under British colonial rule, English-language medium level schools were also established in Jaffna[48] by the British administration and were thus attended by the Tamils in Jaffna.[49] However, 95% of the then 6.6 million Sinhalese population lived away from Colombo and were educated in Sinhalese.[50] Most of the Sinhalese were thus prevented from obtaining white-collar jobs in the state sector, for example, civil service entrance examinations were conducted only in English. As a consequence of the British colonial administration’s “divide

and rule” tactic, the Sri Lankan Tamils were also treated as a “majority community” and given equal (not proportionate) political representation to the Sinhalese during British colonial times[51] – despite the fact that they accounted for only 12% of the country’s population while the Sinhalese accounted for 70% of the population.[52] Being the majority and having functioned in a Sinhala-Buddhist social context for millennia, the Sinhalese were less inclined to adopt English as their first language or Christianity as their religion.

Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike’s post-Independence government sought to change opportunity structures and include the marginalised Sinhalese into the economy and administration of the country through the Sinhala-Only language policy,[53] it was not fair to the Tamils and other minority communities. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who succeeded her husband as Prime Minister and leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1960[54], followed the Sinhala-Only language policy aggressively. She removed Article 29 of the 1948 Constitution, which contained special provisions for minorities. In 1972, the constitution was changed, making Sri Lanka a republic, with no elements of federalism. The Sirimavo Bandaranaike government introduced the Standardisation Policy which made university admission criteria lower for Sinhalese than for Tamils (the score was “standardised” relative to members of other ethnic groups)[55], as there was an overrepresentation of Tamil students in higher education institutions at this time (e.g. in the Engineering and Science fields, the percentages of Tamil students were 48% and 49% respectively)[56].

The Sinhala-Only state policies triggered a wave of Tamil aspirations for a separate state. There grew a Tamil militant underground movement supported by Tamil youth, collectively known as the Tamil Tigers.[57] The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)[58] led by Velupillai Prabhakaran was founded in 1972, and was the most dominant among the several separatist, mostly militant, groups that existed at the time.[59] The LTTE was responsible for the killing of the (Tamil) Mayor of Jaffna in 1975, a supporter of the SLFP mainstream political party.[60]

The 1977 elections made J. R. Jayawardene of the United National Party (UNP) the head of government. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was the largest oppositional party in parliament at the time. Jayawardene changed the constitution in 1978, replacing the parliamentary government with a presidential system.[61] The 1978 Constitution included substantial provisions for Tamils in an effort to secure peace, by giving Tamil the status of a national language and allowing Tamil to be used in administration and education at several levels, abrogating the Standardisation Policy which had made it more difficult for Tamil students to enter university, offering top positions in government to Tamils including Minister of Justice, and calling for an All-Party Conference to resolve the country’s ethnic tensions.[62] However, the Tamil Tigers increased their terrorist attacks on the Sinhalese civilian population in their call for a separate state, which led to Sinhalese counterattacks against Tamils, and served to put a halt to any negotiations through an All-Party Conference.[63]

In 1983, the most gruesome ethnic riots erupted leading to the deaths of hundreds if not thousands of Tamils in Colombo by the hands of organised Sinhalese extremist gangs.[64] The

Sinhalese mob violence began as a reaction to the ambush of a Sri Lankan Army patrol in Jaffna by the LTTE, which killed thirteen Sinhalese soldiers.[65] The nature of the atrocities was extremely savage.[66] Similar atrocities were inflicted on the Sinhalese who lived in Tamil areas.[67] Approximately 150,000 Tamils fled Sri Lanka after the (Black) July 1983 ethnic riots, [68] forming the Tamil diaspora (presently numbering approximately 800,000 people[69]).

Meanwhile, between 1977 and 1987, the LTTE took control over the Northern areas by fighting the Sri Lankan Army and murdering any Tamils who opposed them – killing many more Tamils in this process than the (predominately Sinhalese) Sri Lankan Army.[70] The LTTE's first terrorist attack was carried out in 1987 with a suicide bombing at a Sri Lankan Army camp in Jaffna, which killed 40 members of the Sri Lankan security forces.[71] The LTTE's first terrorist attack against civilians occurred in 1984, targeting civilian settlements at Dollar Farm and Kent Farm in Jaffna, killing 62 civilians, including women and children.[72] The LTTE has carried out about 400 suicide attacks between 1987 and 2009, killing hundreds of civilians and injuring many more.[73] Between February 2002 to April 2007, the LTTE violated ceasefire agreements 3,830 times, while the Sri Lankan government (in turn) violated ceasefire agreements 351 times.[74]

The LTTE simultaneously followed an aggressive disinformation campaign overseas to raise funds for its operations in Sri Lanka, accusing the Sri Lankan government of discrimination and ethnic genocide.[75] The LTTE's disinformation campaign included the map of an invented "Tamil Eelam" territory inside of Sri Lanka, as the Tamil homeland in the North and East of the island (covering more than one-third of Sri Lanka's land mass and two-thirds of its coastline).[76] However, historically all parts of the island were known to have been multiethnic in composition from earliest recorded history.[77] The Eastern Province was 58% Sinhalese and Muslim in ethnic composition in 1985, prior to the "ethnic cleansing" of Sinhalese and Muslims from the North and East by the LTTE.[78] At present, the population of the commercial capital of Colombo is approximately evenly divided between the Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims. Although two-thirds of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka lived in the South and other parts of Sri Lanka throughout the years of conflict[79], from its inception until its last days in May 2009, the LTTE did not propose anything other than the demand for a separate state for Tamils.[80]

