

Post-war Socio-economic Development in the Eastern Province: A Case Study of Ampara District

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Abstract

This study aims to review the progress of post-war development programs and projects in the Ampara district of Sri Lanka. After three decades of armed confrontations, the Sri Lankan civil war ended in East in 2007 with the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A protracted conflict and war lead to the destruction of the economy and normal live of the people and slowdown the development process of the country. With the end of the war, many projects were allocated to the Ampara district, estimated to cost several thousand million rupees. The government implemented road construction, irrigation, cultivation, educational, water supply, housing, health, electricity, fishery, economic development, social upliftment, administrative projects while the country was enmeshed in a horrendous war. The study reveals that post-war socio-economic development projects of the government enhance all sectors in the district. It also promotes life of the people and, allows them to participate in the socio-economic development of the area. The data are gathered from literature and the broader discussions with stakeholders on socio-economic development process of the district.

Keywords: Ampara, Development; Socio-economic, Sectors, War

Introduction

Ampara is one of the largest districts of the island with 4431 sq km area but most of its territory is in the dry zone. The district has a population of 610,719 persons and Muslims are the majority population in the district. Muslims represent 43.99 percent of the district population while Sinhalese account for 37.49 percent and Tamils 18.34 percent (Statistical Handbook, 2013). There are 20 Divisional Secretariat in the District and 503 Grama Niladhari Divisions. The total number of villages in the district amounts to 828.

A large area of the district is covered with forest land, which amounts to 201,135 Hectares. Agriculture is the prominent income source of the people in Ampara district and it is the highest rice producer, estimated to contribute over 25 % of national rice production. With approximately 115 km of coastal belt, the district is also a major fishing area (COHA 2004; German Development Cooperation 2010; Rubasinghe 2012). There is a sugar factory, a tile factory, brick factories, rice mills and several garment factories located in the district. Paddy is the main seasonal crop cultivated in both yala and maha seasons. Other

crops widely grown in the area include maize, ground nut, green gram, cow pea, manioc, sweet potatoes, onion, chillies, coconut, jack, cashew and various fruits.

Methodology

The research has been designed and it is carried out using an interpretative approach, originating from critical theory and constructivism. By adopting an interpretive approach, the authors expect to share the feelings and interpretations of the people under study (stakeholders) by seeing things through their eyes (Neuman 2003:76).

Ampara district has been chosen for the case study. This study is based on text analysis, 10 qualitative interviews and observation (limited). The three step of approach were followed for the qualitative data collection in November 2013 – January 2014.

The first step of the data collection based on a literature survey which authors reviewed all the literature available on the subject. In the second step: 06 elites were interviewed to understand their view and experience towards

post-war socio-economic development. Third step: 04 other major stakeholders' were interviewed; they are civilian population and others. Finally, qualitative interviews have been transcribed, analysed and interpreted.

Findings and Discussion

Demining and Resettlement

The demining is a major issue in Sri Lanka likely other post-war states countenance the particular problems. Demining was taken place in eight Divisional Secretariat Divisions and 10 Grama Niladhari Divisions in the district. Demining has been completed in 426,676 sqm in Kanchikudiaru, Uhana and Thirukkivil. Freedom of movement of people of the district was ensured and as a result civil life is flourishing after the process of demining (Ministry of Defence 2013). With most of the areas being cleared of mines the resettlement of IDPs got off the ground. A total of 1,274 families were resettled in 19 welfare centres in Thirukovil, Alaiyaduwebu, Tankawelathapuram and Kanchikudichcharu in the Ampara District. Rs. 314.31 Mn. was granted in 2010 for dry foods, meals during employment, meals during education and groups at risk (Ministry of Economic Development 2013).

Housing

Government allocated huge amount of money for post-tsunami and post-war housing projects in the district. Funds amounting to Rs. 7276.46 Mn. were spent to build 38,820 houses between 2008 to 2012. It clearly indicates that 38820 families were benefitted from these housing projects. For example 178 houses in Metuwatte, 408 houses in Irawedikulam and 199 houses Karawahuwatte were built (District Planning Division 2014; Ministry of Economic Development 2013).

Health

Health is another flourishing sector in the post-war Ampara. During the last 6-7 years the government allocated a sum of Rs. 1,878.76 million for developments in the health sector in

the Ampara district. With the involvement of more than 13 service sectors, 550 health development projects were implemented in the district. Among the projects some implemented for the benefit of people in the whole district, the construction of the largest Nursing College in the island takes a prime place. Rs. 180 million was spent for this project. This Nursing College will perform a significant service for the government's plan of training 15,000 nurses (Rubasinghe 2012). The College which provides residential facilities for 300 nurses have courses in Sinhala, Tamil and English. This is a giant service received by the Ampara district.

