

## Effects of Reintegration modalities on Ex-Combatants in Kilinochchi and Jaffna; A Situation Analysis

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**Abstract**— *The UNDP presents that violent conflicts cause poverty and poverty also increases the likelihood of civil war. UNDP further states that countries with low, stagnant, unequally distributed per-capita incomes and heavily dependent on primary commodities face “dangerously high risks of prolonged conflict”. This is further exacerbated by what the World Bank calls “The conflict Trap”. This trap reflects the fact that once countries have experienced a conflict and addressed the conflict in the violent means will increase the probability of having another conflict by 200% within a 5 to 10 year period. If they have experienced two conflicts their chances of another conflict are quadrupled. Keeping the ‘conflict trap’ ideology in the back of our minds; it is academically sound to analyse the post conflict situation of Sri Lanka. The National Framework of Sri Lanka for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of ex-LTTE combatants into civilian life had a rapid response. This rapidness was carried out by the government of Sri Lanka to the people who were disturbed by the protracted conflict between the LTTE and Sri Lankan State. There were three key areas focused by the government. First was to safeguard the human rights of ex-combatants and to protect and assist them in accordance with the constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the State’s international obligations. Secondly the contribution towards sustainable peace, reconciliation and social cohesion was encouraged. Thirdly to increase the employability of ex-combatants, minimize their risk of socio-economic marginalization and to create opportunities for economic revitalization in post-war Sri Lanka. This paper intends to provide a situational report by looking at a fair population representing the ex combatants in the Kilinochchi and Jaffna. This attempt will also reveal the areas that need more professional involvement in reintegration. The Study is conducted on a mix method. The data is collected from a random stratified sample, carefully selected from the total ex-combatant population of Jaffna and Kilinochchi.*

**Keywords**— *Conflict trap, social cohesion, employability*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The UNDP presents that violent conflicts cause poverty and poverty also increases the likelihood of civil war.

UNDP further states that countries with low, stagnant, unequally distributed per capita incomes and heavily dependent on primary commodities face “alarming high risks of prolonged conflict”. This is further exacerbated by what the World Bank terms “The conflict Trap”. This trap reflects the fact that once countries have experienced a conflict and addressed the conflict by violent means, there is a doubled chance of having another conflict within a 5 to 10 year period. If they have had experienced two conflicts, their probability of another eruption is quadrupled.

The National Framework of Sri Lanka for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of ex-LTTE Combatants in to civilian life had an encouraging response. That was offered by the government of Sri Lanka to the people who were disturbed by the humanitarian operation which was carried out by the Sri Lankan armed forces against the LTTE. There were three key areas focused by this process. They were:

1. to safeguard the human rights of ex-combatants and to protect & assist them in accordance with the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and in conformity with the State's international obligations
2. To contribute towards sustainable peace, reconciliation and social cohesion.
3. To increase the employability of ex-combatants, minimize their risk of socio-economic marginalization and to create opportunities for economic revitalization in post-war Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's post-conflict rehabilitation program which was aimed at re-integrating approximately 12,000 ex combatants was set up by the Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation (BCGR) under the guidance of the Ministry of Defence & Urban Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. This responsibility was later on successfully transferred to the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Prison Reforms (MRPR) on 29 April 2010.

The government of Sri Lanka adopted an approach to rebuild the lives of the ex-combatants through rehabilitation programs carried out at Protective

Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centres (PARCs) in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. These programs were geared towards engaging the hearts and minds of the beneficiaries through several modes of rehabilitation programmes. The 4R model of rehabilitation (Rehabilitation, Reinsertion, Reintegration and Reconciliation) was specially designed & developed to suit the cultural, religious, ethical norms and values of Sri Lankans. It was aimed to suit the Tamil speaking citizens of North and East. Most have transformed and rejected violence and express remorse. Above Ex-combatants were initially accommodated at 24 Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centres (PARCs) with all basic needs and security. All PARCs were provided with following:

- Security
- Water
- Sanitation
- Food and Nutrition
- Health and Psychosocial support
- NFRI's (Non-Food Relief Items)
- Making contacts with their family and friends.
- Access to all UN agencies

Meanwhile a comprehensive study on ex-combatants was carried out with State Intelligence Agencies followed up with a dynamic psychosocial profiling and socio economic profiling in liaison with profiling experts such as clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, medical officers and counsellors.