Although there was a consensus among Sri Lankan Tamils in the 1970s and 1980s regarding the creation of a separate state for Tamils, the majority of the Tamils living in Sri Lanka have relinquished the separatist agenda, as state policies have changed significantly during the past 40 years, with no overtly ethnically discriminatory state policies currently in place. Most Tamils in Sri Lanka also renounced their support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) insurgency due to the increased use of terror tactics.[81] Supporters of the LTTE live mainly outside of Sri Lanka, as described above. These include Tamils that left Sri Lanka during the past 50 years due to the change in the language policy, ethnic riots during the 1950s and the early 1980s, as well as for economic reasons. One common factor that binds these individuals is that they harbour painful memories of Sri Lanka, which has grown into a hatred

for the government, irrespective of constructive domestic political and social progress. LTTE cells overseas and supportive diaspora groups continue to call for a separate state within the island's land mass. However, there is a second, smaller group of Tamils living outside of Sri Lanka, who politically oppose the LTTE. This group is most prominent in London (which includes the Expatriate Tamil Association); it holds regular demonstrations against the LTTE there.[82]

It is also crucial to understand the historical and cultural realities of Sri Lanka.[83] Due to its history as a trading centre since ancient times, Sri Lanka's culture has been described as having a "strong cosmopolitan flavour" and "multicultural ethos"[84].[85] To illustrate, two of the major religious sites of Sri Lanka, Sri Padha/ Adam's Peak[86] and the Katharagama temple, are sacred to followers of several faiths at once; the former for the Buddhists (who are Sinhalese), the Hindus (who are Tamil), and the Muslims (who are ethnic Moors and others), and the latter for the Buddhists and the Hindus.[87] Pilgrims of the different religions/ ethnicities have always visited these sites side by side in mutual respect. Further, the Sinhalese and Tamils (and other ethnic groups) lived peacefully in the country throughout the years of conflict (except for some border Sinhalese villages which the LTTE regularly attacked and raided, killing and torturing the villagers in the process[88]). It is notable that there were no incidents of communal violence against Tamils by the Sinhalese, despite the LTTE's regular terrorist attacks targeting the Sinhalese civilian population since 1984.[89] Hence, the post-colonial ethnic riots of the 1950s and 1980s seem a stark aberration to the traditionally harmonious ethnic relations between the majority of Sri Lankans.

Sri Lanka has suffered tremendously between 1983 and 2009, and pronouncedly so due to systematic terrorist attacks targeting civilians and, during the final phase of the war, when many civilians were trapped in gunfire. Altogether, more than 70,000 lives were lost over the three decades of conflict[90] - a figure that is not disputed. The Sri Lankan government must make every effort to heal these wounds, especially of those who suffered the most as a community, the conflict-affected, predominately Tamil population in the north. While much remains to be done, it is also apparent that the Sri Lankan government is making strides in its efforts to rebuild the war-torn country.

This article seeks to describe some of the bold and hopefully enduring steps taken by the Sri Lankan government through a twofold post-conflict strategy: (I) restorative justice for former LTTE combatants, and (II) rebuilding of the conflict-affected, predominantly Tamil communities living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Sri Lanka's post-conflict strategy has also embraced a holistic approach to national reconciliation by seeking the contribution of the private sector, community organisations, international organisations, NGOs, as well as private individuals from different segments of society in Sri Lanka. In September 2013, during the 24th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), many UNHRC member states[91] commended the significant progress made by the Sri Lankan government in the areas of rehabilitation, resettlement, resolution of land issues, demining, livelihood development, and issues of accountability.[92]

Sri Lanka's Innovative Rehabilitation Program for Former LTTE Combatants

Restorative justice for former LTTE combatants involved the rehabilitation, reinsertion, and reintegration of 11,481 former LTTE combatants, including 594 child soldiers (as of January 2013).[93] This figure includes 10,329 of the approximately 12,000 LTTE members who surrendered or were detained at the end of the conflict, and were rehabilitated and reintegrated into society by October 2011.[94] These rehabilitees were reintegrated into the community within the two-year stipulated period, while child beneficiaries completed their rehabilitation and reintegration within one year.[95] The Presidential Amnesty issued in support of restorative justice for LTTE members at the end of the conflict, an act which directly promotes reconciliation, stands in opposition to retributive justice which seeks to punish individuals for their wrongdoings through the judicial and prison systems. Despite Sri Lanka being a nation which suffered severe damage to its social, political, and economic development[96] due to the LTTE's decades-long insurgency, Sri Lankans were able to identify many members of the LTTE as victims of radicalisation. Sri Lankan society has always known about the LTTE leadership's long-established and calculated strategy of indoctrinating a violent separatist ideology into Tamil people[97]. It was also well-known that the LTTE propagated what many considered disinformation among the Tamil community in the North and East of Sri Lanka and the Tamil diaspora living abroad[98]. Sri Lankans were also familiar with the LTTE's ruthless tactic of abducting school children for recruitment as child soldiers.[99] Restorative justice is not new to the country; it is very much a part of the Sri Lankan spiritual heritage of forgiveness, which understands that social development involves the transformation of individuals, not their prolonged imprisonment or death. It should be noted that, unlike in Sri Lanka, in some countries, such as Jordan and Yemen, the lack of sustained political will and popular support undermined the sustainability of similar rehabilitation (deradicalisation) programs.[100]

The program "Way-Forward on Rehabilitation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration" (W-RRR) of Sri Lanka's Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation (BCGR) was designed in compliance with international principles, guidelines, and best practices, as well as with due consideration to the unique requirements emerging from the context of the Sri Lankan conflict. In one of the world's most developed rehabilitation programs for radicalised combatants, each beneficiary (i.e. former combatant) was first subjected to psycho-social and socio-economic profiling and categorised as belonging to a "low", "medium", or "high" risk groups, according to the depth, period, and activities of her/his involvement within the LTTE organisation.[101] The 24 Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centres (PARCs) in different parts of Sri Lanka were managed by Sri Lankan Army personnel, while the approximately 254 staff who directly interacted with the rehabilitees were primarily professional educators or school teachers from the Army Cadet Corps who were trained in psychological counseling.[102] Approximately USD 9,136,370 was spent by the Sri Lankan government for the rehabilitation of former LTTE combatants between January 2009 and September 2012.[103] This sum does not include the (initial) smaller contributions in funds

and other resources made by the United Nations International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, international NGOs, several Western and other governments, local NGOs, and Sri Lankan private sector organisations.

