

**ECONOMIC
REVIEW**

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THE GULF CRISIS &
THE LANKAN
ECONOMY
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ON

LANKA'S CHILDREN

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CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction
- 30 The Gulf crisis, The World and Sri Lankan Economy
- 36 The effect of Coconut Development Programmes on Production

SPECIAL REPORT

Lanka's Children

- 3 Child Abuse – Some Sociological Aspects
- 7 Legal Protection for Children's Rights in Sri Lanka
- 11 Child Health Nutrition and Mortality
- 14 Children on the road to Crime
- 17 Child Prostitution – A Growing Melaise
- 18 Books for Children
- 22 Street Children
- 25 Juvenile Delinquency and Rehabilitation of Children
- 27 Current State of Education in Sri Lanka

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Children

Child is an asset. Children are the future generation. This month 70 heads of state got together to discuss the problems facing world's children. The main purpose of this summit, organized by the UNICEF, was to look into the problems affecting children all over the world and find solutions to these problems.

Many adults are unaware that children also have rights. Though child labour, child prostitution & child delinquency are more common in the Third World such phenomena are not unknown in the developed world either. To solve or minimize these problems, on 20th November 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The provisions of the Convention apply to four main areas of children's rights:

Survival – The first specific right cited in the convention is the inherent right to life. States must ensure "to the maximum possible, the Survival and Development of the child". (the right of access to health care services, to an adequate standard of living, including food, clean water and housing) .

Development – To allow every child the chance to develop his or her full potential, right to education, to rest and leisure, and to engage in cultural activities.

Protection – This deals with mentally or physically disabled

children, refugees, orphaned children or children who are separated from their parents, child labourers and sexually exploited children. Another objective was to prevent children from using and selling drugs.

Participation – The child's right to freedom of expression and information, thought, conscience and religion, and to play an active role in the Society.

According to UNICEF findings there are more than 30 million street children and about 7 million child refugees. At least 50 million children work under unsafe and unhealthy conditions, more than 100 million are deprived of primary education and more than 150 million are suffering from malnutrition. Asian children bear the biggest burden. Nearly one child in two is malnourished. Almost half of the world's malnourished children live in eight Asian countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The majority of the 40,000 children under five who die every day in the developing world could be saved at an affordable cost. US companies spend US \$2.5 billion to advertise cigarettes. Soviets spend that much for Vodka, and each day the world spends about 2.5 billion (US \$) on armaments. The problems afflicting world's children can be solved. It only needs a bit of feeling.

Compared to other developing countries, Sri Lanka has done relatively well in the area of child welfare. Our social statistics are one of the best in Asia and could compare favourably with even developed countries - Infant mortality - 25 per 1000 live births; population growth rate - 1.3 percent, literacy rate - 91 for males and 83 for females, primary school enrolment rate 100 for both sexes. Over 90% of the children are fully immunized and life expectancy at birth is 68 for males and 72 for females.

But there are still some major problem areas. Our per capita income is only US \$ 360 (1988). According to the Consumer Finance and Socio-economic Survey (1986/87) the poorest 20% of the population gets 3.5% of the national income but the richest 20% get 56.7%. The gap is widening. Malnutrition, high morbidity, chronic undernutrition, poor housing and sanitation facilities and lack of safe water are the major problems affecting our children according to Mr. Mathema - the UNICEF Representative in Sri Lanka.

Every adult has a responsibility to pay attention to these problems and to help find solutions—if we are to ensure the health, well being and happiness of our children.

Sepalika Fernando



CHILD ABUSE – SOME SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

programme, an 83.7% school participation rate of children of the age group 5-14 years and the elimination of child labour in the formal sector of employment), yet some deep rooted forms of child abuse still persist (eg. child domestic labour and exploitation of children as a family resource) and new forms of child abuse have proliferated with social change, the development of a consumer economy, aspirations for a better quality of life among all strata of society and international influences.

By Wimala de Silva PhD, D Litt.

