The Ethnic Conflict, Displacement and Poverty in Sri Lanka: A Sociological Investigation[1]

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society. Although the exact time when this ethnic divisiveness began is difficult to identify, its ancientness can be presumed. As a consequence, the two main communities functioned differently in terms of the linguistic pattern, religious order, norms and practices. In the fold of a unitary state, ethnic divisiveness resulted in a conflict between the Sinhalese- majority and the Tamil minority, the latter blaming the causes of exploitation and deprivation. At one stage Tamils raised the demand for a separate State and started an armed campaign, which escalated into a prolonged civil war, which resulted in internal displacement and other social problems. The Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka were seriously affected by the civil war for the last two decades. The civil war led to intensify greatly the threshold of multiple vulnerabilities associated with agricultural, fishing, small-scale industries and other livelihood activities of these areas. This paper will trace these negative social consequences, particularly the implications for poverty. The paper will also theoretically examine the relationship between the ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty.

Introduction

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society, which comprises of three main ethnic communities namely, Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. The fundamental issue is the macro-conflict between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority, which has gradually escalated into the civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sinhalese dominated armed forces since 1983 onwards. The Northeast was the main theatre of war in Sri Lanka (Korf & K.T.Silva 2003), which has been seriously affected by the civil war

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for more than two decades distorting the lives of the people and social, economic, cultural and political structures of these communities. As a result of the war and displacement, prevailing poverty has become chronic poverty (Korf & K.T.Silva 2003).

The Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka have been seriously affected by the civil war for the last two decades. The civil war served to intensify the threshold of multiple vulnerabilities associated with agricultural, fishing, small-scale industries and other livelihood activities of these areas (Cohen 1998a, 2004b; Ahmad 2004; Mooney 2005). This paper will trace these negative social consequences, particularly the implication for poverty. The paper will also theoretically examine the relationship between ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty. This study will investigate poverty and vulnerability caused by the ethnic conflict, civil war and displacement in the Northeast Province of Sri Lanka. Existing literature examines the relationship between the impact of ethnic conflict and displacement on poverty and vulnerability The ethnic marginalization and exclusion gain more importance in such livelihood strategies.[2] In addition, caste consciousness and caste identity also persist and play significant roles in the resettlement in the host community where the caste minority (low caste IDPs (internally displaced persons) in the camps)[3] face multiple vulnerabilities and difficulties in order to adjust and cope with their new form of livelihood in the given social structure.[4] The people who are socially disadvantaged happen to belong to the lower caste hierarchy of the society: they encounter tremendous problems in pursuing their livelihood

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[2] See Benedikt Korf and Kalinga Tudor Silva *Poverty, ethnicity and conflict in Sri Lanka* available at
http://www.chronicpoverty. orgpdfs2003conferencepa persKorfS ilva. pdf

[3] See Kalinga Tudor Silva, P.P Sivapragasam & Paramsothy Thanges, *Casteless or Caste-blind? Dynamics of Concealed Caste Discrimination, Socail Exclusion and Protest in Sri Lanka,* 2009, Colombo: Kumaran Book House.

[4] See Benedikt Korf & et.al, *Conflict-Threat or Opportunity? Land Use and Coping Strategies of War-affected Communities in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka,* 2001, Berlin: Centre for Advanced Training in Rural Development.

opportunities.[5] The literature review and practical situations show that understanding of characterization and nature of poverty is a more complicated phenomenon, which requires a multidimensional analysis.