Based on the above, rehabilitees were divided into new groups to undergo vocational and skills development programs along with development of spiritual and moral values to cater to future livelihood and well being. The rehabilitation process was officially commenced on 01 Oct 2009 and re-grouping of all ex combatants to centres was carried out as a result of the findings of profiling assessments. Level of radicalization of every rehabilitee was assessed and personal files were opened and maintained to assess their progress. Legal frame work for rehabilitation was approved by the Attorney General's Office and all centres were formally endorsed by the government gazette notifications.

## II. THE SIX PLUS ONE MODEL

The rehabilitation process in Sri Lanka is based on a conceptual model called 'six plus one' pillar rehabilitation structure. It is geared to bring back the essential components into the lives of beneficiaries, who were confined within a narrow hatred filled ideology as members, helpers and combatants of the former rebel organization. From the commencement of proper

rehabilitation program, careful adoption of terminology and language was given the highest priority to prevent continuation of the stigmatization of beneficiaries. Hence using certain jargon which would hurt one's sentiments was restricted in centres. Thus, all ex-combatants were called '*Beneficiaries*' and all Child Soldiers were called '*Our Children*'.

In this model which is regarded as unique to Sri Lanka, the beneficiaries were being given ample opportunity to pursue either their higher education or to undergo vocational training.

### *A) Important components of the model*

The structure of the model initially consisted of six components as follows:

- Spiritual, Religious & Cultural Rehabilitation
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Educational Rehabilitation
- Family, Social & Community Rehabilitation
- Psychological and creative therapy Rehabilitation
- Sports & Extracurricular Activities

Community Awareness was treated as the additional and unique element of the Sri Lankan model. The author selected a sample of community leaders representing every sector of society. The survey was designed to support four main elements i.e. Social, Political, Economic, and Psychological aspects. During the survey the ex-combatants were interviewed separately in individual and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and data was collected. The sample was forty rehabilitated ex-combatants representing Kilinochchi and Mulativu districts.

### *1) Social and Psychological Reintegration*

As such the social and psychological reintegration becomes the principle issue in resettling the ex-combatants within the same society. After assessing all data gathered during the sample survey through MCQ (Multiple Choice Questioner), at field visits the author found out the following important details (Table 1):

Those facts show that the impact of the resettlement programme has positively taken hold on the sample of ex-combatants. The only negative indicator is that the majority of the ex-combatants is not satisfied with the level of facilities provided in the village. When the author further analyses the possible reasons for negative response, it was revealed that there is a possibility for the combatants to feel deprived when they compare the meagre facilities in their remote villages with urban cities like Jaffna and Kilinochchi.

Table 1. The place of resettlement

	Positive	Negative
The idea of place of settlement after rehabilitation programme	78%	22%
Living over one year at the present place	91%	09%
Feeling about the present place	78%	22%
Recognition by the fellow members	89%	11%
Satisfaction with facilities in the village	38%	62%
Participation in social events	100%	--%

Source: Author

The other possibility could be that there is a tendency from the side of ex-combatants to expect the government to provide all the facilities. They are sometimes lazy to make an effort to improve their own facilities by participation in the development process. There is evidence that some Tamil political parties spreading the rumour among rural people that it is the government's duty to provide everything since they think that the burden of three decade war should be solely borne by the government. However this kind of negative ideology could be a challenge and discourage their positive participation in the future development of the area. If the majority of ex-combatants continue to feel that they are deprived of facilities, spoilers could capitalise on their mentality to organize them again in anti-social activities.

