



## **CASE STUDY 5: THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION SERVICES IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA**

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**Mo Sibbons**

DFID Health Systems Resource Centre  
5-23 Old Street  
London EC1V 9HL  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7251 9555  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7251 9552  
[www.healthsystemsrc.org](http://www.healthsystemsrc.org)

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DFID Health Systems Resource Centre  
5-23 Old Street  
London EC1V 9HL  
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Fax: +44 (0) 20 7251 9552  
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## **Table of Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>Annex 1: Sri Lanka Five Year Primary Education Plan, Provincial Plan Summary.....</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Annex 2: Summary Table of Activities in Slfypep.....</b>	<b>19</b>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper contrasts two periods of time in Sri Lanka – 1) the late 1990s to early 2001 when a violent conflict between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was ongoing, and 2) the period immediately after the cessation of violence and during the on-going peace negotiations (the current situation). In this Sri Lanka case study, the transition from one time period to the other illustrates how a rapid mobilisation was enabled by a pre-existing relationship between development partners and the LTTE (representing the interests of the population of Northeast Province (NEP)) on the one hand, and development partners and the elected government in Colombo on the other.

Using examples of different primary education projects the following text provides lessons with potential to guide DFID aid programme policy approaches. One project provides a useful example of how service delivery was modified during the period of transition from war to peace negotiation – the Primary Mathematics Project (PMP). This project was supported by DFID and implemented by the National Institute of Education in Colombo. Prior to the description of PMP, some other general comments, illustrated with examples of other projects, are made.

### Country background and situation analysis

Sri Lanka has long been held up as a good example of 'over-achievement' in health and education measures compared to its income level<sup>1</sup>. In 1998 the primary education gross enrolment rate of 107% and a net enrolment of 90% compared very favourably with the rest of the sub-continent. A gender parity index of 0.96 in 1999 supports the claim that boys and girls have equal access to school. There is a 76% gross enrolment at secondary school.

However, as with all aggregated data, the disaggregated picture is complex and not so clearly positive. It is estimated that 1 million children living in the North and East of the country under the age of 18 are directly affected by a protracted ethnic-based civil war, and one third of school-aged children have dropped out or have never attended school.<sup>2</sup> There are also small populations of Indian Tamils living in the plantation areas of the central highlands who are educationally disadvantaged, and the children of poverty-gripped fishing villages have limited educational opportunities. Girls in Muslim dominated areas have less chance of an education than girls elsewhere in the Island, and the sexual and economic exploitation of boys in some coastal villages removes them from school.

The high enrolment rates and the 92% literacy rate of Sri Lanka are not reflected in good achievement levels: only 30% of students achieve pass marks in the core subjects at GCE 'O' level. The quality of schooling is variable but generally low, and is marked by teaching that is heavily teacher-centred and didactic, relying on rote learning of text book content. This is despite reforms introduced by the government which emphasise activity-based and child-centred learning.

Schooling in Sri Lanka is almost entirely provided by Government. There are 10,000 government schools serving just over four million primary and secondary students, and staffed by 190,000 teachers. Only a very few (3%) students attend private schools. Schools are divided by medium of instruction according to the two national

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<sup>1</sup> Caldwell J. (1986) Routes to Low Mortality in Poor Countries. Population and Development Review Vol 12 No 2

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2003) At a glance: Sri Lanka – the big picture. New York: UNICEF

languages: Sinhala (70% of schools) or Tamil (28.7%). English, which was the medium of instruction up to independence, is the official 'link language', and is used in some of the private schools.

The figures used for compiling the country profile are incomplete. Collecting data in the Northeast Province has been constrained (or impossible) for two decades during a protracted civil war which has largely been conducted in that area of the country.

Sri Lanka is a country which has been gripped by a 'complex political emergency'<sup>3</sup> for two decades. Incompletely described as an ethnic-based civil war, this crisis of the State has an underlying political dynamic which has created an intractable situation of armed violence throughout the island, but most obviously disruptive and destructive in the North and East of the country. Following a peaceful transition to independence from Britain in 1948 the Tamil population's reactions to subsequent policies by successive Sinhalese-dominated Governments sowed the seeds for this protracted and violent conflict. Between 1983 and 2003 this conflict, of varying intensity, has dominated the social and economic processes of the nation, caused the deaths of an estimated 60,000 people, and the displacement of large numbers (800,000 people, one third of them children) of people from villages in the war zones of the North and East of the country. However, as many people died during violent insurrections by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in 1972 and 1989. These violent demonstrations in the South of the country by this group of Marxist and nationalist Sinhalese youth were brutally put down by the government, and illustrate the increasingly violent nature of life throughout the island, not only in the war zones.

It is the disruption caused by the war, and the multiple dislocations of populations in the North and East, that has the most severe consequences on children's education. As noted earlier, a million children under the age of 18 are directly affected by the war, and one third of school-aged children have dropped out or have never attended school.<sup>4</sup> Currently approximately 50,000 school-aged children in the North East are estimated to be absent from school, and four times the national average of students (15 percent) drop-out from school. Basic education services to children and young adults were provided during the war, whether the children were placed in refugee camps in the NEP, temporarily migrated to Tamil Nadu in India, or were moved to relocation villages. Much of this education was delivered by government teachers who were also relocated along with their students to schools set up to function temporarily for the dislocated communities, or in UNHCR supported government schools in the camps. Non-formal education was provided by NGOs, but generally speaking government services were maintained, albeit incompletely, and often relying on volunteer and untrained teachers. However, missing months or years of schooling had a negative impact on learning, and the repeated moves from one base to another, death of or separation from parents, and disruption to rural livelihoods along with the trauma of close involvement in violent and bloody events all took, and continue to take, their toll on learning. Disillusionment with schooling which was not meeting their needs, and falling behind in their lessons, has pushed many children out of school, reducing demand even further.