Research Objectives and Methodology

The major objectives of this study are: (1) to examine the linkages between ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty, (2) to study the challenges in constructing the sociological concept of poverty, (3) to explore the multi-dimensional framework on theorization of poverty, and (4) to indicate pitfalls, weaknesses, and more limitations in sustainable livelihood approach This study explores linkages between ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty. The existing literature does not extensively examine these linkages or conceptualize the nature of the concept of poverty. It requires an alternative definition in the context of Sri Lanka. Therefore, I will explain the challenges faced in constructing a sociological theorization of poverty in the context of conflict, displacement and war-torn areas. The relationship among the ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty is a complex one in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. This paper utilizes the available secondary data on poverty, ethnicity, ethnic conflict and displacement, which are largely of a quantitative and qualitative nature, and it employs secondary data and analysis related to a World Bank (2007) study, World Food Programme's Community Food Security Profiling (CFSP) (Korf & K.T.Silva, 2003), Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP)[6] (Korf, 2002a, 2002b) and so on. This study is a preliminary step which extensively utilizes secondary data rather than primary data that analyses the issues at a theoretical level.

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[5] See Kalinga Tudor Silva, P.P Sivapragasam & Paramsothy Thanges, *Casteless or Caste-blind? Dynamics of Concealed Caste Discrimination, Social Exclusion and Protest in Sri Lanka*, 2009, Colombo: Kumaran Book House.

[6] The Integrated Food Security Programme (IFSP) has conducted several food security related programme in war affected areas and insecurity areas which are more relevant to this study.

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Theoretical Findings and Discussion on Poverty, Ethnic Conflict and Displacement

This essay attempts to investigate the linkages between the ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty. These concepts can be studied and analyzed separately at different analytical levels. The study combines them to examine cause-effect relations between ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty that would contribute a different dimension to the theorization of poverty. Poverty is a complex concept because it refers to the scarcity of several things: for example, it can be the scarcity of food or cloth. Poverty is an important socio-economic problem that needs conceptualization. The variation in poverty and concepts reveals the complex and multidimensional nature and characterization of poverty (Momin 1992; Mohubub ul Haq Human Development Centre 2006; Lister 2005). Social, economic, political, structural and cultural contexts shape the different meaning, understanding and experiencing of poverty. Consequently, many different measurements, methods, definitions and concepts have been explored over a period of time.

Widening the conceptualization of poverty has to be understood under circumstances of natural hazards such as earthquake, flood, tsunami, drought, and manmade hazards such as violence, ethnic conflict, insecurity, war and displacement which have a direct bearing on poverty. This essay concentrates on man-made hazards such as war, displacement, political violence, insecurity, maintenance of higher security zones (agricultural land, and IDPs' original habitats), land mines, fishing restrictions in relation to the issue of poverty and vulnerability. Furthermore, the concept of livelihood too needs to be understood and analysed under these circumstances (Pathmanesan, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c). Livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms are relatively different due to the political instability, geo-politics and insecurity (Korf, 2002a). Korf (2002) uses the livelihood systems frame as an analytical tool to observe, analyze and understand behavioural patterns of communities living in Complex Political Emergencies (CPE) (civil war described as CPE) (Goodhand, 2001; Korf 2002b, 2002c; Guarnieri 2003). Hence, this study gradually builds up four main theoretical frameworks such as absolute poverty, relative poverty, capability failure and social exclusion, but the limitations warrant further

alternative perspectives and concepts, analysing multidimensional aspects. Because these theoretical models are limited to explanations of the linkages between those concepts, it requires further, a theoretical framework to assess the conceptual relationships.

Today, poverty can be studied and analyzed in different aspects and approaches as it is a multi-dimensional concept.[7] Many studies (Momin 1992;Goodhand, 2001, Korf, 2002, Guarnieri 2003, Korf & K.T.Silva 2003, Lister 2005, Mohubub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2006) have shown that a number of factors cause poverty. Hence, many different indicators and measurements have been developed to study the concept of poverty. This paper draws attention to linking the relations among ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty. These concepts have a one to one relationship that reflects continuous progress among them. The conflict results in displacement which leads to livelihood failure or livelihood disruption that is often seen as poverty.