Re-settlement is a long process that is more than just a program and its good or bad effects will be known over the time. Majority of the ex-combatants acknowledged that they have made friends around the communities where they live. Almost 90% expressed that they are being well recognized at the village level and 100% said that they are participating at every social event. The percentage of ex-combatant's population in the villages is below 25% and the recognition & the accommodative comfort that they find in the village is an indicator of successful re-integration.

Table 2. Leisure as an important aspect of social reintegration of ex-combatants.

	Percentage
Having two days holidays per week	84%
Reading at least one news paper	92%
Watching at least one TV channel	57%
Watching movies	65%
Using of Internet	19%
Participation in sports	65%
Participation in picnics after rehabilitation programme	81%
Easy reach for educational facilities	60%
Obtaining educational qualification during or after rehabilitation	49%

Source: Author

The above statistics show that the overall leisure factor also impacted as a positive element in the social and psychological reintegration process in Sri Lanka. Usage of internet and the acquisition of education qualifications during or after the rehabilitation programme stands below the average level.

When the conflict has lasted a long time and combatants have received little or no schooling, emphasis should be placed on "catch-up" education to ensure that this group is not relegated into life-long poverty. GOSL had a programme in this regard. But the sample indicates that 49% do not have any sort of formal education. That may be due to the fact that they are over aged and sent back to school at the time of surrendering. However it is evident that there is lack of assistance to these special cases in order to accommodate over aged ex-combatants ambitions to further the formal education.

## 2) Economic Re-integration

The main economic reintegration options are either training followed by wage or by self employment, or proceeding directly to the employment stage. Self-employment could be in agriculture or operating a micro/small business. The ultimate re-integration option will be chosen by the ex-combatant, based on his/her skill level, entrepreneurial ability, age, needs and aspirations; available information on training and employment opportunities and the level of income that each employment option is perceived to generate. The data given in the following table gives an idea of the occupational stability of the ex-combatants.

Table 3. Occupational Stability of the Ex-Combatants

	Yes	No
Having a source of income	100%	----
Having membership in other organizations	86%	14%
Satisfaction about income	49%	51%
Idea on their economic standard among the fellow community	81%	19%
Owner of a saving account	78%	12%
Financial facilities taken after rehabilitation programme	30%	70%
Was rehab program supportive to find a job?	73%	27%

Source: Author

Presently most of ex-combatants are living happily. However, some of them are struggling to earn and to lead decent lives because other external issues like drought and high cost of living in the area. They mentioned that they need continuous assistance from the government for some time until they find permanent income.

The interview held with one of the Senior Public Health Officers, Kilinochchi District (did not wish to publish her name) who counts 34 years in the public health field, revealed many points about ex-combatants' socio-economic life. This female health officer's husband is an active Tamil National Alliance (TNA) member and presently a member of the Northern Provincial Council. Describing the re-integration process, she explained how the ex-LTTE combatants are now faring in society. According to her, there are no serious concerns in accepting them back into society. Even the individual questionnaire survey carried out by the author justifies the same. About 78 % agreed that they did not have any issue in re-integrating in the village. This acceptance may be due to their new economic condition.

### 3) Effects on Micro Level Economy

According to humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow, our actions are motivated in order achieve certain needs. Abraham Maslow believed that these needs are similar to instincts and play a major role in motivating behaviour. Physiological, security, social, and esteem needs are **deficiency needs** (also known as *D-needs*), meaning that these needs arise due to deprivation. Satisfying these lower-level needs is important in order to avoid unpleasant feelings or consequences. The economic re-integration could be seen through the Maslow's

'hierarchy of needs' theory. (Maslow, 2014) Sri Lankan situation has been conceptualized under Maslow's theory. It shows a gradual departure of the military from the process.

Most of the economic re-integration is done at the rural grassroot-levels. The GOSL believes that the micro-enterprise provides an opportunity for income generation to those who cannot find wage-employment. In addition, if micro-enterprises grow and expand, they generate additional jobs for others in the community, thus multiplying the benefits of the initial donor investment. Micro-enterprises also contribute to private sector development in a post-conflict national economy. The author found a few challenges arisen due to lack of attention given to certain micro industries. The author could observe that due to fast development in the area all houses and buildings are now sheltered with roofing sheets or tiles. This has adversely affected the communities who have been selling traditional roofing materials such as Cadjan (an alternative roofing source made out of coconut leaves).