In addition to this Nursing College, the Akkaraipattu Base Hospital was also modernized during the last four years. This work included provision of Specialist Doctors Centres, Special Children Units, Ward complexes, Water tanks, Rooms, Stores and Maternity Units. Rs. 260 million was spent for this purpose.

Numerous health development projects were also implemented within the 20 Divisional Development Secretariats last year. This include construction of 23 hospital ward complexes, two administrative buildings, nine public health research offices, 14 Gramodaya health buildings, 21 residential quarters, three Medical stores, and two ENT Units. For these construction works, the government spent Rs. 622 million in 2006, Rs. 83.77 million in 2007, Rs. 416.87 million in 2008 and Rs. 120.49 million in 2009.

For provision of drinking water for 476,400 persons and for health protection activities the government spent Rs. 18,174.18 million during the last four years. These activities were carried out under 496 projects, and 32,400 families in the Ampara district benefited. The value of these services cannot be measured in monetary terms alone (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014).

Education

The expenditure incurred for educational development in the Ampara district during the last four years was Rs. 2,152 million. This development work was carried out to benefit 153,890 students under 1,271 projects which included construction of seven buildings for industrial training, 183 classrooms, 108 computer training centres, 40 teacher hostels, 61 school laboratories, 28 school playgrounds and 24 other buildings. The educational development activities were carried out as development of 401 projects in 2006, 296 projects in 2007, 284 projects in 2008 and 290 projects in 2009. Importantly, upgraded HARDY Advanced Technological Institute in 2013 under DayataKirula programme established Akkaraipattu Technical College in 2009 and about 20 Vocational Training Centers also were established.

Further, massive development has been taken place at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka after the war. These development activities have been sponsored by Government consolidated fund and soft loans from Kuwait Fund for Arab Development. Following constructions successfully completed: such as Staff quarters, Students' recreation centre, Health centre, Road development, Play Ground and Stadium (Vice Chancellor 2014). Human recourse of the University has been also tremendously developed. Recently Faculty of Engineering was also established. This healthy climate at the University increased students' enrolment and promote Harmony among students & staff.

Water & Sanitation

For provision of drinking water for 35,056 families and for health protection activities the government spent Rs. 18,174.18 million during the last four years. These activities were carried out under 496 projects, and 32,400 families in the Ampara district benefited. The value of these services cannot be measured in monetary terms alone. These projects implemented in the areas of Ampara, Karativu, Lahugala, Pottuvil, Ilakkamai, Oluvil, and Uhana consisted

construction of 16 water towers, 30 water supply centres, 324 drinking water wells, 7821 toilets etc (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014). The expenditure incurred amounted to Rs. 4,522.45 in 2006, Rs. 10,557 million in 2007, Rs. 4,522 million in 2008, and Rs. 1,039.95 million in 2009. A further additional amount of Rs. 2,054.73 million was also provided in 2009.

Road & Transport

The government's development in the district started with the improvement of road structure. Accordingly the number of road development projects carried out in the Ampara district since end of the war amounted to 3,155 projects at a cost of Rs. 1,401,762 million. The expenditure incurred for Siyambalanduwa-Ampara road, Siyambalanduwa-Pottuvil-Akkaraipattu road was Rs. 2,250 million. These road structures constructed with assistance from the World Bank, the Department of Expressways Construction, European Union, and assistance under MagaNeguma programme has converted Ampara District as a massive web of roads.

Under these development works, 14,785 k.m. of A grade roads, 802 k.m. of B grade roads, and 2519 general roads have been constructed in the district. Also there were four large bridges constructed on these roads. Addalachchenai Bridge and Arugam Bay Bridge are two such bridges constructed during the last four years. In addition to these large scale bridges, 47 small bridges were constructed (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014).

Electricity

The government has spent Rs. 757.96 million for provision of electricity in the Ampara district in the post war situation. 104 projects were implemented benefitting 38,476 families. There were 39 large scale electricity supply projects. 147.33 k.m. of power lines, 387.51 k.m. three face power lines, and 57 k.m. of general power lines were laid. Electricity provided 79132 Houses to Domestic Consumer and Installation of Distribution Substation

68Nos(Ceylon Electricity 2013; Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014).

Irrigation

Irrigation occupies the significant place among the development works that was carried out whole part of the district in post-war scenario. Five hundred and five irrigation projects were implemented in the last four years. Of which the RambukkanOya and GaloyaNavodaya Irrigation Projects are very significant. The government has been invested Rs.1,867.14 million to implement these projects.