Although the existing literature has extensively discussed the nature and characterization of poverty or vulnerability or livelihood failure among the IDPs through light on Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and Sustainable Rural Livelihood (SRL) approach, it has failed to capture the internal dimension of vulnerability among them. Most of them deal with the external dimension of vulnerability under external factors of conflict, political instability, war and displacement. In addition to these factors, internal factors such as abduction, caste discrimination, and caste identity too re-marginalize and re-exclude people (I have coined these two terms such as re-marginalization and re-exclusion because the ethnic minority has already been excluded and

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[7] The concept of poverty is studied as a multi-dimensional concept which has been discussed in the context of South Asia extensively. For more details see Mohubub ul Haq Human Development Center, *Human Development in South Asia 2006* (Oxford: 2007).

marginalized by ethnicity). The following sections carry out the conceptual discussions on poverty, ethnic conflict and displacement and their linkages.

Poverty

Rowntree's (1902) [8] well known definition of poverty states that absolute poverty is the scarcity of basic needs. Another definition given by Townsend (1979) [9] refers to relative poverty as the scarcity of goods as perceived by society to be necessary or easily accessible. Such perspectives brought in to being the notion of absolute and relative poverty. In the course of time, it is believed that the basic needs are essential and indispensable in all societies; for example, food is required by the people everywhere, in this way the notion of absolute poverty has concretized. The notion of relative poverty will refer to the differential needs of the people; for example, Adam Smith's observation that 'not having a Lenin shirt' is perceived as a phenomenon of poverty by the British workers in 18th century.[10] This can differ in the context of South Asian countries.

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[8] S. Rowntree divided poverty in to divisions such as primary poverty and secondary poverty which came to be known as absolute poverty and relative poverty, he conducted a survey which later came to be known as classical sociological survey conducted among the working class in York that survey was undertaken among poor families to assess their minimum standard of life which outcome is what he called poverty line which concentrates on absolute core of poverty, see S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A study of town life*, 1901, London: Macmillan.

[9] P. Townsend has established the notion of relative definition. Distinction hitherto made between 'absolute' and 'relative' poverty, or between 'basic' and 'cultural' needs are argued to be unreal upon analysis. Needs which are believed to be absolute or basic can be shown to be relative. Poverty must be regarded as a general form of relative deprivation which is the effect of the mal-distribution of resources, see S. Townsend, 1979, *Poverty in the United Kingdom, A survey of household resources and standard of living*, USA: California University press.

[10] See Ruth Lister, Poverty: Key concepts, 2005, London: Polity press

Among the writers of poverty there is an inclination to focus more on the scarcity of food and income (Korf & K.T.Silva 2003). In the eyes of critics, such an approach gives a narrow vision, and therefore, they came up later with the notion of human development and well-being as to, why human well-being is meant to have access to health, education and status apart from food. So the notion of poverty is further widened with the incorporation of categories such as 'capability', 'functioning', or 'entitlement'. In this context, we have now the notion of social exclusion, which primarily refers to the capacity of participation in a society. Social exclusion has sought to understand structural linkages between poverty and a range of group identities, including ethnicity, race, immigrant status, gender, caste and social class. The central argument of this theory is that certain people are excluded from opportunity in mainstream society on account of the structurally marginal position that is accorded to them by society (Korf and K.T.Silva, 2003). Inequality and conflict between groups entail not just economic but also sociological and political factors (Loury, 2000). Bhalla and Lapeyne stress that this concept encompasses the notion of poverty. Typically it results from market failure, discrimination or unenforced rights (Lister, 2005). Sen (2006) stresses the diverse ways in which social exclusion can cause deprivation and poverty. Poverty has to be understood in relation to social exclusion. Atkinson argues that social exclusion makes inherently relative. Room says it is the distributional core of poverty, Bhalla and Lapeyre argue that social exclusion pertains to the interaction of distributional and relational problems of human relations. Social exclusion is more comprehensive than the concept of poverty (Lister, 2005). The paper attempts to develop an alternative approach to the concept of poverty using the theory of social exclusion and examines the linkages among those three concepts.[11]

Therefore, this brief discussion shows that there are different layers with regard to the meaning of poverty, which are gradually influenced by different philosophical assumption, as well as cultural characterization of society. While we are much sensitive about wider perspectives of poverty, our attention will be focused more on them, which are commonly treated in the poverty literature.

