

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN WAR AFFECTED AREAS IN SRI LANKA

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Introduction

Past 25 years, ethnic war in Sri Lanka caused significant hardships in all over the country. The detrimental effects of the war include the disruption of livelihood and market, destruction of social networks and high level displacement. On the other hand Conflict is affected North and East communities than the rest of the country. In late 2010, over 320,000 people who had fled their homes due to the armed conflict before and after 2008 were estimated to remain internally displaced in Sri Lanka (IDMC, 2011).

Sri Lankan Government affiliated with NGOs and Initiated to ensure security and resettlement of the displaced people due to the war. The government was able to resettle 127,626 people in the Trincomalee district by last two years (Ministry of Resettlement, 2011). The main target of this programme was ensuring normal living condition for affected people. In the first stage of resettlement provide subsidies for foods and shelter. Then they have provided other essential services for them. While resettling the people, the government have been started rehabilitating the infrastructure and enhance livelihood activities, improve capacity and empowers the community by using community development strategies. Third stage is the most important stage known as Sustainable Development. This has a goal of community development systematic plan and strategic make out the path.

Community development conversations that began during the war period were discussed about negative influences of war. However new post-conflict situation has created lots of research spaces. What are the new conditions that affect the local community and their development? To identify this new situation, it is very important to build a development conversation.

The general objective of this study is to understand the Community Development challenges and opportunities through the experiences of the community development implementers in war affected areas.

Methodology

This study has been developed during the “Re-awakening Project” in the Trincomalee District. The project aims to help conflict-affected communities in the North and Eastern provinces and the adjoining districts to restore livelihoods, enhance agriculture, service and other production and incomes, and to build the capacity for sustainable, social and economic reintegration. “Community driven participation” is the approach is used by the project and therefore Data has been collected by working together with the project.

The study was conducted in thirty villages which selected by using cluster sample method. And the primary data for the study was collected by using focus Group discussions and close observation.

Discussions and Conclusion

According to the research it was clear that, the positive peaceful political condition in Post-conflict is require for implementing successful community development programme.

It was observed that, the Current situation has been completely changed. New peaceful situation ensures the fundamental rights assembly, association and movement. This situation pulls development workers to engage in development activities. The probability which implementing the project according to the project plan has increase due to the peaceful situation.

The infrastructure which developed by government within short period have produced a compatible environment for development workers. For example, Road system has developed with the bridges across ferryboat routes. Therefore, now development workers have good access to work with community. After the war Tourist industry is rapidly increase in Trincomalee district. Therefore it developed livelihood among rural community. The recent livelihood development programme drawn new strategies targeting on the tourism industry.

Market opportunities for village level production have been increased after the war. Village people got new livelihood opportunities and market linkages with the development of Tourism industry in the particular district.

Post - Conflict situation has also changed the women's status and role. Women started involve in income mechanisms. This reveals that implementing development programme in positive post war condition also empowering women.

Lack of local language ability is still a barrier for development integrated. For example, Sinhala speaking development workers faced difficulties to work with Tamil community. This situation badly effect on knowledge and resource sharing among the community for development process.

Dependent mentality among conflict affected people is very harmful for their self reliance and empowerment. This research found that, resettlement people used to depend on subsidies. According to the research the dependent mentality among the people has been develop from early period of conflict.

In some cases, community members do not live in the resettle village permanently. Some people come only for paddy cultivation. Therefore lack of community integration can be seen among the community and it affect on socio-economic development in the particular area.

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