Several United Nations and humanitarian agencies, notably the IOM and HALO Trust, assisted the Sri Lankan government in the rehabilitation of former combatants through a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program (DDG) in 2009, as well as in the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The IOM, trusted by the Sri Lankan government, had access to IDP welfare and rehabilitation centres throughout the combatant rehabilitation process.[104]

The components of the Sri Lankan “6+1 Model” rehabilitation program included: (1) Educational Rehabilitation, (2) Vocational Rehabilitation, (3) Psychosocial and Creative Therapies for Rehabilitation, (4) Social, Cultural, and Family Rehabilitation, (5) Spiritual and Religious Rehabilitation, (6) Recreational Rehabilitation, and (+) Community Engagement. An aftercare system was also put in place for the rehabilitees who required livelihood support once the rehabilitation program was completed. This was in the form of guaranteed wage employment in the newly established Civil Defence Force and Navy Coastguard in the government sector, or support for self-employment through micro-finance facilities and business support services.

The rehabilitation program in Sri Lanka was led by two internationally experienced Sri Lankan psychologists, Malkanthi Hettiarachchi and Peshali Fernando[105]. It was designed according to the rehabilitation model developed by Singapore’s International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research(ICPVTR).[106] The research staff from ICPVTR which included experts in rehabilitation from the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) of Singapore, assisted the Sri Lankan government in designing and implementing its rehabilitation program from October 2009 onwards.[107] However, the rehabilitation program was “indigenised” to suit the Sri Lankan culture.[108] The IOM provided crucial technical assistance for the vocational rehabilitation and reintegration programs. It also facilitated study tours for relevant Sri Lankan government officials to study the rehabilitation programs in Colombia.[109]

The components of the Sri Lankan “6+1 Model” rehabilitation program are described in detail in an article entitled “Sri Lanka’s Rehabilitation Program: A New Frontier in Counter-terrorism and Counter-insurgency”, recently published in *PRISM: Journal of the Centre for Complex Operations* by Malkanthi Hettiarachchi[110], lead psychologist of Sri Lanka’s rehabilitation program. Some details relating to the components of the rehabilitation program provided in the following paragraphs are based on the *PRISM* article.

The Educational Rehabilitation included providing formal education to beneficiaries under 18 years of age within a residential school environment for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary and Advanced Level Examinations, as only 60% of the beneficiaries under 18 had studied up to the national standard of Ordinary Level (Grade 10). Adult supplementary

education was also provided, as 10 - 25% of adult beneficiaries could not read and write in the Tamil language, and the majority did not understand Sinhala or English.

Vocational Rehabilitation included skills development for Agriculture, Carpentry, Masonry, Motor Mechanics, Beauty Culture, Garment and Textiles, Information Technology, and other industries for which there is a (labour) market demand. The forty-two vocational training programs conducted were also based on the beneficiaries' interests, their families' traditional vocations and businesses, and regional vocational opportunities. The vocational programs were partly held within the rehabilitation centres, and partly externally run by local and foreign NGOs, private businesses, state ministries, and volunteer organisations. Several Sri Lankan blue chip companies supported the vocational training programs by building the vocational skills of former combatants, and by providing them with employment in the companies upon completion of the rehabilitation program. The beneficiaries' desire for vocational training and employment was seen to gradually increase as their period in rehabilitation progressed.

A major component of the Psycho-social and Creative Rehabilitation program was the in-house counseling provided to beneficiaries. The Centre staff was trained in psychological counseling and advanced psycho-social skills by a clinical psychologist, a counseling psychologist, counselors, therapists, and other professionals in psychology. The Mentorship Program was a part of the Psycho-social Rehabilitation program, in which well-respected persons of the Sri Lankan Tamil community acted as mentors for the beneficiaries. Creative therapies, known to have a healing effect on many, helped many beneficiaries to express their inner thoughts and feelings through artistic means.

Social, Cultural, and Family Rehabilitation included social and educational tours to different parts of Sri Lanka to gain an understanding of the diversity within the island. These included visits to universities, schools, and other developments in Colombo, the ethnically diverse commercial capital of Sri Lanka. [111] Family Rehabilitation consisted of visits by family or next of kin in a friendly atmosphere conducive to rehabilitation, writing and receiving of letters, and visits to home villages in the event of a celebration, illness, or a death in the family.

The Spiritual and Religious Rehabilitation was seen to have a strong impact in helping beneficiaries to emotionally and morally reconcile with their past and develop a state of inner peace, so that they are psychologically in a position to look to the future. The spiritual programs that were conducted included yoga and meditation sessions, also encompassing mindfulness (*vipassana*) training. Group religious ceremonies with rites and rituals were conducted, based on a beneficiary's faith. These ceremonies were led by religious leaders of the respective Hindu, Christian, and Satya Sai faiths.

Recreational Rehabilitation included beneficiary participation in team sports such as cricket, volleyball, and traditional team sports. Recreational Rehabilitation also included engaging in other forms of physical exercise for an allocated period of time each day.