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[11] See the pages 4 and 5

Ethnic Conflict

The three concepts of ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic conflict emerged and developed in the fields of anthropology and sociology. At the conceptual and theoretical level, sociologists and anthropologists have defined and theorized the concept of ethnicity in terms of the notions of culture and social groupings. The individual 'social being' is generally couched in terms of different ensemble or signs or labels that normally constitute the primary bases for identity formation, while the universal denominator is human in the social context it is not uniform. In this process, ethnicity evolves in human society, differentiating one group from the other. For example;

DeVos defines it as the "subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture (by a group), in order to differentiate themselves from other groups" (Eller: 1999: 08).

Ethnic differences or inequality has become analogous to the notion of human deprivation. It sometimes has instigated 'social inequality' and 'discrimination'. Ethnic differences have indecently become the tool of exploitation in some societies. In other words, it implies the exploitation of the ethnic minority by the ethnic majority. However, this is not the case at all times, as there are many other forms of exploitation based on caste, class, ethnicity, religion and other factors. It has been recorded that mal-treatment, exploitation, discrimination, exclusion and domination take place within the ethnic minority as well. In many parts of the world, the so-called ethnic minority rejected the order of the discrimination and deprivation and initiated action to put in place a new social arrangement, which underlines what is meant by an ethnic conflict. It can be either offensive or defensive. Those which are the primordial (also known as "Ideological pole")[12] elements such as 'religion', or 'language' used to

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[12] B. Korf & K.T.Silva states primordial approach as ideological pole which they have introduced to explain the different religious ideologies and historical, cultural and political processes led to formation of militant and agonistic identities in the context of Sri Lanka. See for more details also, B. Korf & K.T.Silva, 2003, *Poverty, ethnicity and conflict in Sri Lanka*: This article has been presented at the conference 'Staying poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy' University of Manchester (7-9 April 2003). Available at www.chronicpoverty.org

evoke ethnic identity.   On the other hand, those who advocate the instrumental (also known as "Material pole")13 approach underscore the invocation of some elements of identity to forge a social group.

The recent conceptualization of ethnicity has increasingly moved in parallel direction (primordial and instrumental); this study also follows in this way. The first view treats it as a primary identity struggle between the Sinhala Buddhist majority and the Tamil minority (resisting the hegemonic campaign through armed struggle). The second view believes that the instrumentalist formulation of ethnicity can accommodate both the objective and the subjective experience of poverty and deprivation as factors shaping one's group affiliations and sense of identity (Horowitz, 1985; Eller, 1999; Taras and Ganguly, 2002; Korf and K.T.Silva, 2003).

There is a close connection among ethnicity, ethnic conflict, poverty, and deprivation. Poverty causes the ethnic conflict, and at the same time the ethnic conflict creates poverty related issues due to factors such as war, displacement, ethnic grievances, ethnic cleansing and violence. Now the attention is being drawn towards the concept of ethnic conflict. The topic of ethnicity and ethnic conflict is a dauntingly complex one. If studies of ethnic conflict have moved on a broad, multidisciplinary front all at once, the phenomenon of ethnic conflict does not proceed in an analogous way (Horowitz:2000:XII).

The primordial approach is widely manipulated in the understanding of the ethnic conflict in the context of Sri Lanka. However this essay will not trace the root of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict in this section. It attempts to shed light on interpreting the ethnic conflict in relation to the theory of relative deprivation rather than looking at cultural connotations. There are many works including those by Eller (1999), Horowitz (2000) and Jayawardhana (1987) that focus on cultural interpretation rather than other causes. Even though cultural markers

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[13] The second view is the instrumental approach which is explained as material pole by B. Korf & K.T.Silva. It pays attention on competition for scarcity resources like land, employment and educational opportunities. See for more details, Ibid.