Dr. Wimala de Silva, currently Chair of the University of Sri Jayawardenapura got her PhD (London) and D Litt, from the University of Sri Jayawardenapura. She has been interested in the study of Child Abuse for several years. She participated in the Third International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect held in Amsterdam in 1987. She had written several articles on Child Abuse including "Some Cultural and Economic Factors leading to Neglect, Abuse, and Violence in respect of children within the family in Sri Lanka" published in the International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol. 5, No. 4 1988. Dr. de Silva served as a Honorary member of the International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect from 1993 - 94. She is currently a member of the Governing Board of the Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR).

A Background

Priya – Come on Vajira! Don't run away. Vajira – Why do you want to take my picture?

Priya – I want to include it in the story I am writing of you.

Vajira – Why are you writing about me?

Priya – To tell people about your difficulties.

Vajira – What can they do about it?

Priya – You know Vajira, there are important people who can do things. We want to bring to their notice your story and stories from other children like you.

Vajira – Why do you have to write about us and bring it to their notice? We are everywhere.

This conversation with 13 year old Vajira, a child in years but an adult in cynicism and perception, was reported by a young researcher into the street child.

'We are everywhere' – the school drop out selling lottery tickets, the scraggy child walking from one railway compartment to another begging for coins with a pathetic song, the boy hanging around a bus of tourist tourists and pleading for poms, chewing gum and other imported goodies, the child used by his father to cut stones at the expense of his studies, the little girl in the market weighed down by the basket she carries and trailing behind a buxom mistress, the adolescent female

domestic servant raped or seduced and then turned out to the streets when she becomes pregnant - and so the list goes on and on.

The poignant cry 'Don't they see us?' hits hard, a cry of condemnation of the prevalence of exploitation and deprivation in a country where great value is laid on the child. Yet, Vajira did not know the full story. Since the early decades of the twentieth century there has been legislative concern for the child. Enactments have been made for their care and maintenance (1), their education (2), to prevent their exploitation as labour (3), to safeguard them from being used in illegal activities (4), and from harmful publications (5). The law also makes provision for the care of the unwanted child (6), and for the rehabilitation of the delinquent (7). Societal concern for the well being of the child in all its aspects is embodied in the constitutional safeguard provided in the 1978 Constitution - that the state 'shall promote with special care the interest of children and youth so as to ensure their full development physical, mental, moral, religious and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination.'

Nevertheless, the country is faced with the unhappy dilemma that while much has been achieved for the well-being of the child (the drop in child mortality to twenty per thousand live births, the success of the immunization

What specifically is indicated by the term "Child Abuse"?

There is no internationally accepted definition of child abuse. But going by the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child of November 1989, it may be inferred that violation of these rights is Child Abuse. Nevertheless for purpose of this paper and to obtain deeper insights into the numerous facets of child abuse in the local setting, it is necessary to understand the characteristic features of childhood and to deduce from this perspective that whatever goes counter to the fulfillment of the needs of childhood constitute child abuse.

More specifically, childhood is a period of dependence. Hence it is an extremely vulnerable period requiring special care and protection. Childhood is also a period of growth – physically, mentally, socially and emotionally and therefore requires special nurturing and an environment favourable for development. Childhood is further a period of intense learning activity to come to understand the world in which the child lives and to prepare for adult life. Hence childhood requires opportunities for observing, questioning, learning accepted behavioural patterns and acquiring knowledge and skills. From this conceptualization of childhood it follows that if any action on the part of a care giver (parent, guardian, teacher or other) or of a person in a superordinate position hampers or retards any aspect of a child's development, then such an action constitutes child abuse.

Viewed from this perspective child abuse covers a wide spectrum ranging

for infanticide, abandonment and battering to early removal from school or an unhealthy pressurization for achievement.

To understand the complexity and multidimensional nature of child abuse it should be noted that it is interlocked with a number of disciplines such as sociology, economics, politics, law, physiology, psychology, education and criminology, and has also numerous dimensions including the cultural and attitudinal. Because of the complexity of the subject this paper will confine itself to the analysis of four cases of child abuse from the socio-cultural perspective within the conceptual framework of child abuse detailed above.