The rehabilitated former LTTE combatants were “reinserted” (resettled) in their original homes with a three-month reinsertion assistance package that was meant to meet their preliminary basic needs in terms of shelter, food, clothing, and healthcare. This process sought to rely on community-based support structures. The final phase of the W-RRR program, the reintegration of former combatants into their home communities, constituted the two aspects of social integration and economic integration. The (+1) Community Engagement component of the rehabilitation program helped to work towards social integration. Community engagement was vital to overcome the anger and resentment held by some members of the Tamil community living in villages in the North and East, who were persecuted by the LTTE or had been held hostage by the LTTE during the final stages of the war.[112] Some of the efforts included establishing community-based support networks and public reintegration ceremonies.[113] In this way, the mentoring and further mainstreaming of former LTTE combatants was meant to constitute a natural and gradual transfer to their respective local communities. The initial contact between a beneficiary and her/his home community was established in degrees, beginning with a series of visitations, letters, and phone conversations as part of the Community Engagement program.[114]

Economic reintegration was to be achieved by providing employment or support for self-employment through the aftercare system, and by ensuring employability of rehabilitees through catch-up programs in education and vocational training as described above. However, effective reintegration, especially economic reintegration, could not be achieved for all rehabilitated former combatants.[115] Thus, the need for the establishment of a continued monitoring and mentoring system of rehabilitated combatants exists, in order to evaluate the progress of, and support for, the reintegration component of Sri Lanka’s W-RRR program (this topic is discussed in greater detail below under “The Continued Challenge of Economic Reintegration” heading).[116]

Rehabilitation Programs for Child Combatants

The rehabilitation programs for child beneficiaries involved additional facets such as an emphasis on further education and the inclusion of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides programs. Approximately 40% of child beneficiaries had not studied up to the national standard of the Ordinary Level Examination (Grade 10); many were in fact illiterate. All child beneficiaries were admitted into a prominent school near Colombo (Ratmalana Hindu College), with the exception of those who preferred to undertake vocational training.[117]

Some beneficiaries were able to enroll in university education, and several also entered the very competitive medical schools in national universities.[118] The rehabilitation program conducted for 273 former LTTE child combatants at the premises of the Ratmalana Hindu College, in partnership with community organisations and private individuals, was found to be particularly effective due to its special English Language program and Girl Guides and Boy Scouts programs.[119] English was taught using the comprehensive Montessori Method which

embraces different learning styles and student-centred learning through non-traditional, non-competitive, and collaborative teaching methods.[120]

Seventy-eight boys and girls completed the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides programs, which were adapted to meet the requirements of the rehabilitation program.[121] These programs helped former child combatants to overcome trauma and past negative experiences through a system of holistic education. The programs promoted social responsibility and integration, team spirit, and ethnic and religious harmony through the values they promoted, activity-based learning, rewards for good behaviour, and practical training useful for resettlement into society, such as knots training, carpentry, electronics, and first aid training.[122] The rehabilitation program for child beneficiaries at the Ratmalana school also included opportunities to visit Colombo for water therapy and other activities.[123]

Demonstrating Effectiveness of Cognitive Transformation

The effectiveness of the deradicalisation of the Sri Lankan rehabilitation program was assessed using: (1) interviews with beneficiaries, (2) review of past records, (3) observations noted by staff, and (4) formal assessment in the form of psychometric testing.[124] Assessment Battery psychometrics were used, based on a radicalisation index and several psychological and social psychology scales.[125] Observed cognitive transformation is attributed both to the core components of the rehabilitation program as well as to the strong informal interpersonal relationships built between beneficiaries and centre staff.[126] When trying to assess the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program, it became evident that the radicalisation levels of members of a control group not exposed to the rehabilitation program shifted only minimally. This led to the conclusion that time alone was not sufficient for their deradicalisation.[127] Two components that were observed to be most effective were psychological counseling and mindfulness training, although the effectiveness of one component cannot be assessed in isolation as all beneficiaries underwent all six components of the rehabilitation program.[128]

An independent assessment of the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program was conducted by leading psychologists in the field, Arie W. Kruglanski and Michele J. Gelfand of the University of Maryland (USA), which included a baseline survey to assess the changing attitudes and opinions of the beneficiaries.[129] Kruglanski and Gelfand used several attitude questionnaires and personality measures to survey the beneficiaries' support for armed fighting against the state, their "embeddedness" to the LTTE terrorist organisation, their attitudes toward the Centre's staff members, and their attitudes toward the rehabilitation program, among other psychological variables.[130] Responses of over 9,000 rehabilitees were obtained.[131]

Many beneficiaries of the rehabilitation program were observed to have undergone a significant transformation in their attitudes and behaviour towards other ethnic groups as well as the mainly Sinhalese security forces personnel over the course of the first seven months of rehabilitation.[132] The assessment made by Kruglanski and Gelfand demonstrated three

main findings[133]: (1) “Significant decline in the detainees’ support for violence toward the Sinhalese from the moment they joined the deradicalisation program at Time 1 to seven months later toward the end of the program at Time 2”; (2) “Evidence that this generalised decline in support for violence and armed struggle is even more pronounced for the most extreme terrorist members of the organisation;” and (3) that two key ingredients which made the Sri Lankan rehabilitation successful were: “dignity and adequacy”. [134] Kruglanski and Gelfand believe that “dignity” was a significant aspect of the rehabilitation program where the beneficiaries developed genuine friendships with centre staff and guards, and the feeling of being respected led to deradicalisation. [135] Kruglanski and Gelfand believe that the perception of “adequacy” of the rehabilitation by the beneficiaries was also significant, i.e. the adequacy of the attributes of the rehabilitation programs such as the vocational training component which would help them reintegrate into society. [136] While long-term effectiveness can only be assessed in later years, the study by Kruglanski and Gelfand is very significant, especially as scientific research into the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs for violent extremists has thus far been cited as a shortcoming of rehabilitation programs adopted previously by several other countries, including the expansive rehabilitation program in Saudi Arabia. [137]