such as language, notions of home land and factors lead to ethnic conflict, the Sri Lankan history clearly shows that relative deprivation was also a contributory factor. There are a number of theories on ethnic conflict which attempt to understand its multi dimensional progress over time periods. The theory of relative deprivation is one of the schools of indirect theories of disintegration which is under theories of ethnic political mobilization, which subsumes various interpretations of revolution, intergroup conflict and aggression.[14] 'Regional autonomy' has played a prominent role in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. In this context, it would be appropriate to pose the question of the primacy of cultural or economic interest. Regional autonomy can be explained as cultural interests which are in relation to emotional attachment to their descended land as well as claiming their home land which is interpreted by their cultural values and norms. In the 1950s and '60s, the Ceylon Tamils, concentrated in the North and East of the island, were demanding some form of regional autonomy in their areas. The demand was a reaction to the growth of a powerful Sinhalese ethnic movement that had resulted in the imposition of the Sinhala language. There was a growing sense among Tamils that they were about to lose their advantages and opportunities in government employment and in other activities where their educational head-start had placed them in a favourable position. Accordingly, they hoped at least to be able to gain control over their own areas and, by running their own administration, to have positions for civil servants who were displaced from the South.[15]

With regard to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, there are many interpretations of the nature of conflict formation. This study does not carry all the explanations and interpretations. It concentrates on the issue of how war, displacement and other grievances have been a consequence of the ethnic conflict. These consequences have positioned the people in a vulnerable position.

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[14] See for more details Raymond C.Taras and Rajat Ganguly, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict*, London: Longman, 2002, p.04-05

[15] See more details Donald L.Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, California: University of California Press, 2000, p.132

Displacement

Today, many terminologies are frequently used in the context of migratory studies such as internal migration, internal displacement, voluntary migration, forced migration, relocation and dislocation. There are many kinds of displacements and migrations. This paper focuses on internal displacement. Internal displacement and internally displaced persons have emerged in recent years as one of the most pressing humanitarian, human rights, political and security issues facing the global community (Cohen, 2002, 2004). In fact, there exist different ideas as to what is meant by "internal displacement" and "internally displaced persons". For some, the term "internally displaced persons" refers only to people uprooted by conflict, violence and persecution. That is, people who would be considered refugees if they crossed a border.[16]

When the issue of internal displacement emerged onto the international agenda in the early 1990s, no definition of "internally displaced persons" existed. Two core elements of the concept of internal displacement were clear. First, was the involuntary nature of the movement. Second, was the fact that such movement takes place within national borders- a criterion which distinguished the internally displaced from refugees. Drawing attention to the existing literature of internal displacement in Sri Lanka, the problems related to IDPs are of legal concern in the context of livelihood activities. I would like to bring very important legal issues here to discuss. And most relevant literature will be referred to in the last section of linkages between ethnic conflict, internal displacement and poverty. The ethnic conflict is not the only factor that induced displacement, but there are other factors that should be taken into account. These include war, political instability, insecurity (particularly landmines areas), and high security areas (HSA). One of the immediate consequences of the ethnic conflict is the displacement of groups from their

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[16] See also, Erin Mooney, *The Concept of Internal Displacement and the case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern*, Refugee survey quarterly, 2005,Vol.24 Issue 3

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original habitats. It is understood that if a group of people are forced to leave a place as a consequence of an ethnic conflict, it is difficult to resettle and begin new economic activities: They cannot migrate to a new place with their land, productive tools and other equipment. They might not be socially welcomed in the new places. However, in the literature, it is not explored sufficiently.

As an extension of the concept in some literature, liminality also emerged. The concept of "liminality" is obviously a very important concept. Turner (http//www.lliminality.orgaboutwhatisliminality) describes that liminality is a state of being "betwixt" and "between" (Shure, 2005). IDPs (internally displaced persons) are "neither here nor there", as they are betwixt and between the host community, marginalized and at the edge of society. They face a number of challenges and obstacles in livelihood activities and coping mechanisms. For example, in Jaffna, long term IDPs are identified by (a) caste identity (so-called low caste) (b) their original village, (c) their camp location and (d) the "status"- camp people which excludes them access to employment, land, water and other resources. They become marginalized in the mainstream society and are neither here (host community) nor there (original village/habitations).