Under the new irrigation projects there are 264 tanks, 57 anicuts, 1,451 irrigation roads included. The new projects enabled 69,979 hectare (2013) to be cultivatable land while it was 60,737 hectare in 2006. Around 28,312 farmers in the district are benefited through these massive irrigation projects. Most of these projects were carried out along with road construction development. The implementation of these projects has increased the capacity of recharging groundwater in the district (Rubasinghe 2012; Department of Irrigation 2014; District Planning Division 2014).

Agriculture

Agriculture has been primary economic activities in the district. Majority of the people in the district is depending on agriculture for their livelihoods. The district provides 20 percent of the country's paddy production. During the last four years, the government spent Rs.29,365.63 million for the development of agriculture sector of the district. It includes two hundred and nineteen projects. The government spent a massive amount for providing fertilizer subsidy alone for 34,486 farmer families. Under agricultural development, 16 fertilizer storages, five Agri Stores, an Agricultural Training College, and 302 agricultural wells were also constructed by the government (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014). The booming development in the agricultural sector has increased the extent and production of field crops, fruits and vegetables. The percentage of

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contribution for national paddy production has also increased and improved living standard of farmers. In 2013, the paddy production of the district is was 15,049 bushels in Maha and 14,245 bushels in Yala seasons respectively while it was 13,128 bushels in Maha and 12,308 bushels in Yala seasons in 2006. The increased level of paddy production reflects the rapid development in the agriculture sector of the district (District Planning Division 2014).

Fishing

Ampara District has a coastal area of 115 k.m. stretching from Kalmunai to Panama. Nearly ten thousand metric tonnes of fish (inland and marine) are caught annually. The active fishermen of the district are 18,324 and three thousand two hundred and eighty five boats are employed in fishing activities. The fishing sector was severely affected by Tsunami and war. The government implemented number of projects at a cost of Rs. 421.48 million to rebuild the affected fisheries people. These projects were implemented under purview of seven service sectors and work carried out included construction of 203 housing units, 873 toilets, 8 k.m. of fishery roads, seven cold storage facilities, two resting places for fishermen, four Fishery Banks, 249 power boats, and 234 fishing vessels.

Over 17,725 families benefited from these projects which were implemented by the government expending Rs. 15.40 million in 2006, Rs. 112.6 million in 2007, Rs.224.28 million in 2008 and Rs. 69.64 million in 2009 (Rup). The government has been spent during last four years (2009 – 2013) is Rs.667.42 million for hundred fifty seven projects. Under these projects, 17,316 fishing families benefited. In 2006, marine fish production was 6.08 percent of national sea fish production and inland fish production was 5.97 percent of national inland fish production. It was suddenly increased in 2012 as 8.02 percent and 12.20 percent respectively (Rubasinghe 2012; Fisheries Department 2014; District Planning Division 2014).

Social development

The amount granted by the government for social development activities in the Ampara District during the last four years was Rs. 809.18 million. Under the supervision of nine service sectors 885 social development projects were implemented which benefited 610,719 persons.

Thirty eight multi service buildings, fourteen community centres, fourteen information technology centres, twelve service centres, seventeen trade complexes (market building), five shopping complexes, two administrative centres and seven solid waste management centres got developed under this scheme. This development has empowered the capacity of local community and increased the level of community participation, trade and recycling activities (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014).

Oluvil Harbour Project

The Oluvil Harbour project is very significant in the government economic development plan in the eastern region. The higher priority is given for this harbour development which is no doubt being an economic infrastructure catalyst for the growth of the district and region. The harbour has been constructed a dual purpose fishery and commercial harbour and it covers a land area of 175 acres. The government spent for this projects Rs.7,000 million (Sri Lanka Ports Authority 2014).

As mentioned in the Sri Lanka ports authority's web portal, this port will form the southeastern link in the developing chain of coastal harbours in the country and will provide more convenient and cost effective access to and from the southeastern region for goods and cargo originating on the west coast.

Local Administration

The immediate priority of the government after defeating the LTTE has undoubtedly been rebuilding and strengthening local administration. For that purpose, government has been taken initiatives to re-establish

political and administrative institutions in the former war torn areas in the district. During the last four years, government spent Rs.293.61 million for the development of local administration and implemented forty five projects. This huge amount was spent for physical and human development in the administrative sectors and increased infrastructure facilities for those institutions.

Government took further initiatives to increase administrative efficiency of those institutions through human resource development. In the last year, government recruited 1,780 graduates as development officer to gain the contribution of younger generation to the development of the district which reduced the unemployment rate of the district. The local administration was also strengthened through the GNs appointment (92). In the development of local administration, appointment of management assistants (39) and office assistants (07) are very significant in the post-war development process of the district (District Planning Division 2014).