Thus, the Sri Lankan rehabilitation program can be assessed to have been successful in countering the LTTE’s violent, ethno-nationalist ideology which demonised the Sinhalese and Muslim communities of Sri Lanka. Therefore, not only was the Sri Lankan rehabilitation program able to “disengage” the former combatants, apparent through the zero rate of recidivism, they were “deradicalised” owing to their cognitive transformation. In this the Sri Lankan rehabilitation meets the “Key Components of Successful Deradicalisation Programs” in the article entitled “Deradicalising Islamist Extremists” by Angel Rabasa, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez, Christopher Boucek, published by the RAND Corporation. [138] Sri Lanka’s rehabilitation program can potentially serve as an effective and low-cost solution for deradicalising members of a terrorist organisation for other countries emerging from similar conflicts. Sri Lanka’s rehabilitation program which has cost less than USD 20 million [139], stands in contrast with others such as in Afghanistan with a budget of over USD 220 million, [140] with a much less effective outcome (although the nature of Afghanistan’s on-going conflict presents much greater challenges to reintegration). It also shows that a program supported by vast funds such as in Saudi Arabia [141] may not be required for the cognitive transformation of beneficiaries. In undertaking a relatively effective rehabilitation program for former LTTE combatants, Sri Lanka has fulfilled a recommendation made in the country’s Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report produced in November 2011. However, it can be noted that although there have been no incidents of recidivism or terrorism related crime since the reintegration of rehabilitated combatants, [142] Sri Lanka’s robust security platform which continued post-conflict is likely also to be a strong factor for this post-conflict stability.

The Continued Challenge of Economic Reintegration

Economic reintegration of rehabilitated combatants continues to be a challenge due to the lack of satisfactory employment opportunities in conflict-affected areas or insufficient livelihood support through the aftercare program.[143] The three-month reinsertion package was not offering sufficient financial and material assistance for those rehabilitated former combatants who did not opt to be employed in the Civil Defence Force or Navy Coastguard. Those employed in the Civil Defence Force and Navy Coastguard receive a monthly salary of Rs. 19,500[144] (approximately USD 148.68), which is higher than the minimum wage of Rs. 13,000 (approximately USD 99.12) in the public sector[145]. However, this amount is still considered to be low with the high cost of living in conflict-affected areas,[146] and in Sri Lanka in general. Employment and self-employment prospects are low due to the limited qualifications and skills of former combatants, as well as the few job opportunities in the formal sector of local economies in the underdeveloped conflict-affected areas.

Thus, the economic reintegration component of Sri Lanka's W-RRR program was not successful for many rehabilitated combatants, although 100% success in economic reintegration may be deemed beyond the scope of a developing country such as Sri Lanka. In August 2013, the Sri Lankan government allocated a further Rs. 525 million (approximately USD 4.01 million) for loans for assistance in livelihood projects for rehabilitated former combatants, with a maximum loan of Rs. 250,000 (approximately USD 1,911); authorities have already received 4,700 loan applications from rehabilitated combatants.[147]

Economic reintegration may have been better achieved if private sector organisations were formally a part of the aftercare system of the rehabilitation program, in which rehabilitated combatants would also have guaranteed employment in the private sector of Sri Lanka. The variety in employment opportunities would have also led to greater job satisfaction among the newly employed beneficiaries. The lack of jobs or livelihood opportunities post-rehabilitation has been cited as a major vulnerability of the rehabilitation programs undertaken by several countries such as Afghanistan (Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program)[148], Algeria[149], and Pakistan[150]. While the social reintegration of former combatants overtly seems to be less of a challenge, more research should be undertaken through a monitoring and mentoring system to gauge its effectiveness through the W-RRR program, especially in light of some members of the beneficiaries' home villages initially being opposed to the return of former LTTE combatants back to their villages.

Rebuilding the Conflict-affected Communities in the North and East

Reconciliation initiatives to relieve the conflict-affected, predominately Tamil communities of the North and East have been implemented to fulfill their urgent social, political, and economic needs. These reconciliation initiatives continue to be implemented and comprise measures taken in: (1) resettlement and humanitarian assistance, (2) reconstruction of key transport, economic, health, and social infrastructure for reintegration, (3) political

engagement, and (4) other reconciliation initiatives relating to the emotional, social, and economic aspects of reconciliation.

Humanitarian assistance was provided to more than 300,000 displaced persons by the Ministry of Resettlement of Sri Lanka, assisted by international organisations, NGOs, and private individuals. This ministry has resettled approximately 280,000 internally displaced individuals within 2.5 years, while 6,031 persons remain in resettlement camps (as at May 2012).[151] Grants, cooked meals, and dry rations were provided for six months or more after resettlement. The Sri Lankan Army has contributed to the resettlement effort by building 1,766 houses, and in undertaking the essential, painstaking, and dangerous task of demining conflict-affected regions.[152] Demining has been completed entirely in the Jaffna Peninsula, while demining activities continue in some areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.[153] Public services such as water, sanitation, electricity, education, and health facilities were restored to an extent in the North and East in the initial stages of resettlement. More than 12,000 houses are under construction or have been constructed by the Indian government as of May 2013. India plans to build a total of 50,000 housing units for the resettled families in the North and East.[154]

Reconstruction of Key Economic and Social Infrastructure

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka has kept record of government-directed transport, health, and economic infrastructure reconstruction programs in the conflict-affected areas of the North and East[155], the details of which have been included in the next paragraphs as they help to grasp the extent of reconstruction and development work required to rebuild a war-torn and underdeveloped region. Key transport infrastructures have been rebuilt in conflict-affected areas in the North and East of the country, including the Paranthan-Pooneryn Highway, the A32 and A35, as well as 250 km of railroad.[156] The water supply was restored through the Jaffna Peninsula, and Mannar-Vavuniya water supply schemes and ten main water tanks were reconstructed in the Eastern Province. More water tanks are being rebuilt, including the Iranamadu water tank destroyed by the LTTE.[157] Electricity has been restored through the Sampur Coal Power Project, with a power supply extended to Mankulam, Kilinochchi and Vavuniya, and a new electrification scheme in Vavuniya. More than 2,400 power lines have been installed.