Exploring Linkages between the Ethnic Conflict, Displacement and Poverty

The preceding discussion has suggested some general theoretical and empirical findings on the linkages between the above concepts. This paper has assembled a number of theories and perspectives which define the concept of poverty. It has shown that poverty is a more complex phenomenon, and therefore cannot be defined from a single dimension. The need to analyze poverty and vulnerability from a multi-disciplinary perspective has been increasingly recognized (Korf, 2002). This is particularly relevant for understanding the complex interplay among war, violence, vulnerability and livelihood strategies. Furthermore, the concept of livelihood needs to be analyzed under conditions such as warfare and inter-ethnic troubles. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (SRL) Approach is a recently developed framework to define and characterize the nature of poverty and vulnerability

among the IDPs. Therefore, in trying to comprehend the social profile of poverty, it is necessary to look into the interplay and interconnection between these concepts.

At a conceptual level, these concepts have evolved in different contexts and in response to different analytical questions. Poverty is a much older concept developed mainly by economists in terms of the notion of material deprivation. Perceiving livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms are relatively different due to the political instability, geo-politics, complex political emergency (CPE) and insecurity. There are a few studies (Goodhand, 2001; Geinitz and Reinhard, 2002; Korf 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; Korf and K.T.Silva, 2003) that have been undertaken in war-torn areas. This section focuses on those existing literature to ascertain the interplay between these concepts in the context of livelihoods activities.

Although a number of theories and views are assembled here to illustrate an alternative perspective to define the concept of poverty, all these discussions and relevant concepts are found at axiomatic level (Khan, 2004). But the rationale of the concept is not to develop a measurable indicator, but rather to open a new horizon of assessment.[17] Nevertheless, the construction of a social profile in the context of poverty needs to take into account multiple aspects including external shocks in the form of political violence, ethnic conflict, armed conflict, war, forced migration (internal displacement) which make the victims asset-less and home-less. In these circumstances, sociologists use the term vulnerability for defining poverty (Chambers, 1983; Gamanou and Morduch, 2002; Lister, 2005).

In this context of vulnerability and social marginality, sociologists have tended to focus on how the peoples' livelihoods are disrupted by the sudden shocks and how they cope with extreme situations. The coping strategies were

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[17] Monirul Islam Khan, Challenges in Constructing the Sociological Concept of Poverty, Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. Vol. 2 No. 1 January 2005

continued and formalized into the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework (SRL) (Wood, 2005) and Sustainable Livelihood Framework (DFID, 1999, 2001) and offered a more 'holistic' approach to anti-poverty work (Lister, 2005). The SRL approach is employed as a framework to analyze the livelihood strategies of individuals and households in the context of warfare, and how these strategies relate to these local power holders. The concepts of food, nutrition and security go beyond the entitlement approach. We have to extend Sen's (1981) entitlement approach in the context of civil war, conflict situation and vulnerability. The livelihood framework suggests that poverty is not only a product of material deprivation but of a set of interlocking factors, including physical weakness, social isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness and poverty (Chambers, 1983; Lister, 2005).

Therefore, SLA (DFID, 1999a 2001b; Cahn, 2002; Kollmair and Gamper, 2002; Wood, 2005; Knustsson, 2006) is currently treated prominently in the context of vulnerability (can be either natural disaster or man-made disaster) to define the nature of poverty. The people-centred analysis is most likely to begin with the simultaneous investigation of people's assets, their objectives (the livelihood outcomes which they) and the livelihood strategies which they adopt to achieve these objectives. The bulk of IDPs lives in the Northern and Eastern provinces. They live in the camps (welfare centres) and the houses of relatives or non-relatives. They struggle with coping strategies to succeed in their livelihoods, which resulted in remaining them extremely poor, falling into chronic poverty. In this context, we have to draw our attention on how ethnicity, ethnic conflict, political violence, armed violence, internal crises (caste base discrimination), military administration and abduction affect their livelihoods activity.