Destruction of schools and education system infrastructure, loss of teachers through death or migration, and the simple difficulty of moving through land-mined countryside or along roads in various stages of destruction all played their part in limiting the

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<sup>3</sup> Goodhand J (2001) *Aid, Conflict and Peace Building in Sri Lanka*; London: Kings College, Centre for Defence Studies, The Conflict, Security and Development Group

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF. (2003) *At a glance: Sri Lanka – the big picture*. New York: UNICEF

supply of adequate schooling. An estimated short-fall<sup>5</sup> in NEP of nearly 9,000 Tamil medium teachers (28% of the total needed to meet the Government set teacher-pupil ratio) and a small gap of Sinhala teachers not only places a burden on the teachers who are in the system, it also presents the interim Provincial administration with a significant challenge.<sup>6</sup>

The justification, therefore, of considering Sri Lanka a difficult environment for education service delivery, is in part the legacy of the war, and in part the continuing complex political emergency which still dominates the State, despite the on-going but frequently interrupted peace negotiations. The rehabilitation and restoration of education services in the North East, both formal and informal, is of critical importance if the basic right of all children to basic education is to be met. They continue to suffer immensely due to the impact of the conflict.

### Key Questions

How willing is the elected government to take positive actions to redress the inadequacies of the education system, particularly for the Tamil minority whose leaders they still distrust? How willing is the LTTE interim administration to allow the GOSL to take responsibility for delivery of services in 'their' area? And in such a destroyed environment, how able are either to effect the necessary improvements to the education system? The following description of education sector project work in Sri Lanka attempts to answer these questions. Constraints to delivery of inclusive education and actions taken to facilitate improvements are illustrated in the examples of activities provided below.

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<sup>5</sup> UNICEF (2004) Action Plan for Children Affected by War; Progress Report 2003. New York: UNICEF

<sup>6</sup> Accurate data about the situation in the North and East of Sri Lanka are not available, and the estimates of the education situation vary. The figures quoted here are provided by UNICEF, but they are estimates, and these do not necessarily accord with other data provided by the government or from other non-government sources. The sensitivity of the situation in the country, with competing claims of the Government and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) Political Wing during the ongoing peace negotiations, results in survey and assessment data being closely protected until agreement by all sides on their legitimacy and accuracy permits their disclosure. For example, an 'official' needs assessment prepared by UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Food Programme on behalf of the GoSL and the LTTE in April 2003 was not in the public domain. The report of this needs assessment provides valuable insights into the current conditions, and highlights the priority areas for attention. DFID may have access to the report of this needs assessment through their education adviser based in the World Bank in Colombo.

The difficulties of data collection are well demonstrated by reports held in the official Government Department of Census and Statistics. Survey and census data is available through their web site: [www.statistics.gov.lk](http://www.statistics.gov.lk) The latest household income and expenditure surveys of 2001 reported in 2002/03 are separately reported for Northern and Eastern Province (NEP) and the rest of the country. The NEP survey notes that surveys had not been undertaken since 1980 – the conditions prevailing in those areas prevented the intervening surveys being conducted. This latest survey (2001) does not properly represent the area as a whole as the sampling frame was incomplete. Some of the districts could not be included, and only about 60 percent of housing units were represented in the Northern Province survey. This being the case, despite education data being said to represent the whole of NEP, lack of household data and limited population figures mean that calculations of enrolment rates, for example, may not be accurate. It is often unclear if national data does or does not include NEP data, and what the source of data is for the NEP if it is said to be included.

## Context

In the '*Failure of State Formation ...*'<sup>7</sup> the situation in Sri Lanka is ascribed to a post-independence process which failed to develop a unified state. '*The elite has not been able to form a state where all identity groups of Sri Lanka are able to live peacefully*'<sup>8</sup>. The Sinhalese are such a significant majority of the population (about 70 percent) that in a first past the post electoral system, the minority ethnic groups' rights have been bypassed: methods to safeguard the rights of the minorities failed to have their desired effect. The resulting resentment was particularly acute for the Tamils of the North of Sri Lanka who historically were known for their high levels of education and their position as the professional and political elite.

Although the Sri Lankan government has very strong commitments to the Millenium Development Goals, a commitment to the aims of which pre-empt the statement of those goals by several decades, their attitude towards reaching the goal for the Tamil population of the North and East has been ambiguous, at least. The distrust both of the government towards the LTTE (and any who might be their supporters) and the LTTE of the Government and their supporters (including service providers) has limited the scope for dialogue on education system reform. (The war and the constant dislocation of population, of course, produced an even more significant restriction on service delivery). The mutual distrust continues to hamper improvements resulting from Colombo-initiated activities – unless these are mediated through development partners. The examples given below illustrate how DFID education projects have worked within these confines.

## Willingness and capability matrix

Returning to our key questions of willingness and ability to provide education services we might summarise as follows. On the question of government willingness to support the implementation of education services the answer is a positive but highly qualified 'yes'. The government does not represent all sections of the state, and has manipulated state institutions to represent the Sinhalese majority. In the 1950s and 60s this may well have been a purposeful manipulation, but more recently the result is a consequence of that history, and by default rather than specific design. The government are committed to social service delivery, but their commitment is skewed towards the Sinhalese majority. In a sense this also gives the answer to whether the government is capable of delivering: yes they are, although, however, there are sections of the state that are excluded from this delivery, either because the war and its aftermath prevent delivery, or because resource flows are constrained for other historical, institutional reasons. (A simple fact which demonstrates the different commitments is a teacher-pupil ratio in 1998 of 1:28 for Sinhala medium schools, and 1:48 for Tamil medium). These points are explored further.