The development projects in the region must create more job opportunities for the locals. It is observed that with the rapid social and economic development in the region, the traditional behavioural patterns of the people have changed. Other than that, the regional health issues are at manageable level. Communal diseases have declined and no epidemic or endemic situation was reported so far.

According to the statistics the most rehabilitated and re-integrated individuals are males. Generally, re-integration is very much challenging for the female ex-combatants due to several reasons. Public health is also affected due to lack of jobs and some mothers tend to work at faraway locations leaving their small children behind. Some of these mothers were not matured enough to bear children because they were compelled to marry very young during the conflict to avoid being conscripted by the rebels. Malnutrition and pre-maternal health issues are a plenty because of this reason.

However, the government health departments are conducting various programmes along with NGO's to educate the public including the young ex-combatant mothers on these issues. The public health officer emphasized that there should be a thorough study into problems faced by the female ex-combatants and their children and to make more provisions for livelihood improvement. Most of the female ex-combatants may have left the motherland to work overseas. There are common problems affecting not only the re-integrated

ex-combatants but the society as a whole. The livelihood is affected due to lack of employment opportunities.

The additional District Secretary, Kilinochchi, was also interviewed in this regard. According to him, the re-integration process in the Northern Province in Sri Lanka has paid no special attention on ex-LTTE combatants. It is basically focused on all Internally Displaced People (IDP's) during the conflict. As far as the government assistance to the community is concerned, the ex-combatants are considered as normal citizens. He further stated that they should not get any special attention as it will agitate the others. However, the ex-combatants should be given whatever assistance to overcome any psychological trauma if needed. He also emphasized that the ex-combatants are facing an unemployment problem at the moment which could lead into social security problems. Thus they may be compelled to take part in criminal activities such as robberies or other violations of law for living.

The Government Agent's Office offers no special financial assistance programmes for the ex-combatants. This fact was further proven by the survey.

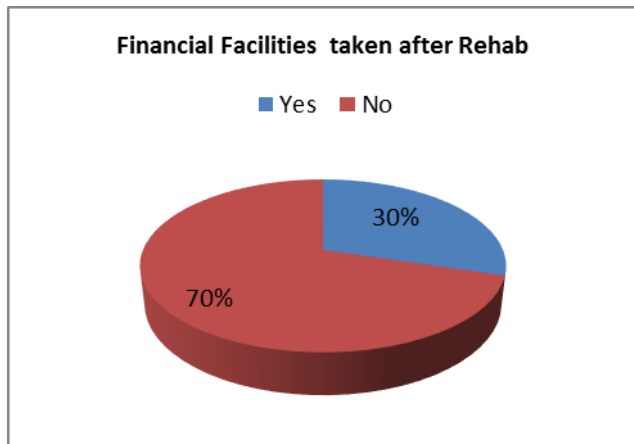


Figure 1. Financial facilities taken after Rehab.

Source: Author

Presently rehabilitees are finding difficult to secure even a minor job such as 'daily paid labourer' due to use of new mechanisation in the agriculture sector and also due to the severe drought. According to him most of the unemployed in the region are now engaged with illicit brewery business which causes social unrest and a threat to security.

#### 4) Employability

'VANNAVIL' (meaning the rainbow in Tamil) is the only private sector mega factory established after the end of the war in the Northern Province. This factory produces and exports high quality sports garments. The GM

explaining the vision of this venture mentioned that after the war ended, it was decided by his company to establish this factory especially to assist the community in finding jobs. There are over 1000 workers at present and out of which only less than 2% are from outside district. This factory was established in 2012 and is still expanding. The workers in the factory are 99% local females and they are being provided with meals and transport besides a lucrative salary by the management.