All names are fictitious and details have been altered to conceal identity.

B – Cases of Child Abuse

I – Sajeeva

Story

Ransina was a twenty two year old woman working in the Fernando household. The husband and wife were both in government service and their three children were school going. Therefore, Ransina was by herself the greater part of the day. She was a good and honest worker and trusted by all members of the household. One day Mrs Fernando felt unwell while at work and returned home unexpectedly, to find Ransina entertaining a man from a neighbouring dairy who used to deliver milk at the door. When Mr Fernando returned home the evening they drove Ransina back to her home and told the story to her mother. It was clear, though unnoticed by the Fernandos, that Ransina was pregnant. She hoped to marry the milkman who had passed off as a bachelor. But inquiries revealed he was in fact married. Enraged, Ransina's brother thrashed her mercilessly. How could they face the village? In the early hours of the following morning Ransina took her few belongings and went to the home of a dhoby family with whom she had struck up a friendship while in service. This family lived in a small hut with plank walls and thatched roof. They said that Ransina could live with them



until the baby was born. But it was impossible to keep a mother and child in that hovel which could barely accommodate their own family. Prior to her confinement Ransina worked on a casual basis in affluent homes near by. But after the baby was born – a son whom she named Sajeeva – she could find no work and a place to live. She then took to the life of a beggar, sleeping on pavements and under trees. With the child she had no chance of obtaining work. Once she was on the point of throttling the infant. But fear of consequences restrained her. On another occasion she tried to pass the infant to an unsuspecting female at a bus stop. But she was detected. One day she met one of the ladies for whom she had worked. She promised to get Ransina a job in the Middle East as she knew Ransina was a capable cook and housemaid. But who would look after Sajeeva? By now Sajeeva was about 1 1/2 years old – an emaciated infant, dull looking and retarded in his development. Once he had a bout of diarrhoea. Ransina took him to a clinic. After treatment Ransina was asked to bring the child regularly for vitamins, nutrients, immunization and medical checks. But Ransina turned up months later when Sajeeva was running a high fever. A social worker who remembered Sajeeva's pathetic figure turned angrily to Ransina "Why didn't you bring this child earlier, as you were asked to? Are you trying to kill him?" "Yes" answered Ransina. She wanted to go to the Middle East!

Analysis

The story of Sajeeva illustrates the web of circumstances driving a mother to infanticide and abandonment of her child – the social ostracism of a woman who has an illegitimate child, the rejection by her own family, her poverty, the inability to find for herself and her infant without support, lack of knowledge of support systems, the opening of employment in the oil rich countries of the Middle East and the visions of a life of comfort in this Eldorado being shat-

tered because she is shackled by her infant. The child would have been allowed to die of neglect were it not for the timely intervention of a social worker.

2. Seelawathie

Seelawathie's father was a coconut plucker. When Seelawathie was six he fell from a tree and died. He left behind a family of five children. Seelawathie was the one but the youngest. The mother was a casual agricultural labourer and had no other means of support. Sunk in despair she gladly seized an offer made by the village mudalali to give to his cousin Mr Perera, a headmaster in a small town, the child Seelawathie for adoption. Mr. Perera too had children, all of school going age and Seelawathie had only to be a companion to them when they were at home. Mr Perera would undoubtedly send Seelawathie to the village school though not to the convent his daughters attended. So persuaded, Seelawathie's mother removed her from the village primary school and took her to Mr Perera's household. It was however, not adoption, but slave labour. There was no talk of schooling for Seelawathie. She was the first to be woken up to help Mrs Perera with the cooking and the last to go to bed. She was at every one's beck and call and was given a knock or slap when she did not respond fast enough. When the other children left for school, Seelawathie would watch them wistfully and then return to the soot and smoke of the kitchen.

Seelawathie was comparatively well fed on rice and curry. But delicacies were only for the children of the family. Whenever the mother visited Seelawathie Mrs Perera never left them alone. She was sent back home with Seelawathie's "salary" and some cast off clothes for the older children. The mother would go away happy tucking inside her jacket the daughter's meagre earnings and an additional Rs 100.