## Limitations of international aid in developing capability

There has been considerable development aid support provided to the education sector in Sri Lanka (see table 1 below). However, one of the frustrating features of working in the Sri Lankan education sector is the lack of sustainability of impact from past development aid supported projects. When questioned about previous programmes designed to support those children who experience poorer schooling

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<sup>7</sup> Bastian S. (1999) *The failure of state formation, identity conflict and civil society responses – the case of Sri Lanka* (Working Paper 2). Bradford: University of Bradford, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.4

than the average child (inputs, process and outcomes) more than once the answer has been 'that project has finished'. This disappointing reaction reinforced a suspicion that development aid provides valuable funding to support service delivery (implementation), but the development/technical inputs of projects are accepted by government departments or institutions in order to satisfy the donors and their technical advisers – to gain access to additional funds. The suspicion remains that the 'wheels reinvented' during the life of the PMP project (below) will suffer the same fate of falling off the cart once the project life is completed – despite considerable attempts to make sure this does not happen through institutionalisation measures during the life of the programme.

One later component introduced in the project was a special programme to address the educational needs of children in so-called 'disadvantaged areas' of the country. This was initiated after UNICEF interventions in the National Institute of Education (NIE), and on the invitation of the Director General of NIE to the Primary Mathematics Unit (PMU)<sup>9</sup>. A trial approach to delivering education through the education system using non-traditional situation analysis and management methods implemented by government personnel (including teachers) was completed. This demonstrated particularly good results, but a commitment to ensure that further replications of the programme, managed by officers of NIE, in other disadvantaged areas of the country was not followed through. Despite attempts to make sure that NIE officers were willing and able to continue the programme (by engaging them in implementation of the trial) at the end of the funding of the project these officers were moved from the post which would permit them to continue the work. Commitment to the marginalised groups is marginal! In part this is legitimate: they are a small minority of the population, and the majority do enjoy far better access to schooling than other children in the sub-continent. On the other hand, it is also a demonstration that once the specific funding for special measures through the development partner finishes it is not replaced by a government commitment of funds. This and many other examples raise the question of how long the government commitment to LTTE areas of the country will persist beyond the end of considerable inputs from the donor community.

### **Constrained access – limited capacity**

As is pointed out in the Five Year Primary Education Plan (1999 – 2004), it is precisely the minority of educationally disadvantaged children who do not benefit from schooling that are the focus for achieving 'Education for All'. This minority tends to be Tamil speaking: the plantation workers, the Muslim fishing villages and the Tamils of the North and East. This is not a single homogenous ethno-religious group, and they each face different constraints to accessing schools. The consequence of the latter is the need for different policy responses in each location. The reluctance, lack of willingness, of the government to tackle the constraints, is in part due to lack of knowledge (statistics are poor, especially for the NEP), and in part lack of capacity to deal with social, economic and cultural factors within the education system. As suggested in the previous paragraph, even when a capacity to deal with the social, economic and cultural factors is created this is not sustained – there appears to be little willingness on the part of the government appointed heads of key institutions to address the needs of the minority (even a substantial minority) of educationally disadvantaged.

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<sup>9</sup> The project became integrated into the National Institute of Education (NIE); the establishment of the Primary Mathematics Unit (PMU) for the implementation of activities of PMP was an early demonstration of acceptability by the government of the work and approach of the project.

### **Project-specific interventions to increase access**

Despite this pessimistic interpretation of outcomes for those deemed to be educationally disadvantaged, there are project examples which have a more optimistic prospect. PMP has tackled the lack of capacity to address the educational needs of marginalised groups throughout all its components. There was, though, considerable resistance within the NIE, and within the technical advisory team, when it was first suggested as a legitimate focus for the project. The technical nature of the project design and TORs meant a legitimate focus on curriculum development, maths teaching (in-service and pre-service teacher education) and learning (materials, text books and assessment). However, teaching and learning is done in context, and there are many factors which influence process and outcomes which relate directly to the socio-economic environment within which the child lives. 'What has this to do with maths teaching?' was a question posed on several occasions during the development of equity analysis tools, school improvement planning, and the encouragement of community/parental involvement in schooling. Fortunately, ***the support from the client (DFID) for a mainstreamed equity approach was considerable***, and instrumental in creating legitimacy. The timing was fortuitous as it coincided with the 'Social Harmony' strategy that the joint donors were developing.

Also of note is the sizable and influential set of elder states-people in the education system of Sri Lanka. They pre-date the conflict era, and are dedicated to a unified nation state, where all children benefit from a quality education. In such circumstances, identifying key local informants – respected, influential actors who are willing and able to advocate for specific changes to benefit the excluded minority – is a key to the success of development aid programmes. In a sense they can act as surrogates for Government which may be reluctant for various political reasons to be seen to be supporting sensitive initiatives. ***As significant state (as opposed to Government) representatives, with no direct political representation to satisfy, the elder states-people are important allies in creating change to government service delivery for the benefit of the marginalised, and often the poorest.***

### **Education service delivery in NorthEast Province (NEP)**

As noted above, Sri Lanka is not a unified state. This section looks at specific experiences of service delivery which attempted to work with all sections of the state during a period of war, and during the transition towards peace. Because of the international development partner (IDP) approach, the cessation of hostilities and the protracted peace negotiations (which are still on-going) provided an opportunity for a rapid mobilisation of initiatives to provide services to the excluded, displaced or inadequately served population of the war zone and of NEP in general. The following notes look at project activities while the war was still active, and at project activities which spanned that period and into the period of peace negotiations. The external support provided through bi-lateral and multi-lateral partner programmes generally worked alongside government service providers; this relationship is described below.