Even though Korf (2002) discussed coping strategies in the context of complex political emergency (CPE) in order to derive certain outcomes in the livelihood activities, the people have faced multiple vulnerabilities such as consequences of the end of the civil war, closure of highway (A9 road: from 2006-2009), restrictions on fishing and the ethnic conflict (World Bank, 2007). Even though the UN Guiding Principles, other relevant policies and international communities have placed many rules and regulations at policy and legal levels, they have failed to fulfill the needs of IDPs under the political climate of the

country concerned. For example, Sri Lanka has set up a large High Security Zone in Jaffna to which original residents will not be allowed to return. This case obviously is a violation of the UN Guiding Principle 28 (William, 2005). This complex situation subjects the IDPs to victimize, preventing them from restoring and securing their livelihood activities (Pathmanesan, 2008a).

Although the exiting literature has extensively discussed the nature and characterization of poverty, vulnerability or livelihood failure among the IDPs through SLA and SRL approaches, it has failed to capture the internal dimension of vulnerability among the IDPs. Most of the researchers deal with the external dimensions of vulnerability, focusing on external factors such as conflict, political instability, war and displacement. In addition to these factors, internal factors such as abduction, caste discrimination, and caste identity re-marginalize and re-exclude the IDPs which places them in a vulnerable position.

Recent studies (Silva, Sivapragasam, and Thanges, 2009) on IDPs in Jaffna reveal that the remaining long-term IDPs (in welfare centers) are from low castes (particularly Panchamr castes)[18] and indicate that except one welfare center, all other welfare centers comprise only individuals of the low castes who have been victims of war and displacement. In Jaffna, all people are displaced at different times and periods. In this process, non-low caste people have more opportunities to be accommodated in relatives' houses or friends' houses or, even in temples and schools. But in this crucial circumstance, low-caste IDPs become a vulnerable group compared to other groups, because they are not allowed to stay either in public schools and temples for a long time. They have to be resettled in other places, but they have limited contacts and social network in the given social structure. The main reason is that the high caste population is larger than the low caste population in Jaffna. Apart from the size of the caste based population, there is caste consciousness to be reckoned with. This situation has led them to be in the camps and empty lands in the

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[18] In Jaffna Tamil Hindu society comprises caste system. Panchmar is a Tamil term referred to the collection of five castes namely Vannar (washerman), Ampattar (barber), Nalavar (toddy tappers), Pallar (agricultural labour) and Parayar (drummer) these castes are seen as low-castes in Jaffna society.

Jaffna peninsula. There are several reasons for the predominance of Panchamar people in the remaining IDP welfare centers.

First, traditionally, the 'low caste' people did not own much land other than their ancestral landholdings of miniscule size. As a result, once displaced, they became absolutely landless, having nowhere else to go except the welfare centers maintained by the government for IDPs. The IDPs, displaced in mass from high security zones occupied by the Sri Lanka security forces are particularly vulnerable as they cannot return to their original villages due to the restrictions imposed by the security forces. Second, these people, reportedly of depressed caste background, do not have an adequate social network outside their own communities, restricting their capacity to move out of the welfare centers, where they are dependent on State subsidies. Third, most of them do not have enough resources to purchase new land or build a separate shelter on their own. Fourth, even if they have enough savings, they may find it difficult to purchase land from those of higher castes due to the continuing practices of caste discrimination and unwillingness on the part of other castes to accept Panchamars as their immediate neighbors. Sixth, for a variety of reasons such as security and mutual support mechanisms, people themselves may prefer to live together in their own caste communities in or outside the IDP camps.[19]