Reconstruction of key economic infrastructure included increased banking and finance facilities in the North and East: 385 private and public bank branches and extension offices had been established by 2011, while all banks had branches with microfinance schemes and loan facilities with credit guarantee schemes in the North and East. Self-Help Groups (SHGs), organised by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, were formed in the Northern and Eastern Provinces to improve financial inclusiveness of low-income groups.[158] The traditional fishing industry has been able to rebound as harbours have been upgraded, fishing restrictions removed. In addition, several tax and other concessions were made in government budgets

(from 2012) to encourage investment in agriculture and fisheries in the North and East. Several hundred private companies[159] have supported social and economic reintegration in the North and East through large-scale business investments or grassroots level initiatives. [160]

A smaller-scale, yet notable, social reintegration initiative was undertaken in November 2012 by the Sri Lankan Army in its recruitment of 100 young Tamil women between the ages of 18 and 22 years from the Northeast (Killinochchi and Mullaitivu areas) as Sri Lankan Army soldiers.[161] This program helped these young women and their families to overcome socio-economic hardship faced by the still underdeveloped region, and prevent their possible entry into prostitution due to the lack of employment opportunities in the area. The families, although initially reluctant, believe employment in the Sri Lankan Army brings income and social status to their children's lives.[162] The new recruits were enlisted into the Civil Affairs Division and are to fill the communication gap between the generally Sinhala-speaking Army officers and the Tamil-speaking communities in which they serve.[163] The recruits have received a unique reconciliation-oriented military training in a friendly environment, which included field excursions to Colombo with opportunities to establish new friendships with university students in Colombo.[164]

Some important examples of social development programs have been undertaken by community and charity organisations in conflict-affected areas. The North Empowerment Project of the Foundation of Goodness serves 50,000 beneficiaries and aims to empower communities with developmental projects in healthcare, education, business development, and sports. Sri Lanka Unites, a youth movement for reconciliation, works to motivate young leaders in schools across the country and in the Tamil diaspora to engage constructively in reconciliation efforts in post-conflict Sri Lanka. "Happiness Centres" conduct psychosocial programs in schools in the North and East through centres equipped with arts and craft material, sports equipment, musical instruments, and a library including TV/DVD resources to support children in overcoming trauma, while providing a Children's Accelerated Trauma Therapy Training course for teachers and supervisors of the Happiness Centres.[165]

Political Engagement and Other National Reconciliation Initiatives

A notable strategy adopted by the Sri Lankan government for political engagement with the Tamil community is the integration of former LTTE leaders in the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition government. The break-away former LTTE commander of the East, Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan, also known as Karuna, a former child combatant, joined the Sri Lankan government as the Vice President of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), and entered into mainstream politics with his appointment as the Deputy Minister of Resettlement. Similarly, the rehabilitated LTTE leaders Selvarasa Pathmanathan, also known as KP, former leader of the LTTE's international network for fundraising and weapons procurement, and Velayutham Dayanthi, also known as Daya Master, former LTTE

spokesman and leader of the propaganda wing, are due to enter national politics through membership in the SLFP.[166]

The government has appointed an all-party Parliamentary Select Committee to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report submitted in November 2011, including the contested 13th Amendment to the constitution[167] and the subject of devolution of power to the provinces. Challenges remain as the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) political party has declined its participation in the Committee, fearing its participation will be construed as agreement to possible decisions made by the Committee based on a majority consensus (which the TNA believes it will be in opposition with). Presently, the main oppositional Tamil political parties such as the TNA are not viewed as effectively engaging with the Sri Lankan government or genuinely committed to the national reconciliation process, as they are ethnic-based sectarian parties which sympathise with the separatist ideology of the LTTE.[168] TNA leaders also openly associate with pro-LTTE organisations working against the Sri Lankan state outside the country, such as the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) and Global Tamil Forum (GTF).[169] With the LTTE having systematically assassinated many prominent and popular Tamil political leaders in Sri Lanka, there is a great need for a new generation of mainstream Tamil politicians who are willing to serve all ethnic communities, and assume national leadership roles in Sri Lanka (such as Lakshman Kadirgamar, the two-time Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka and likely presidential candidate who was supported by all ethnic groups of Sri Lanka, and was assassinated by the LTTE in August 2005 for that very reason).

In September 2013, elections were held in the conflict-affected, Tamil dominated Northern Province for the first time in 25 years.[170] However, the majority of the northern Tamil population voted for the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) which had an election manifesto that espoused the self-determination of the Tamil people, thereby rejecting the ruling coalition government. While conducting provincial elections is a great step towards establishing normalcy in conflict-affected areas, the election results clearly reveal that the Sri Lankan government has not reached the "hearts and minds" of the Northern population, despite its many large-scale projects for economic development in the North.[171] Firstly, to earnestly engage the conflict-affected Tamil population, the Sri Lankan government must provide means to achieve immediate livelihood relief. A survey conducted in August 2013 showed that much of the conflict-affected population continues to suffer from food insecurity.[172] Additionally, there is much more the Sri Lankan government must provide to the Northern population to promote reconciliation in the North, such as allowing local participation in the implementation of development programs,[173] vocational training programs for the people (for goods/services with a market demand), psychological counseling for victims of violence, and recruiting a sufficient number of Tamil-speaking police officers, hospital staff, and government officials to the North to effectively serve the local population. It is encouraging that 900 Tamil police officers and 1,500 Tamil-speaking Sinhalese police officers have been

stationed in the Northern and Eastern Provinces recently, so that Tamil residents are able to make statements to the police in Tamil.[174]

Other initiatives in reconciliation efforts include the commission established in August 2013 by the president of Sri Lanka to investigate cases of missing persons, including abductions and disappearances, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.[175] The commission is to produce a report within six months.[176] If conducted sincerely and transparently, as with the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission report of 2011[177], the work of this commission has the potential to greatly increase the trust between the Sri Lankan government and the conflict-affected community of the North and East. Also in 2013, the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka (UGC) began to establish Harmony Centres in universities to promote harmony and reconciliation among university students belonging to different ethnic and religious groups.[178] The Education Ministry of Sri Lanka announced in July 2013 that no new schools are to be established on the basis of ethnicity.[179] This policy decision is meant to support national reconciliation efforts, as roots of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka also lie in the segregation of communities from childhood through ethnically or linguistically segregated schools.