### **The Primary Education Planning Project.**

This DFID funded project was a planning exercise the outcomes of which were a master plan and a cadre of trained personnel at both national and provincial levels to manage, monitor and evaluate primary education programmes<sup>10</sup>. During the three-year project, Cambridge Education provided 26.5 months of international consultancy

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<sup>10</sup> Details of the education sector policy and planning system in Sri Lanka is described in Little A. (2003) Education for All: Policy and Planning Lessons from Sri Lanka

and 31.5 months of local consultancy in education planning, finance, economics, monitoring and evaluation.

The project focused on establishing and operating a management system for preparing the five year primary education plan (FYPEP), training national and provincial primary education and planning staff and producing and disseminating draft plans for primary education. Other main outputs involved conducting a public awareness programme for primary education issues, developing and agreeing proposals for financing primary education and preparing, publishing and disseminating the master plan.

The SLFYPEP document was produced by the MEHE (March 2000), compiled from the Provincial Plans. It outlines a five year programme, based on available statistics. Despite the well-known problems of providing schooling for children in NEP, references to this large area of the island are negligible. The most significant statement occurs in Chapter 3, and appears to be the only direct reference to the unique problems of that province.

*“The reasons why children do not enter formal education at the correct age are various. They may be economic (e.g. the direct and indirect costs of schooling), socio-cultural (e.g. parental valuation of education, religious attitudes), the absence of birth certificates required for school entry, and a lack of awareness on the part of the parents of the correct school-admission age. The ongoing war in the North East has rendered thousands of people displaced and refugees living in camps or in the homes of those who care for them. Children in refugee camps and the displaced have difficulties in entering school.”<sup>11</sup>*

Why there is such a significant gap in analysis is not clear – the team of technical assistants supporting the Provinces and the MEHE were certainly capable of analysing the situation, and might have been expected to advocate inclusion of reference to and specific programmes for the NEP. The outline of the NEP provincial plan (as with other provinces, this is embedded within the national plan) makes salutary reading (annex 1). Very baldly, it makes it plain just how significant the problems are that have to be tackled by the Province.<sup>12</sup>

On the one hand, the fact that the NEP plan is included in the National plan indicates a certain level of inclusion of the NEP in the MEHE programme. On the other, the ***lack of acknowledgement of the content of the NEP plan within the introductory chapters of the national plan perhaps indicates how concern for their problems are not mainstreamed, not deeply embedded in the general thinking about education policy.*** In the long list of activities included in the National plans there are specific initiatives for ‘catch-up’ programmes, and for schooling for children in refugee camps (annex 2).

The disappointment on reading the text which supports the list of activities is the seeming lack of recognition of the need to identify and address the particular challenges and problems of the NEP. ***It is possible to draw parallels between this marginalisation of NEP needs and the argument that providing activities specifically to address ‘women’s issues’ simply marginalises these problems to special units with no real funding and poorly resourced. Here, the provision of a couple of specific activities for the NEP permits their problems to be***

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<sup>11</sup> SLFYPEP (2000) pps 1-2

<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that the North East Provincial team who prepared the NEP plan were considered to be the most able by the PEPP technical advisers.

***relegated to a special unit, or a special team (poorly resourced, and poorly funded by government).*** There were activities supported by bodies outside the MEHE, which are mentioned below, but within the government departments attention was not given to the particular difficulties posed for normal service delivery in NEP.

An example is the issue of qualified teachers in post. The analysis is partial, partly because there were no comprehensive and accurate statistics for the NEP. The table on teacher deployment and projections for teacher requirements in the SLFYPEP does not make reference to the unique problems of the NEP, and hence misses the opportunity of highlighting the specific needs of the Province. This does have consequences for the later period when services are returning to normal during the peace negotiations. The large shortfall on qualified teachers in some zones of NEP was certainly anticipated by NGOs and others involved in education in NEP during the war (see for example *An appraisal of the education system in the Vanni area of Sri Lanka* SC (UK) 1998), and reported to government. Despite this knowledge only very limited pre-planning took place. Children were relying on volunteer teachers for their education (and continue to do so). Those volunteer teachers were excluded from in-service training (taking place as part of the government curriculum reform programme). There was strong resistance to their inclusion in mainstream activities – a resistance that I was witness to during work on the Primary Mathematics Project. ***An opportunity was missed in the SLFYPEP to address the very significant problem of providing sufficient teachers to staff the newly re-opened schools in the Vanni.***

There are different possible explanations for this failure to mainstream. It is not true to claim that activities were not taking place (as described below) but within the national policy making circles mainstreaming did not happen. There was certainly an evident reluctance to make overt reference to supporting service delivery in the Vanni. To do so might be construed as (tacit) support for the anti-government LTTE, support which was clearly unacceptable within the government civil service and Ministerial departments. Whether the TA team made efforts to ensure a greater reference to problems of NEP but were overruled is unknown. This is quite possible, given the strong local ownership of the SLFYPEP, an ownership rightly encouraged by the project team.

### **Development partner approaches**

In these circumstances the development partner approach needs to be sensitive to the local context. GTZ answered the conundrum of seeking government acceptance for NEP focussed activities by working directly with the Provincial education department, clearly with government approval, but allowing them to bypass much of the reluctance of the central decision makers to get involved in the NEP. A project implementation team of senior and capable Sri Lankans were in post, based in the Provincial education ministry in Trincomalee – a relatively safe environment. Although not ideally placed for delivering services in the far North of the island, the headquarters for the amalgamated North and East Provinces was the most appropriate base for policy development and implementation for the very difficult circumstances of the populations there.