All these issues address the complex position of IDPs caused by external factors (ethnic conflict, political instability, war and displacement) and internal factors (caste consciousness, caste identity and caste base discrimination). However, in Jaffna, the people of low castes have been severely affected by way of caste-based discrimination and caste exclusion (no access to water, land and various things). Therefore, once they are placed in a host community, these practices such as caste based discrimination, and exclusion in relation to access to water,

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[19] See also, P. Thanges, & K.T .Silva., "Caste Discrimination in War-affected Jaffna Society", *Casteless or Caste-blind Dynamics of Concealed Caste Discrimination, Social Exclusion and Protest in Sri Lanka,* , K.T.Silva, P.P. Sivapragasam & P.Thanges (ed) International Dalit Solidarity Network, Copenhagen, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi & Kumaran Book House, Colombo: Kumaran Press, 2009, p. 71

land, employment and social participation, do not cease. In the process of examining the linkages among the three concepts[20], the theory of social exclusion has been paid attention in order to capture the notions of poverty and vulnerability among the IDPs in Sri Lanka. Sen (2000) suggests that the value of social exclusion lies not in its novelty or greater comprehensiveness but in its illumination of the role of relational features in the deprivation of capability than in the experience of poverty. According to Sen (2000), poverty has both material and nonmaterial dimensions and many development practitioners find it easier to understand and address the material dimension of poverty. But the exclusion of the poor from participation in and access to opportunities and activities is a major nonmaterial dimension of poverty that also needs to be addressed and discussed in development. But we have to pay attention to social participation because some get opportunity while others are deprived. Inadequate social participation, lack of social interaction and lack of power are the relational features of social exclusion which are developed by Room (Lister, 2005).

On the basis of the theoretical background, at the macro level, the Tamil ethnic minority has been cut off from access to participation such as the labour market, educational opportunities, employment, political participation, power relations, freedom of expression etc. At the micro level, IDPs are excluded from various material and non-material access; for example, IDPs are excluded from physical and natural assets (original habitats, land, and other natural resources), traditional occupations, and so on. Consequently, IDPs become marginalized and face multiple vulnerabilities in succeeding and securing livelihoods in a given society. Even though the government organizations, Non Government Organizations and other aid agencies gave relief at urgent requests, multi sects of problems emerge such as the psychological trauma, physical weakness in learning a new job, aid dependency, and lack of sustainability in livelihoods, challenges and obstacles in finding new employment, lack of social recognition, social contact and social network in the host community and other issues. Nevertheless, it can be argued that at a theoretical level, analysing the conceptual linkages in a single dimension or

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[20] See the pages 4 and 5

single theoretical approach is a complicated issue to examine the poverty in war affected areas.

Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of theorization of poverty requires a multi-disciplinary perspective. For instance "social suffering" (Das, 2000) among the IDPs is not highlighted in most of the existing literature. The suffering of IDPs from either internal or external factors has not been discussed in any of existing literature. In general, most researchers draw a common picture of poverty and vulnerability rather than paying attention to their livelihood activities in a "transforming structure". They become long-term "aid/relief dependency" than pursuing "self-defined" beneficial livelihood outcomes.

Most of the literature did not touch upon the issue of "internal crises" such as caste identity and caste-based discrimination. In such a vulnerable context, "coping mechanisms" evolve into "adapting strategies" over a time period.

The Jaffna IDPs, who have been in the IDP camps for a long period of time, have established certain livelihood strategies, which become their coping mechanism to adjust to their life in a new social structure. But this coping mechanism evolved in to adapting strategies to adjust and survive in the host community over a period of time. These adopted strategies become their only permanent asset to lead an ordinary life; it is mainly for survival rather than social participation in the host community, standard of living and job opportunities. Even though basic needs have been fulfilled, the notions of poverty go beyond the subsistence approach. Moreover, it requires sociological analysis to assess the linkages between these concepts. This research will help to fill the gap between previous research and empirical findings, and to construct a new theoretical framework on the nexus between ethnic conflict, displacement and poverty so as to develop a new dimension on the conceptualization of poverty.

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