One day after a child's birthday party, Seelawathie took a tempting piece of cake which Mrs Perera had stored away. One of the daughters caught Seelawathie in the act of "stealing" and dragged her to the mother. Mrs Perera

ried her to a pillar and rubbed chillie powder on her tongue. The next morning Seelawathie took Rs.10/- from the mistress's purse and ran away. She was seen by a teacher living nearby and taken to her home. When Mr Perera was informed he went to the teacher's house with a cane and drove Seelawathie back thrashing her all the way. Not a soul protested. A few months later, Seelawathie ran away again and was able to find her way to the village. But the mother fearing reprisals from the Mudalali took Seelawathie back. Again Seelawathie ran away. Mr Perera informed the Police. But she had not been heard of since.



hand. Though the father was a shiftless chap to lord of the bottle and irresponsible, everyone expected he would change once the wife was away. Besides his own mother lived only a few doors away and she could keep an eye on the household. It seemed a wonderful opportunity for the family. With Rani's earnings they would build a new house to replace their mud hut, buy jewellery for Kusuma and set up Somapala in business when he was old enough. Moreover Rani would be spared for a couple of years the batterings from her husband. So Rani left with a light heart, confident she had made adequate arrangements for the family.

In the morning Kusuma would cook the mid day meal take Samira to their grandmother and then go to school. One day the grandmother was asked to see Kusuma's teacher. There was a rumour going round the school that Kusuma had confided in a friend. 'My father does with me what he used to do with mother'. The grandmother would not believe this story. But persistent questioning and probing revealed that in his drunken spells the father had sexually harassed the girl, yet he had not gone so far as to rape her. The grandmother promptly took Kusuma and Samira to her own home. But she had to withdraw the girl from that particular school because of the scandal that had been raised.

Enraged, Jinasena took it out of Somapala. He took the boy out of school to do the household chores and help him in his work as a vendor. One day instead of working in the home garden as ordered by his father, Somapala took some money from his father's purse and went to see a film with his friends. When he returned the father tied him to a tree full of red ants and thrashed him. In spite of his cries no one came to Somapala's help. After all, the father was only exercising his parental right to discipline a wayward son. When the father left, Somapala managed to free himself and run away to his maternal

uncle. Unwilling to incur the wrath of his brother-in-law the uncle handed Somapala to the care of the Chief Brahmin of the village temple. He hoped the boy would be ordained in due course.

Analysis

This case brings out the strains and stress affecting the families of migrant women workers leading to child abuse. The father weak on alcohol is unable to handle the new situation. And in the absence of his wife he works out his frustrations and aggression on the two older children. In terms of our culture removing a child from school for the maintenance of the family and physical chastisement directed towards the disciplining of a boy may be considered as child abuse only marginally. But the sexual abuse of young daughter left in a father's care would be condemned by any standard of morality as child abuse of the darkest hue. It is further brought out that even the corporal punishment meted out to Somapala in its severity was really a means by which the father worked out his frustrations and was not directed towards the well being of the son.

And so Rani would return to a broken home even though laden with good things for the children.

One interesting fact emerges from this story. There is one escape route for the abused boy, not available to the sister, namely to take refuge in a temple.

4. Shanta

Story

Shanta's story is in a completely different setting to the other three. Both his parents are teachers. Both are from families of good standing. But they have little wealth except undivided shares in ancestral property. Shanta is the only boy in a family of four children. So the hope of the parents were centred on him to acquire wealth and reach the upper rungs of society.

Shanta was admitted to one of the best schools in the island, and was

Analysis

Seelawathie's story is almost a worked example of the exploitation of children as cheap domestic labour. Poverty provides the excuse and the opportunity for such exploitation. The Perera family appears as the worst offender – the crime against the child being compounded by the fact that he is in a profession committed to the care and well being of children. Nevertheless, with the conceptual framework of child abuse, the mother becomes the primary offender. Though she gives the child for 'adoption' in a good faith yet she uses the little girl's earnings for the benefit of the family without any consideration for the child's own future. Further, the mother did not have the courage to stand up for the child she tied to her for protection. Nor can the neighbourhood be absolved of responsibility. By its silence it gave support to the use of a child almost as slave labour and condoned the brutal treatment of a child.