The Primary Mathematics Project used a similar approach to ensuring dissemination of its programme in NEP. They set up a sub-office in Trinco, with a project officer and team of in-service teacher training specialists. Not only did this office provide a more suitable location for dissemination to the NEP, it also provided a professional team of specialists who were Tamil speaking and who understood the cultural context of NEP. (PMP is returned to below)

Also in NEP NGO programmes existed, and an analysis of the situation in the conflict areas was undertaken by SC (UK) in 1998. Their country report for 2001 noted *'Successive governments have demonstrated national commitment and significant advances towards 'education for all'. However, recent research points to a marked deterioration, with significant disparities in infrastructure and allocation of resources between urban and rural areas and in conflict-affected areas. Literacy rates are decreasing and school drop-out is increasing.'* Later they go on to say *'Despite policies on inclusion, children are excluded from compulsory primary education if they have no birth certificate, are displaced, disabled or poor, or if the school is being used as a welfare centre or is closed due to lack of resources, Government 'catch-up' programmes (in the conflict-affected areas) are few and under-resourced.'*<sup>13</sup>

GTZ focussed very clearly on education provision in the war zone, and for those pupils who were affected by the trauma of war. They provided specific training for teachers in psycho-social issues for children suffering from the war, and developed a catch-up programme for children whose education had been disrupted by dislocations from war. The recognition of the family breakdown that occurred and the consequences of parental deaths for child care were central to their approach of support for children.

Attempts were made by the PMP project to ensure coherence between the two projects, both working in NEP and working directly through the government education system. However, this was sometimes less than optimal: sharing of materials in the process of development was not an option for GTZ. Waiting for final versions was frustrating when similar materials for teacher support were being developed by PMP. The government had little influence on this coordination during the development phase. Despite this difficulty, good relationships were established between the two projects, notably after a change of team leader on the GTZ country programme. This meant that ***when it came to the sudden increase in activity in NEP following the start of negotiated peace the two programmes could work very closely together and with the NEP education department in delivering in-service teacher training and the catch-up programme.***

From these experiences it would seem that being able to maintain a neutral political position whilst at the same time supporting service delivery for the mainstream and the minority population groups provides a solid foundation on which to build post-conflict programmes. Having a network of service delivery offices in the formal government system, where limited capacity has been maintained and resources supplied throughout a conflict appears to be an important element to post-conflict reconstruction. If a viable government structure exists it is of greater relevance to support maintenance, capacity building and reconstruction of that system than to develop parallel provisions through NGOs or donor supported discrete projects.

The presence of development partners' aid programmes provided leverage for activities in the so-called cleared areas (provided by personnel who may be sympathetic to the LTTE opposition groups) that the central government did not prevent. The incentive of large sums of money to support the delivery of regular services appeared to persuade the government to permit improvements and changes to schooling in line with reforms elsewhere in the country for children in the cleared areas of the North and East. From our own experience we know that providing training and orientation programmes in these areas was difficult. Even with a sub-

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<sup>13</sup> Save the Children UK. (1998) An appraisal of the education system of the Vanni area of Sri Lanka.

office in Trincomalee able to coordinate these programmes through the provincial department, permits to travel and the long and uncomfortable journeys to distant locations required considerable logistical stamina and longer periods of time for implementation. ***It is unlikely that the government was able, nor willing to, deliver these training programmes without project support.***

Refugee camps delivered schooling following the same curriculum, although the supervision of quality of the services provided and the constraints to resource distribution meant a reduced quality in comparison to schools elsewhere. Schools in the war zone, in the un-cleared areas, were very poorly served, and in many cases the infrastructure was destroyed as a consequence of warfare. The continuous, forced movement of populations and the relocation of schools disrupted schooling, and had consequences for the availability of qualified teachers. ***In these areas INGO support for services was invaluable, and the role of the INGOs and UN bodies (UNICEF and UNHCR) provided the neutral inputs acceptable to the circumstances.***

The following table outlines the main, externally supported, education activities which were implemented throughout the conflict period. The dates indicate where projects were active in both the war and the transition period (from 2001). The GTZ consolidated their various education activities under one programme – the [Basic Education Sector Programme \(BESP\)](#). This includes continuing work in the NEP on the TIP as well as expanded inputs in the BECARE and VERP. As noted elsewhere, the continued presence of GTZ in the NEP over several years, and working directly with and in the NEP government education offices, provided them with a network and a knowledge base which has enabled a rapid response to meet the reconstruction needs of the education system, and to address the priority needs for schooling. They have worked closely with other donors, such as UNICEF and DFID/WB in developing and implementing the ‘catch-up’ programme, again a process facilitated by earlier collaborative efforts. Although the PMP closed as a project in mid-2004 the legacy of qualified Tamil speaking consultants and officers has supplemented those resources available to support the GTZ and UNICEF initiatives. The BES programme includes the following projects:

- Material Development and Training Unit (MDTU)
- Teacher In-service Project North Eastern Province (TIP N/EP)
- Teacher In-service Project Central Province (TIP-CP)
- Basic Education for Children in disadvantaged areas (BECARE)
- Vanni Education Rehabilitation Project (VERP)

In addition to the following tabulated information, working through local organisations, UNICEF has an active programme of mine-clearance education, as well as supporting the education and health needs of war-affected children in the NEP. They are closely involved in the education ‘catch-up’ programme.

