

Sociological Study on Impact of the Ethnic Conflict on Poverty: A Case Study from War Affected Environment

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At present number of scholars consider the ethnic conflict and poverty assuming that the war might be key issue for the problems related to poverty. Sri Lanka is a developing county with an annual per capita income of about 820 dollars (World Bank Report 2000). One out of five Sri Lankan households subsists below the poverty line. After achieving 6.0% growths in GDP in 2000, Sri Lanka faced negative economic growth of 1.3% in 2001. The decline was largely due to the LTTE attack on Sri Lanka's International Airport that adversely affected tourism and shipping.

The impact of ethnic conflict on poverty can be examined at micro and macro levels. But most scholar's and institutes have their studies at macro level. So this paper attempts to understand, how conflict has impacted peoples poverty in war affected areas. By examining the ethnic conflict and poverty, we can build two hypotheses. Conflict leads to poverty and Poverty leads to hopelessness. This study attempts to examine how conflict causes poverty.

This research was carried out in three communities in the Seruvila Divisional Secretariat Division in the Trincomalee district. The main objective of this study is to understand the impact of the war on the poor and the poverty dynamics in the war affected regions focusing on the three ethnic communities.

Data for the study were collected from three selected villages in Seruwila Divisional Secretariat Division representing all three ethnic groups, Sinhala, Tamils and Muslims. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed to collect information. A survey of records and literature was done to gather secondary data, and it was followed by primary data collections in the field. For the collection of the primary data, case studies, interviews, group discussion and observation were the methods employed.

The findings of the study reveal that the major factors that have contributed to poverty in the war torn areas are the physical damage to life and property, frustrations and hopelessness created by the war, the decline of other traditional livelihood activities, the decline of both public and private sector services, LTTE tax policies and the decline of support organizations at community level.

Key words: Ethnic; Conflict; Poverty; War Environment

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