Author visiting MAS VAANAVIL, 13 July 2014

As this project started to help the war affected community economically, the company is now engaged in various community development projects as well. Education, health, social and religious activities are being sponsored by the company. These gestures have made the community happy and built up confidence with the factory as one of the sources of strength to stand up on their own. However, the factory management is also facing a few problems that are inherent among war affected community such as a number of single parent workers, legal assistance, domestic violence and psychological imbalance with the workers. The management is making every effort to assist the staff to overcome these issues by conducting various programmes.

The general income of the sample in the two districts namely Kilinochchi and Jaffna were generally looked through the sample and respondent's perception about income generation is as follows.

The below shows that nearly half of the sample is not happy about their income. They are in a view that it could have been better if the salaries are increased in proportion to Cost of Living (COL)

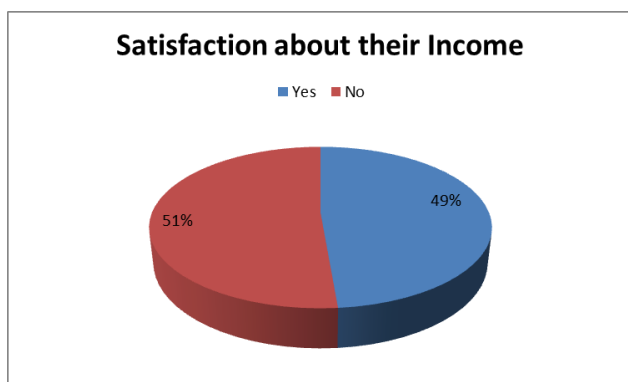


Figure 2. Satisfaction about their income  
Source: Author

### 5) Political Challenges

Democratic citizen tolerates a diversity of opinion and accords same political rights to his friends and foes. This ideal is rarely fulfilled or is at least very difficult to apply both in principle and in practice. The survey was carried out to test whether the sample of ex-combatants are back in the democratic process.

Political Event	Yes	No
Violating rights after Rehabilitation were practiced	100%	---
Access to MP from the area.	86%	14%
Attitude on frequent elections	49%	51%
Discrimination of villages	81%	19%
Discrimination from others outside the village	78%	22%

The above data shows that 95% of the ex-combatants have not had one to one relationship with their local political representatives. It poses the crucial question whether the Tamil politicians who represent the ex-combatants reflect appropriate representation of their respective community. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is in the forefront as a political party in the north. The principal demand of the TNA when they negotiate with the government is a federal power sharing solution. In an interview with a leading journalist, Namini Wijedasa of 'Lakbima News' in Sri Lanka, the present TNA leader stated that they were working for a political solution with a 'substantial political autonomy for Tamil and Muslim people to determine their affairs in their areas of historical habitation within the framework of an undivided and unified Sri Lanka' (Jeyaraj, 2014). At the initial rounds of negotiations, the TNA stressed to improve the situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), clearing of landmines and screening of suspected

LTTE cadres. Furthermore, the TNA also raised the issue about the identities, whereabouts and time of detention of the civilians who were fleeing the conflict zones to government-controlled territory during January 2009. In such a situation, statistics of the TNAs reaching the ground level say that they are not in touch with the ex-combatants in the ground.

Another burning issue which affects political and economic spheres was raised at the interview with an Emeritus Professor P. Balasundarampillei who was the former Vice Chancellor, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. According to him political powers such as controlling the local governing bodies are not being vested with the Provincial Government and therefore, the Provincial Government feels that it is powerless. (Balasundarampillei, 2014).

Although there is so much potential for agriculture and fisheries industry in this region the government has not given substantial assistance to develop these. As a result the Tamil Nadu fishermen are ruining the fragile eco system while raiding the maritime wealth that is the legitimate bread & butter of the namby-pamby fishing community in the northern Sri Lanka. If the government could develop this industry with better infrastructure facilities and empower the community with more security, then the Tamil Nadu fishermen will be reluctant to poach in Sri Lankan waters. The strained political situation between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu State of India could be solved if the GoSL engages in direct discussions with Tamil Nadu State government. During the war, alternative political institutions sprang up, such as militias and guerrilla groups who were never under the jurisdiction of any Government. By violence and intimidation, these groups can change established power structure and grab control over large tracts of territory. Being a member of such a group also offers individuals the opportunity for political empowerment.