**Table 1: Donor Funded Projects in Primary Education during the war and post-war period**<sup>14</sup>

<b>SIDA</b>	<b>DFID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plantation Schools Education Development Project (PSEDP) 143.56 million SEK, July 1986 to December 1998</li> <li>• Primary Schools Development Project (PSDP), 44.58 million SEK, July 1986 to December 1998</li> <li>• Distance Education Project, 60.23 million SEK, July 1986 to December 1999</li> <li>• Special Education Project, 15.14 million SEK, July 1986 to December 1999</li> <li>• Institutional Development of Disadvantaged Schools project, 5.8 million SEK, July 1992 to December 1998</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary English Language Project (PELP), Sterling Pounds 2.7 million, September 1996 – August 2001</li> <li>• Primary Mathematics Project, (PMP), Sterling Pounds 3.1 million, March 1998 – March 2003</li> <li>• Primary Education Planning Project, (PEPP), Sterling Pounds 1.1 million, February 1997 – March 2000</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sri Lankan – German Development Cooperation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sri Pada College of Education Project (SPCoEP), 28.38 million DM, January 1986 to December 1998</li> <li>• Teacher Training and Staff Development Project (TSDP) 3.1 million DM for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase (through TETD), 1998 – 2003 (primary pre-service teacher training curriculum and teaching/ learning materials)</li> <li>• Teacher In –Service Project (TIP), 1993 – 2003</li> </ul>	<p><b>World Bank</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second General Education Project (GEP2), 83.4 million US Dollars, 1998 - 2003</li> </ul> <p>The important components of the project for Grades 1-5 are Curriculum Development (14.2 million \$) Education Publications (12.3 \$) School Rationalization (23.9 \$) quality inputs (18.3 \$), Libraries (5.9 \$) Management and Planning (6.4 \$), Education Financing (0.8 \$) and studies (0.7 \$). PMP is integral to GEP2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Education and Teacher Development Project (TETD), 79.3 million US Dollars, 1996- 2001</li> </ul>
<p><b>UNICEF Funds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Education Development Project (PEDP), Rs. 32.1 million, 1990 to 1998</li> </ul>	<p>The important components of the project for Grades 1-5 are Rationalization of Teacher Deployment (0.2 million \$), Rationalization of Structure and Organization (0.9 million \$), Upgrading of Teacher Education Programs (3.7 million \$), Strengthening of Staff and Management (11.8 million \$), Strengthening and Upgrading of the Teacher Training (49.5 million \$) and Studies and Monitoring (0.3 million \$)</p>
<p><b>JICA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of 302 Model Primary Schools in 302 Divisions, launched in 1998, JICA has already released Rs. 1460 Million to be utilized until end of 2000.</li> </ul>	

<sup>14</sup> Sri Lanka FYPEP (March 2000) CH 2, p16

### The Primary Mathematics Project – summary of key learning points

As previously described, this project focussed on improving maths teaching and learning in primary schools in Sri Lanka. It started in 1998 when the war was on-going and came to an end in 2004 after an extension which focussed on consolidating its outputs and providing further inputs to extend the equity related activities of the project. This extension was particularly pertinent in light of the peace negotiations which had started and brought a cessation of hostilities in the NE Province. It allowed the project to complete the coverage of training for in-service advisers in the NEP, as well as contributing experienced Tamil-speaking staff to reconstruction activities and the catch-up programme. ***As noted above the presence of an office in Trincomalee, and working with the NEP education departments during the war was a foundation which permitted a rapid support to improving services in NEP.*** An early visit to Vavuniya following the start of peace negotiations provided first-hand information of the situation of schools in NEP, and allowed bridge-building meetings with key persons in the area. This would not have been possible if relationships had not already been established, not only with government, but also with opposition groups and other donor programmes active in the area. A senior Tamil speaking local consultant employed on the DFID PMP contract continues to work in the NEP helping with the system strengthening activities in the Province.

Some of the other key learning points were:

- The importance of establishing the legitimacy of the project activities within the primary system. The opening of the PMU as a functional unit of NIE meant that all activities agreed by the Director General were within the government education system.
- Gaining acceptance for mainstreaming of an equity focus permitted a continual assessment of project activities as to their validity for all children, and how to enable effective implementation in the NEP.
- Materials were always prepared in the three working languages; resources were therefore available for ready expansion into Tamil speaking areas of the North.
- All activities within the project were disseminated throughout the whole island, and every effort was made to ensure as wide a dissemination in the North as feasible at any given time.
- Although focussed particularly on mathematics teaching and learning, liaison with other primary projects to ensure consistency of approaches within the one system was actively pursued. This provided opportunities for joint activities and sharing of resources when this became particularly pertinent in the NEP following the start of negotiated peace.
- The support of DFID for the PMP to broaden its mandate and increase its activities in NEP was a significant factor contributing to the success of this project to provide services across the nation in a non-unified state.
- The inclusion of a social development adviser, initially resented and poorly understood by the technical experts, was also positively endorsed by DFID. This had a considerable impact on the project, ensuring a constant focus on minority groups, and supporting initiatives in the NEP.
- The early decisions to include Tamil as well as Sinhalese personnel in the project and to establish the sub-office in Trincomalee contributed to the later state of readiness to support the post-conflict areas.