3. Karuna and Somapala

Story

When Rani decided to go to the Middle East as a house maid, like so many of her relatives, no one objected – not even her husband, Jinasena. She was leaving behind three young children. But Kusuma aged thirteen, would be able to do the cooking and look after her four year old brother Samira. The eleven year old Somapala was big enough to give his sister a helping

urged to follow every possible extra-curricular activity. He was sent for cricket practices and classes in swimming, elocution and art – though he was not particularly keen on any of them. Academically he was only little more than average. So to ensure admission to a Medical faculty (the parents had set their heart on seeing their son a doctor) he was given tuition in every subject from the age of seven. So from the early years he was pushed hard and made to feel that the future well-being of the family depended on him. The parents drove Shanta hard. But they drove themselves hard too – engaging in several businesses other than to earn the money needed to pay for classes to which they sent their children.

Shanta sat for the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (G.C.E. O/L) when he was fifteen. Just before the results were out he was a nervous wreck. He couldn't eat or sleep and had bouts of diarrhoea. When the results were out the house was like a house of mourning. Shanta had failed to qualify for admission to the C. C.E. Advanced Level Science stream – the only path leading to a career in medicine.

Shanta's uncle came to find out the results. But Shanta was nowhere to be seen. He heard a noise in a garden shed and ran towards it. He was just in time to strike a bottle of insecticide from Shanta's hands.

Analysis

This case illustrates the other side of the coin where parents with high ambition drive their children too hard and too early for high achievement regardless of their abilities. While the declared reason for such pressure is concern for the child's future, there is also the covert reason of wanting to realise, through the boy, their own aspirations and use him as a vehicle for upward social mobility.

C. Issues

These cases cover only some areas of child abuse. Nevertheless they spotlight several important issues.

1. Many forms of child ranging from child battering to exploitation as family



labour take place in a domestic setting. Hence what is visible may be only the tip of the iceberg. Statistics, therefore, may not provide a true picture of the nature and prevalence of child abuse in this country.

2. There is legal concern to safeguard and protect the child from exploitation. Nevertheless, except in relation to the use of child labour in the formal sector of employment, laws have not been effectively enforced. Participant observation reveals the presence of child domestic servants in urban homes. Nevertheless during the period 10.3.56 to 10.8.89 only twelve such cases had been reported to the Department of Labour. During the period of eleven years only one court case had been filed against an employer. Similarly the Education Ordinance making education compulsory up to the age of fourteen (a law, which if enforced, would serve as a deterrent to the use of child labour in the informal sector) is not now enforced. It is therefore vital that for the containment of child abuse not only should there be legal enactments but effective law enforcement machinery.

3. Equally important is the development of a social conscience regarding child abuse. While there are sporadic efforts to raise public awareness and develop a sense of public responsibility nevertheless there is no orchestrated and sustained attempt to do so. The media is used on occasions, such as International Children's Day, to bring to the notice of the public the problems of child abuse. Once that day passes there are long silences, even on the part of government departments and NGOs concerned with child abuse, until the next occasion comes round.

4. It is brought out that poverty provides the ideal breeding ground for most forms of child abuse. Hence alleviation of poverty becomes an important requirement for the eradication of the most common forms of child abuse. Nevertheless, such programmes alone

are inadequate without the necessary laws, an effective law enforcement machinery, a developed social conscience and above all a strong political commitment to the eradication of this evil.

5. Child abuse stemming from cultural values and attitudes was also observed. In Sri Lanka infanticide was never used as a method of resolving social problems such as the control of population growth. But that it is prevalent today is seen from newspaper reports; the main reason for this being social ostracism of the unmarried mother and illegitimate child.