Further, the civil administration is very significant which occupies an important place in the post-war development process. In the Ampara district, government has taken initiatives to establish civil administration in former war torn areas through withdrawing military camps and extending police services. The law and order of the district was reestablished after the government victory of the district.

DeyataKirula: National Exhibition

Seventh DeyataKirula National Development Exhibition was held in Ampara in 2013 by including infrastructure developing activities in the Ampara, Batticola, Trincomalee and Polonnaruwa districts. Under this programme, Rs. 1.075 billion was spent for the construction work. Around Rs 45,375 million was earmarked solely for the development of identified development projects, including road development activities. This national exhibition contributed to the rapid socio-economic

development of the district (Ministry of Economic Development 2014).

Tourism

The government has given more priority to the development of tourism sector in the post-war development initiatives. In this growing development based concern, the Ampara district has also been identified as a potential place to revive tourism sector having major attractions such as Arugambay, Kumana National Park, Lahugala Kitulana National Park, Magul Maha Vihara, Okanda Murugan Hindu Temple and Deegawabiya. Arugambay is well known for international surfing among these attractions where International Surfing Competitions are held annually.

The government spent Rs. 10 million for tourism development of the district. After the war eradicated in the east, it was increased more than Rs.65 million. The tourists arrivals were also increased as 25,000 (foreign tourists) in 2010 compared with 2006 in which year tourist arrivals were approximately 1,012 (foreign tourists) (Eastern Provincial Council 2012).

Financial Institutions

The government has created a business-friendly climate in the district since the end of the war and the financial activities of the people have been suddenly increased during the last four years. Presently, there are nineteen state and private banks functioning in the district while it was eight in 2006. In the last year, there were eleven other financial institution took part in people's financial activities while it was five in 2006 (District Planning Division 2014).

Ethnic Harmony

The Ampara district is most diverse in Sri Lanka ethnically and religiously. The Muslims (43.58 %), Sinhalese (38.73 %) and Tamils (17.39 %) are living peacefully (Statistical Handbook 2013). Unfortunately, the civil war brought communal violence and tensions among ethnic groups of the district. The end of the war has brought harmony among the

peoples. Ethnic harmony is relatively high compare with other districts in the war affected areas of the country.

For this purpose, government conducted number of peace and cultural interactive programs with support of government and non government organizations and spent millions of rupees (Social Service Division 2014). During the last four years, level of trust and understanding among ethnic groups increased and freedom of movement was ensured in the district. The peoples are motivated to the interactive business activities. Religious disharmony is also very less relatively in the district.

Livelihood Development

The government has soundly realized the livelihood of the war affected people. During the last four years, Rs. 634.69 million was spent for the development of economic standards of the people in the district and approximately 24,500 families benefited from this scheme. The Ministry of Economic Development has been allocated sum of Rs. 104.36 Mn. for self-employment development, infrastructure and micro finance projects.

Under this scheme employment opportunities have also created for 8,340 apprentices for self employment, 2,324 families were trained in cattle breeding, 1,983 families in goat breeding, 5,412 families in poultry management, 3,288 families in small scale trading, and 1,493 families in the fishery industry. The government granted Rs. 61.32 million in 2006, Rs. 56.98 in 2007, Rs. 105.09 in 2008 and Rs. 411.30 in 2009 for these activities (Rubasinghe 2012; District Planning Division 2014).

Conclusion

The Ampara district is emerging from a devastating protracted conflict of three decades. Its economy is now reviving with visible vigour due to concerted efforts from the government. Its socio-economic status during post-war period has well progressed as a result of massive development projects and initiatives

taken by the government. In these development processes, local people's participation is relatively high compare with war period.

However, it is imperative to ensure the sustainable development. For this purpose key issues such as policy issues, lack of participation, problems in investment, motivation for local contractors, accessing finance and marketing, land and land related issues, unemployment, women issues and ethnic harmony should be addressed in a fair manner to become the district as a part of socio-economic wonder of the twenty first century.

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List of Interviewees

- GA Ampara, Interviewee 1
- Director of Planning, District Secretariat, Ampara, Interviewee 2
- AdministrativeOfficer,District Secretariat, Ampara, Interviewee 3
- Member of Parliament, Interviewee 4
- DS Kalmunai, Interviewee 5
- DS Thirukkivil, Interviewee 6
- Civilian, Interviewee 7
- Civilian, Interviewee 8
- NGOs representative, Interviewee 9
- NGOs representative, Interviewee 10