## Concluding points

Throughout this paper some points have been highlighted which were thought to be particularly relevant to delivering services in difficult circumstances. Sri Lanka is very different to other countries where civil war has disrupted and devastated the lives of populations. Despite the upheavals which were mostly but not exclusively experienced in the North and East of the country, Sri Lanka has maintained a democratic system (albeit flawed through its inability to provide equitably for the whole population) which has delivered effective health and education services to the majority of the population. However, a substantial minority of the population, geographically demarcated and largely ethnically separate, have had their lives devastated and/or destroyed over two decades, and have been excluded from the democratic processes available to the Southern and Western populations. Children have been denied an education, or have had limited access to disrupted and distorted schooling. Many projects and IDA programmes have worked within the government education system to ensure that at least a minimum service has been maintained in those areas of the North and East where hostility has been on hold for many years. It is maintained here that the persistence in supporting the education system in the NEP has enabled a rapid mobilisation of resources during a transition phase, which has seen the return of dislocated populations to their home villages and a rapid rebuilding of lives. Complications of land-mines, poor communications networks, destroyed infrastructures and overgrown farm land are being addressed, while some form of normalcy is developed in social service delivery.

Despite the particularity of the Sri Lankan situation, the following points are highlighted as of more general relevance:

- An earlier reference was made to gender mainstreaming. The lessons that have been learned in respect to addressing the interests of the whole population, both men and women, and not only the voiced and powerful male elite, are as relevant to the issue of service delivery in difficult environments. That is, effective mainstreaming of a focus on marginalised groups, or groups beyond access to mainstream provision, is an essential ingredient if the needs of populations in difficult environments are to be met. A combination of special measure to address specific needs ('positive actions') need to sit comfortably alongside incorporation of their needs in all activities.
- Efforts to ensure continuous awareness of and a focus on minority interests as part of the mainstream set of activities have the potential to enable outcomes and impact which contribute towards MDGs. Recent gender analysis of PRSPs has demonstrated their generally poor record in addressing gender disparities: even where gender analysis is included, the policies developed are poorly designed and are rarely accompanied by gendered budgets. This analysis could be extended to other educationally disadvantaged groups, such as the population of NEP in Sri Lanka, where problems are identified but national policies and resources do not flow to address those problems.
- Sound, thorough and participatory analysis, information-based policy development (including stakeholder involvement in design), formative monitoring and evaluation systems representing all interests and adequate budgeting are not just clichés of the development aid discourse, but lessons learned from programme implementation. Although not highlighted in the text here, the analysis conducted by NGOs and other donor supported projects has focussed on the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to support policy development that will address the specific problems of the NEP (and other educationally disadvantaged segments of the country's population).

- The inclusion of external and objective 'critical friends' throughout the life of programmes are helpful in ensuring a continuous refocusing or modification to projects' activities.
- The evidence from the Burundi education sector case study <sup>15</sup> illustrates the difficulties that exist when the government fails to distribute resources equitably – a continuing failure to recognise the needs of the non-dominant group, a build-up of further resentments, and a failure to achieve education targets. In Sri Lanka the precipitation of the civil war had similar pre-cursors to those in Burundi - of a non-unified state.
- In Sri Lanka the efforts of external development partners permitted a post-war rapid effort to redress imbalances, an approach which is not necessarily appreciated by the majority Sinhalese who themselves are now resentful of the significant development aid funds being provided for the NEP reconstruction – 'a reward for hostility'.
- Although much of this paper has concentrated on the area of Sri Lanka which has experienced the most difficult of circumstances, it should be noted that other sub-groups of the population are also educationally disadvantaged. These tend to be Tamil speaking minorities (Indians, plantation Tamils, and Muslim Tamils), and add to the perception that the democratic system fails to meet the needs of the non-mainstream populations.

In this particular case, a government education system with a sound and robust structure was worthy of support. Despite concerns for the quality of schooling (shared by government and development partners alike) the mechanisms for managing and delivering schooling were/are effective. Working within the system and working to strengthen it was and remains a far more constructive approach than setting up parallel delivery structures. Apart from emergency and humanitarian relief delivered by NGOs and UN agencies, empirically the consensus of the development partners to this perception is demonstrated.

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<sup>15</sup> Jackson T. (2000) Equal Access to Education: a peace imperative for Burundi

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## **ANNEX 1: SRI LANKA FIVE YEAR PRIMARY EDUCATION PLAN, PROVINCIAL PLAN SUMMARY**

### **North East Province SLFYPEP, 2000**

The programmes and activities designed to achieve the goals and targets are summarised below. The five programmes are based on five major aspects, namely students, teachers and principals, schools quality inputs and management. Under each programme a number of activities are listed. All these programmes and activities are designed to improve primary education in the Province.

#### **Programme I**

##### **Student related**

###### **Activities**

1. Improve the learning environment in schools
2. Increase GER
3. Reduce drop outs
4. Raise achievement levels
5. Reduce the retention rate
6. Organise catch up programmes
7. Organise special education programmes
8. Organise nutrition programmes
9. Organise assistance to poor and needy students
10. Organise schooling for students in refugee camps

#### **Programme II**

##### **Teacher / Principal related**

###### **Activities**

1. Recruit teachers to fill vacancies
2. Organise in service training for teachers
3. Train the untrained teachers
4. Retrain the trained teachers
5. Deploy teachers equitably to schools
6. Set up resource centres in Zones
7. Set up teacher centres.
8. Evaluate teachers and principals
9. Provide incentives to difficult area teachers and principals
10. Organise awards for outstanding performance to teachers

#### **Programme III**

##### **School related**

###### **Activities**

1. Open temporarily closed schools
2. Revert back displaced schools
3. Construct classrooms where required
4. Refurbish class rooms
5. Construct teachers and principals quarters where required
6. Provide urinals, toilets and drinking water facilities where required