The National Reconciliation Unit at the Office of the Adviser on Reconciliation to the President, Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha, has conducted more than a hundred events promoting national reconciliation.[180] The Sri Lankan Reconciliation Youth Forum of the National Reconciliation Unit disseminates information and exchanges ideas, views, and suggestions on Sri Lanka's post-conflict reconciliation and development process.[181] A series of National Conferences on Reconciliation are organised by the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (under the purview of the Ministry of External Affairs) to foster reconciliation and further constructive dialogue, in accordance with its objective of "engaging and promoting peace and addressing post-conflict issues" as per the Institute's Act.[182] Sri Lanka has also embarked on many other impactful state- and non-state led national reconciliation initiatives.[183]

Recommendations to Address Shortcomings in National Reconciliation Programs and the Lasting Challenge Posed by the LTTE's International Disinformation Campaign

There are many aspects to reconciliation that remain to be strengthened, including the aftercare system for rehabilitated combatants, economic development of conflicted-affected areas, provision of public services to their population, and overarching reconciliation programs. The establishment of an ongoing monitoring and mentoring mechanism to support reintegrated former combatants is imperative for these vulnerable individuals, as they are targets of re-radicalisation by existing remnant members of the LTTE domestically and overseas. A monitoring mechanism is also important to ensure the security of the resettled former combatants, who may be harassed by members of their communities as a reaction to violence inflicted on them by the LTTE in the past. An assessment technique such as Multi-

attribute Evaluation (ME) can also be developed to gauge the outcomes of Sri Lanka's rehabilitation program (W-RRR), and to check whether its planned goals and objectives have been met.[184]

More government support must be given to secure basic needs, as the (six-month) care package after resettlement was not sufficient for the survival of the resettled communities due to the lack of livelihood opportunities in the conflict-affected areas. Similarly, the three-month reinsertion package provided was also not sufficient financial and material assistance for resettled and rehabilitated former combatants. Many households in the conflict-affected zone are still believed to be food insecure,[185] despite the government's initiatives for the conflict-affected households to adopt home-gardens and animal husbandry. Thus, sustainable economic development programs that can immediately improve the living standards of the conflicted-affected population should be adopted by the state as soon as possible. In the future, the government should also ensure that there is more local participation in implementing development programs.[186] District secretariats must be empowered to implement reconciliation initiatives, including local economic development through small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). More support is needed for small and medium scale industries in the conflict-affected areas.[187] In studying how to achieve successful economic reintegration of the conflict-affected people, Sri Lanka can study the Malaysian approach more closely, where significant improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the vulnerable population was identified as a key to preventing their exploitation by extremist elements in society.[188]

Psychological counseling and assistance should be provided systematically through government-NGO partnerships for the conflict-affected population, beginning with victims of violence and vulnerable groups such as war widows and children. There should also be quicker implementation of the government's trilingual language policy[189], so that, for example, the conflict-affected population has access to Tamil-speaking public officers serving in hospitals and in government offices.[190] An overarching, specialised government infrastructure for national reconciliation initiatives, with a monitoring and evaluation mechanism, should be established as soon as possible. The failure to move more quickly in the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan (as well as the trilingual language policy) has been attributed to the absence of a dedicated ministry for reconciliation.[191] An overarching body for reconciliation can engage with, and facilitate collaboration between, the different sectors and segments of the country to bring about meaningful changes.

The government should work more proactively with private sector organisations to increase investment in conflict-affected areas and to encourage more north-south business partnerships. More public-private partnerships and tax concessions and finance for key industries are needed to spur economic growth in the conflict-affected areas. Linking the economies of these regions to the national economy may be the most organic, effective, and sustainable approach to unite the country. Reconciliation cannot be achieved by state directives alone. For this, more transport infrastructure needs to be developed by way of a railway connection that provides direct connection between Jaffna and Colombo.

National reconciliation and interethnic harmony can perhaps be achieved most effectively through education and culture. Firstly, there must be an increase in the quality of education, including higher education, to meet international standards throughout Sri Lanka, so that the generations to come can more easily enter local and global job markets. To foster reconciliation, it is imperative that educational courses in interethnic studies and studies in comparative religion in the context of Sri Lanka be introduced into school and university curriculums. Restoring and reviving the cultural heritage of all communities, especially that of the Tamil community, is an urgent and integral part of the national reconciliation process. [192] To gain the goodwill of the northern Tamil people, it is also necessary to reduce the military presence in the North. At the same time, the necessary measures for national security should be retained so that a resurgence of terrorism can be prevented. State recognition of those perished due to the conflict, including in the end phase, is important for reconciliation. In this regard, it is very encouraging that the Sri Lankan government has recently announced that a nationwide census will be conducted to determine the number of lives lost during the 26-year long conflict.[193] Lastly, strengthening principles of democratic governance by investigation into alleged crimes committed by individual members of the Sri Lankan security forces, politicians, and gangs is essential to regain the trust of the whole population as well as the international community.