In Sinhala society, before the coming of the western colonial powers, the attitude towards the illegitimate child was much more liberal. He was accepted as the off-spring of an irregular marriage⁹ and had property rights from both parents (9). But with the enactment of the General Marriages Ordinance (10) and the spread of a strongly puritan sexual morality, social attitudes have become harshly condemnatory of the mother and illegitimate child. Hence with a child outside a valid marriage may be forced to the streets without any support driven to infanticide or to the abandonment of the child.

Since today the opportunities for sexual relationships outside marriage are increasing it is desirable that the social attitude towards the illegitimate child should change that services and infrastructural supports should be established and their availability publicised.

6. With the national and international commitment towards the involvement of women in development new situations have arisen in which child neglect and abuse can take place. Therefore providing adequate care for the children of mothers who are away from the family for long periods has become an urgent need. What generally gets highlighted is the plight of children of low income families whose mothers have migrated for employment. But child care needs of working mothers of all social classes require study. With the recent phenomenon of large numbers

LEGAL

PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN

SRI LANKA

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01. Introduction

Childhood or minority has been defined in different ways in the indigenous and received legal tradition of Sri Lanka. The statutory age of majority was reduced from twenty one to eighteen after more than a century in 1989. (1) A child from the point of view of the law is thus a person under the age of eighteen. We shall observe that older children enjoy a wider spectrum of rights and responsibilities, that childhood or minority is a diminishing legal status.

The concept of the child as a person who is entitled to legal rights has a long history in Sri Lanka. In indigenous Sinhala and Tamil custom children were considered to belong to parents, and deemed an important economic resource for them. (1A) Yet the concept that a child has a right to care and nurturing introduced some limitations on parental rights. In the colonial period the concept of children's rights was expanded because it was recognised that the State and the Courts has a right and duty to interfere with parental rights in the interests of children. In Roman Law the concept of patria potestas gave the paterfamilias or head of the family a right of life and death over a child. However Roman Dutch Law that represents the Dutch colonial legal heritage in Sri Lanka, recognised that the State and the Courts had a protective role in relation to children.

The Courts status is described as that of an 'Upper Guardian of Minors'. (2) Both the State and the Courts had a duty to safeguard the welfare of children. When English law was introduced in the British period of colonial rule, the ancient legal proceeding known as the application for a writ of Habeas Corpus was used in child custody cases to deny parental rights in the Child's interests. (3)

The obligation of parents, the State or the Courts to provide protection for children

that is recognised in both the indigenous and received colonial legal traditions, came to be developed at a later stage into a concept of children's rights. Thus the status of minority was considered a diminishing status as the child grew from infancy to adolescence and majority. Judges in the British colonial period, influenced by English law, recognized an arbitrary age of discretion at which a boy of 14 and a girl of 16 could make their own decisions in some respects. (4) The Children and Young Persons Ordinance (1938) was enacted in this century as a 'Children's Charter' of Rights. The Ordinance provided for controls on adult exploitation of children in employment, in society, and in the family. It also provided a special system of juvenile justice for children in trouble with the law. It was therefore described in the legislative assembly as a 'Charter of Children's Rights' that was meant to 'give them their right place in society'. (5)

The Constitution (1978) has carried this trend to its logical conclusion and envisaged the child as a person entitled to civic rights and the right to share in the resources of the community. The constitution gives the child, like an adult, important fundamental rights in respect of equality before the law, gender equality, freedom from torture and degrading treatment, freedom of speech, conscience and religion, as well as cultural rights. (6) However the 'protective' concept has not been eliminated. A specific article in the Constitution declares that the adult's right to equality shall not be interpreted so as to prevent the introduction of legislative and administrative policies of the State that benefit children in general and disabled children in particular. (7) The protective philosophy also underlies the Directive Principle of State Policy which declares that the State shall promote 'with special care' the welfare and development of children and protect them from exploitation and discrimination. These Directive Principles cannot be enforced; yet they

provide values that must influence legislative and administrative policy and judicial interpretation in the Courts. (8)