### 6) Psychological Challenges

The integration process has facilitated psychological support; family counselling, academic & vocational rehabilitation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, assistive aid and house modification. There is a psychological aspect in political, economic and social spheres of re-integration.

According to Professor Balasundarampillei, a good number of the former LTTE combatants having gone through the government rehabilitation programme are striving to re-integrate with the society. Main reason is their own trauma. They are reluctant to face the society.

He further states that the government has completed a monumental task regarding rehabilitation. Most of those who are still struggling to re-integrate are very poor and were most seriously affected by the war. They have lost their loved ones or lost their properties completely. Another group, after successful a rehabilitation, has continued their education and found jobs. They are now fully re-integrated. The group who are still struggling are harbouring a common fear of being targeted for social crimes as the authorities look at them suspiciously. This is a mental trauma that they undergo. These ex-LTTE combatants have a tendency to evade the society and go abroad. Their relatives who are living abroad also advise them to come over there, fearing some harassment in Sri Lanka. Political situation in the Northern Province is very unstable. The politicians cannot perform to live up to expectations of the people who voted them due to some constraints. This situation is quite alarming as the entire community in the north is expecting to reconcile as fast as possible. They never want to see another armed conflict. They feel they are too weak and realise that day to day life is just dragging on without a ray of hope.

Even under these circumstances one cannot deny the improvement of the livelihood in the war affected areas. The security forces intervened in administration of the conflict affected areas with the aim of minimizing issues and maximizing results. Any pragmatic supporter of the post war development will realize that the military actions as necessary, to ensure smooth delivery benefits of the development process to reach the ground level.

The economic growth and maintaining peace are the two most important goals of GoSL. However, it is found that there are spoilers to this effort. These lethal & determined spoilers - both internal and external - are mainly aiming at disrupting the ongoing development projects that would definitely erase the scars of war from the minds of the people. Although, the government seems to be confident of their political stability, there are several issues that authorities have to be concerned with. In relation to security, the efforts by some remnants of LTTE during the recent past to stage a comeback, is one of them. In an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and peace exist in cooperative environments rather than competitive settings. There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for rule of law and uninterrupted peace.

During the survey carried out by the author it is observed that there are no clues to postulate that Tamil youth will take up arms back to their hands in order to rebel against

the government. Therefore at present, after five years of the conflict the theory of conflict trap leaves a question mark in Sri Lankan case.

### III. CONCLUSION

It is noted that the government still could not fully embark on a programme to generate the potential economic growth for the Northern Sri Lanka. As a recommendation the author suggests to establish a professionally qualified research cluster to find out the untapped resources and other security & development dynamics for both human and physical conditions in the area. This research cluster should also develop the capacity to facilitate transmission of knowledge and data for the government to act in following areas.

- Assessing the resources in the North and East and identifying their possible economic contribution towards the economy.
- Planning the Economic growth to include more micro level participation and the provision of more ownership in development programs is a must.
- Implementation of a strategic communication program to enhance the understanding among ex-combatants, rest of the community and the government. This is a pressing needed.
- Additional inclusion of ex-combatants in the security sector reforms in order to build the trust between government and them.
- Strict Implementation of alcohol and drugs prevention of programs.
- Soft surveillance on national security issues in the areas through academic surveys.

Findings with regard to re-integration processes that specifically concern the development agencies show that they should be adequately prepared to deal with future needs of the ex-combatants. Re-integration support also requires a high degree of flexibility and willingness to coordinate at all levels on the side of the government donors and other voluntary parties. Fast but steady procedures and specific rules & regulations should be formulated to ensure the effectiveness of the programme.

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