While the government of Sri Lanka faces such significant challenges in achieving post-conflict reconciliation, the most formidable threat to its hard-won peace remains the LTTE's remnant factions, front organisations, and financing and propaganda units that have survived abroad. Although the LTTE is militarily defeated, second and third tier leaders and cells operating in southern India and Western countries are attempting to create unrest, revive terrorism, and hamper economic development[194] in Sri Lanka. They continue to present a distorted view of Sri Lanka and continue to radicalise Tamil youth living outside of Sri Lanka.[195]

As a measure to counter the LTTE's tech-savvy and multi-lingual propaganda machine and its worldwide mass dissemination of separatist ideology and disinformation, the Sri Lankan diplomatic arm should, without further delay, embrace new information communication technologies (ICTs) in its conduct of public diplomacy as well as in day-to-day diplomatic work. While traditional measures to ensure the security of information and communication should not be forsaken, ICTs will increase the speed, reach, and effectiveness of communication by officials of Sri Lanka's bureau of foreign affairs. This will also enhance the state's capacity to engage with the Tamil diaspora, counter reporting against the Sri Lankan state by ill-informed or ill-willed NGOs and other institutions, circulate positive news items of stories of post-conflict Sri Lanka, as well as normalise relations with nations hosting large communities of diaspora Tamils. The LTTE's leadership has been rightly described as "masters of deception"[196]: the LTTE's penetration into civil society and legitimate governments in the West remains unparalleled by other terror groups due to diaspora constituency pressures.[197]

Post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction is by nature a long-term process. Thus, Sri Lankans, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, and the world must allow the democratic, culturally

developed, and traditionally ethnically harmonious country to heal itself in an organic, sustainable, and responsible manner, in a period of time that is roughly proportional to the more than 25 years it grappled with a terrorist insurgency that also fuelled inter-communal mistrust.

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- [156] Reconstruction of key transport infrastructure included road reconstruction in the North and East including the completion of the Paranthan-Pooneryn Highway, A32 (Puttlam to Mannar), A35 (Paranthan to Mullaitivu), and reconstruction of 250 km of railroad (Vavuniya-KKS, Madawachchiya-Madhu, Madu-Thailimannar, and Omanthei-Pallai). The Paranthan to Poonakari, Mankulam to Mullaitivu, and Jaffna-KKS roads are under construction, and the Kandy-Jaffna A9 highway has commenced development from Galkulama to Medawachchiya, from Vavuniya to Mankulam, and Nawatkuli to Mannar as at January 2012. The Kinniya Bridge, Trincomalee Bridge, Mannar Bridge and causeway, Sangupidy Bridge, Navakkuli Bridge, and many smaller bridges have been completed. In June 2013, the reconstruction of the Iranamadu Domestic Airport in Kilinochchi in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka was completed.
- [157] Five major irrigation schemes and 115 minor irrigation schemes are being developed. Health services have been restored through the construction of 164 health institutions in conflict-affected areas. A large number of small-scale sanitation constructions have been built, including 14,539 latrines. In addition, 10,891 water wells have been cleaned.
- [158] Through the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) program, 8,534 loans were disbursed amounting to Rs. 459 million in the Northern Province and 18,123 loans were disbursed amounting to Rs. 818 million in the Eastern Province between the years 2008 and 2011.
- [159] The private sector organizations included Brandix Lanka, John Keells, Hayleys, Virtusa, Nestle, Lanka ORIX Finance, 99X Technology, Academy of Design, and Mt. Lavinia Hotels.
- [160] A large number of motor boats and nets have been distributed to the fishing community and several thousands of cattle, goats, and poultry have been distributed to households in promotion of sustainable livelihood opportunities by the Ministry of Resettlement. The Ministry also implements grassroots level participatory development programs, and has launched plans for the establishment of Millennium Development Goals model villages in the North and East with the active participation of affected communities and other stakeholders.

Economic zones and industrial parks have been established in the North and East, and the government has set-up vocational training centers and technical colleges for skills development, including opportunities for youth to develop entrepreneurship skills. The “Northern Spring” program is being implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development to develop the Northern Province with regard to infrastructure development, agricultural and fisheries development, livelihood promotion, housing, and educational facilities and a Work Task Force under the Ministry inspects and conducts the development projects. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) extended a loan of USD\$ 154.4 million to reconstruct 120 km of provincial roads as part of the Northern Road Connectivity Project in 2010.

[161] Interviews with two new Tamil female recruits from Kilinochchi and Mannar into the Sri Lankan Army (names withheld); Face-to-face Interviews, “Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues” program conducted by the Office of the Director of Social Development Affairs to the President, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka, January 11, 2013;

Brigadier Manoj Mudannayake, Chief Coordinator, Face-to-face Interview, “Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues” program conducted by the Office of the Director of Social Development Affairs to the President, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo, Sri Lanka, January 11, 2013;

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[183]^{Mark} Taking the National Reconciliation Conference series outside of Colombo for the greater benefit and participation of the conflict-affected community, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka and the University of Jaffna organized the National Conference on the Role of Higher Education in Reconciliation on June 13-14, 2013 in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka, marking the university community's commitment to the national reconciliation process.

A "National Program Promoting Ethnic Harmony and Developing Leadership Skills of Students from Conflict-affected Areas in the North and East and Difficult Areas in the South" ("Sisu Diriya National Program") has been in operation since 2006, and is conducted by the Office of the Director of Social Development Affairs to the President, Presidential Secretariat. The program is aimed at reducing post-traumatic stress, reviving the education of children who have been displaced and whose education was disrupted by LTTE activities, developing leadership skills of youth, and promoting interaction between ethnic groups to contribute to national interethnic and interreligious harmony. The Office of the Director of Social Development Affairs to the President together with the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka are presently planning the establishment of Harmony Centers in all universities, schools, and districts to conduct activities in reconciliation.

An outstanding example of a non-state initiated reconciliation program in Sri Lanka are the dance performances undertaken by the Aru Sri Art Theatre. This theatre, founded in 2004 by Mrs. Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan, promotes ethnic harmony through visual and performing arts and has conducted numerous dances and multicultural concerts with this goal. These performances include the Oriental Music Orchestra performance in Sri Lanka on March 6, 2012, in which 100 young musicians from all districts of Sri Lanka performed in unison. Aru Sri Art Theatre also held a dance festival in Bintaan, Indonesia, on April 12-13, 2012 and in Singapore on April 14, 2012, where Sinhalese (Buddhist and Christian) and Tamil (Hindu and Christian) dancers presented dances together under Hindu themes in performing two classical Bharathanaty compositions and the Cosmic Dance of Shiva.

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