The enactment of a new 'Children's Char-

ter of rights' was planned in 1979, as a reflection of national priorities, to coincide with the U. N. International Year of the Child. This Charter in fact did no more than put together modified but existing legislation in areas such as child employment, adoption, and juvenile justice. It did not represent a response to even some of the practical problems faced in implementing and enforcing the existing laws. The Charter did not emerge as legislation in the decade that followed. However the recent adoption of the U. N. Convention on the Rights of the Child has surfaced once again the idea of introducing a 'Children's Charter of Rights'. In his message to the U. N. Summit on Children in September 1990, President Premadasa has indicated that the enactment of a 'Children's Charter' is high on the list of priorities for national policy. (9) The discussion that follows will highlight the need for committed law enforcement and realistic legal reforms if the concept of children's rights is to become a meaningful reality in this country.

02. Justice for Children

The delivery of justice to children through the legal system requires a combination of legal rights and enforcement strategies. Even though we do not have a specific 'Charter of Children's Rights' in Sri Lanka, we do have a strong theoretical foundation of law and legal concepts that can be used to give children equity and justice in the community. What we lack most are effective law enforcement and social mobilisation strategies that can translate theoretical legal rights into every day realities that will touch the lives of our child population. This is evident if we examine selected areas of our law.

(a) Constitutional Rights

We have observed that the Constitution (1978) recognises fundamental rights that are available to adults and children. The right to life is not specifically articulated in the Constitution but rights such as the right to freedom from torture, and indeed all the other rights presume the existence of a right to life. In any event other laws, such as the strict abortion laws of this country (10) are based on a 'right to life' concept.

The legal right to life as well as the other fundamental rights can only be enforced in

an application presented to the Supreme Court within one month of becoming aware of a violation. They can be claimed only in respect of violations by State or executive authorities, so that violations by private persons or organisations cannot be challenged under the Constitution. The interests of national security, public order, the national economy and other specified factors also legalise the limitations placed on these fundamental rights. (11) The latter premise recognises that the fundamental rights cannot be enforced by seeking – judicial remedies in situations where political violence is met by State controls on personal liberty. The former constraints prevent the assertion of fundamental rights even in times of peace and political stability.

The absence of adequate facilities for free legal aid, and independent advocates of children's causes, such as Non-Governmental Organisations, make the Constitutional remedy very remote for the vast majority of Sri Lankan children. There have been a few instances of cases involving school admissions and torture or personal violence against children, where violations of their fundamental rights have been challenged in the Supreme Court. (12) Unless the one month rule is amended, the attitude to private sector violations modified, and independent legal representation for children provided, the Constitutional remedy will not give accessible relief for violations of fundamental rights, even under normal political conditions.

The concept of 'social action litigation' has been developed in India so as to permit concerned individuals or Non-governmental organisations to challenge the conduct of the State and private persons or authorities who violate the fundamental rights of any person. Courts also make orders requiring affirmative action that will ensure follow up action, so that fundamental rights do not continue to be violated. Non-governmental organisations and even individuals have locus standi to move the Supreme Court on behalf of vulnerable sectors of the population who cannot easily obtain access to this forum. 'Social Action Litigation' in the Supreme Court has been used in India on behalf of vulnerable sectors of the child population, such as bonded workers. The recent action of the Sri Lankan Supreme Court in accepting a letter sent by Boosa detenués and its order to the Bar Association to report on their cases is a precedent that may be used to argue that Non-governmental organisations or individuals can apply for redress under the Constitution, on behalf of children.

The guarantees of equality in the Constitution and the other fundamental rights also confer limited jurisdiction on the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, because it has only a



restricted power of judicial review of legislation and other existing laws. New legislation can be challenged during its passage through parliament, for violation of fundamental rights. However past laws that do so cannot be challenged under the Constitution. (13) Thus laws, such as the Citizenship Act, (1948) and various family laws that discriminate against illegitimate children cannot be challenged for violation of fundamental rights. Similarly inheritance or marriage laws, that express diverse legal attitudes in regard to the rights of male and female children cannot be challenged. The restrictive attitude of the legal system to judicial review of legislation thus limits the scope of legal relief under the Sri Lanka Constitution.