7. Provide activity rooms and play areas
8. Provide security fence to schools (fence).
9. Provide office room, staff room and store room where required.
10. Effect repairs to school buildings and furniture

#### **Programme IV**

##### **Quality related**

##### **Activities**

1. Provide primary kits
2. Provide sports kits
3. Provide Music kits
4. Provide teaching learning equipments
5. Provide audio – video equipments
6. Provide supplementary reading materials
7. Provide Rs 1000/= per school for making improvised aids.
8. Organise remedial teaching
9. Organise co-curricular activities
10. Provide text books etc. on time

#### **Programme V**

##### **Education Management Related**

##### **Activities**

1. Provide Management Training to all principals
2. Recruit required ISAA cadre
3. Train all ISAAs
4. Provide graded principals to schools
5. Provide Management Training to all Primary Education Offices
6. Set up Primary Education Development Committees school wise, Division wise and Zone
7. Set up school families
8. Train in school and external supervision staff
9. Organise in school and external supervision programmes
10. Organise School Based Management

**ANNEX 2: SUMMARY TABLE OF ACTIVITIES IN SLFYPEP**

Figure 3.1 Sri Lanka Five Year Plan for Primary Education, 2000-2004

		Origin of planned programme/plans		
Programme/ Activity		MEHE/Provincial	Special Projects	Supplementary programmes PEPP/MEHE
<b>Enhancement of Initial Intake</b>				
1.1.	House hold survey to identify potential grade one entrants	-	-	X
1.2.	School Attendance Committees	NFE (MEHE)	-	X
1.3.	Scholarships from provincial Trust Fund to needy children	-	-	X
1.4.	Strengthening of Monitoring of the Implementation of Compulsory Education Regulations	NFE (MEHE)	-	X (To supplement)
1.5.	Improvement of Special Education Provisions	SEB, MEHE	-	X (To supplement)
1.6.	Targeted programmes for disadvantaged communities	-	-	X
<b>Retention and Completion</b>				
	Bettering the Learning environment	-	-	X
1.7.	Sensitizing of Parents	-	-	X
1.8.	Monitoring of school attendance	-	-	X
<b>Improving Access</b>				
1.9.	Provision of education for refugee and displaced children	-	-	X
1.10.	Construction of new buildings	X (PSDG Funds & National School Funds)	GEP 2 and JICA	-
1.11.	Maintenance of school plants	X	-	-
1.12.	Furniture Supply	X	GEP 2 & JICA	-
1.13.	Remodeling of classrooms	X	-	-
<b>Curriculum Development and Text books Production</b>				
	Training of National Level Curriculum Development	-	GEP 2	-
2.1.	Training of provincial Level Curriculum Developers	-	-	X

2.2.	Evaluation of Curriculum and Textbooks	-	-	X
2.3.	Preparation of improved textbooks and education materials	NIE & EPD	GEP 2	-
2.4.	Provision of Funds for 'quality Inputs'	Province	GEP 2	-
2.5.	Training of Untrained Teachers	TEB, MEHE	-	-
2.6.	Training of ISAs and PESOs in New Curriculum	NIE/ MEHE/ Province	-	-
2.7.	Strengthening Zonal Level support for the annual orientation courses for teachers on the new curriculum	PEB, MEHE, NIE	GEP 2	-
2.8.	Teacher Training in specialised methods – Multi-grade teaching	-	-	X
2.9.	Teacher Training in specialised methods – School-based assessment	NIE	-	-
2.10.	Training in SBA of Primary Education Specialist Officers (PEOs), ISAs, Primary Principals/ Section Heads and Primary Teachers	-	-	X
2.11.	Continuous Monitoring of SBA	Province/ MEHE/ NIE	-	-
2.12.	School based on the job training	-	-	X
2.13.	School Family-based professional development	Province	-	X (To supplement)
2.14.	Supportive Supervision by Education Officers	Province	-	-
2.15.	Home-School partnership	-	-	X
<b>Deployment and Training of Support Staff</b>				
3.1.	Rational Deployment of Principals/ Sectional Heads to Primary Schools/ Sections	ESC/ MEHE/ Province	-	-
3.2.	Training of Primary School Principals and Sectional Heads in Primary Education Management	-	-	X
3.3.	Increasing the Cadre for Primary Education ISAs and Training them in Primary Education Pedagogy	MEHE	-	-

3.4.	Rational Deployment of Primary Education Specialist Officers and training all Education Officers in Primary Education Management	MEHE/ Province	-	-
3.5.	Staff Development Programme for Senior and Middle Level Managers	-	GEP -2	-
<b>Organisation of Primary Education</b>				
3.6.	Organisational Audit	MEHE	GEP- 2	-
<b>Planning and Information Systems</b>				
3.7.	Strengthening Primary Education Planning Capacity of Provincial Education Units	MEHE	-	-
3.8.	Establishing Primary Education EMIS at School Level	MEHE	-	X
3.9.	Evaluation of Plan Effectiveness and Impact	-	-	X
<b>Teacher Deployment</b>				
4.1.	Rationalisation of Teacher Deployment	ESC/ MEHE/ Province	-	-
4.2.	Recruitment of Teachers Trained in Primary Education	ESC/ Province	-	-
<b>Funding Mechanisms</b>				
4.3.	Establishing norm-specific needs based formula finding for primary education	-	GEP2/ Finance Commission	-
4.4.	Special Support to Disadvantaged Schools	-	GEP2/ Finance Commission	-
4.5.	Separate Budget Lines for Primary Education at National and Provincial Level	MEHE	Finance Commission	X
4.6.	Revision of Guidelines and procedures on School-level funds	MEHE/Province	-	-