There is an even greater problem faced in implementing and enforcing constitutional rights in the face of the guarantee in regard to cultural rights. The guarantee on equality before the law comes into conflict with the guarantee on protection of cultural rights. The concept of cultural rights can be used to perpetuate discrimination between the rights of boys and girls and between children of different communities in the area of marriage and inheritance. Thus the attitude to inheritance rights, capacity to marry and the age of marriage in Muslim personal law, may continue to be recognised by the legal system even when the law on these matters in respect of other communities is modified to reflect health concerns and foster equitable distribution of economic resources.

In the past, uniformly applicable Sri Lankan legislation on matters such as wills, majority, adoption and maintenance, minimised the significance of pluralism in the area of children's rights. However, the present Constitutional provisions encourages pluralism in personal law. Recent cases on maintenance of Muslim children demonstrate how the maintenance rights of Muslim children are more limited than those of other children. (14) A recent decision on Muslim adoptions in the Supreme Court has undermined the inheritance rights of Muslim children adopted under the uniformly applicable adoption statute. (15) The Supreme Court did attempt to work within the scope of Muslim personal law in the Maintenance case, so as to ensure that a boy over fifteen years was not deprived of the right to claim financial support from his father. However, a majority in the Supreme Court has been insensitive to the plight of an adopted Muslim child who cannot now succeed to his or her adoptive parents. The valuable dissenting opinion of Justice Wanasundera, may continue to be ignored in

future on the ground that the Constitutional guarantees on cultural rights justify a different perception of the inheritance rights of adopted Muslim children.

(b) The Legal Status of Children in the Civil Law of the Country

Civil Court have jurisdiction both under Statutes and the Roman Dutch Law to ensure that the rights of children are protected. The Courts can in their role of 'Upper Guardian of minors' safeguard children's rights in civil litigation concerning their personal and proprietary rights. Indeed appellate courts have used this jurisdiction in the past to ensure that there is independent representation of the child's interests in property litigation. Transfers pertaining to the property of minor children are subject to strict control by the Courts. (15A) They have showed similar concern in custody litigation, and emphasised that they have the power to interfere with parental or adult rights in the child's interests. (16) We have observed that the Appeal Courts have no occasion interpreted the personal laws in such a way as to minimise prejudice to children. There are instances in which they have even interpreted the law on illegitimacy in 'such a way' as to minimise the discrimination against illegitimate children. This 'child oriented' judicial attitude was rejected in the recent adoption case, and is also not evidenced in the trial courts, which handle adoption cases. Sri Lankan law permits adoption only in the case of a child under fourteen. The concept of representation for the young child, obtaining adequate information on the adoptive parents home, and monitoring the child's progress are provided for in the adoption statute. However these legal procedures are not strictly adhered to, so that abuse of infants and young children in adoption has surfaced as a significant area of concern. (16A)

The courts are of course powerless to confer legal rights when Statute laws pertaining to illegitimacy and inheritance do not recognise a child's legal right to just and equitable treatment. We have observed that the law discriminates against illegitimate children born out of marriage. Though legitimate children governed by the General Law, Kandyan Law and Tesawalamai enjoy equal inheritance rights. (17) Muslim law differentiates between children on the basis of gender, and the factor of adoption. A parent of any community may dispose of his property by will according to a uniformly applicable pre-independence Wills Ordinance. This legal position however is a mixed blessing. For a parent may also dispose of property to others and leave minor children destitute. A creative concept of family provision that restricts the right of disposition for the benefit of the testator's close family has not been introduced in Sri Lanka.

Employment law is another area which affects children's rights. The minimum age of employment for children was removed from the Employers Act (1966) which now deals with the subject, and promulgated as a subsidiary regulation in 1967. (17A) Consequently many people are unaware that it is illegal to employ a child under twelve years. The related controls on child employment between the ages of twelve to fourteen set out in many statutes are also unrealistic, resulting in children in this age group being exploited in employment in the informal sector.

Legal controls that were enforced effectively in the early years appear to have established a tradition of excluding children under fourteen from employment in industry and manufacturing. Factors such as female employment and free education may also have contributed to exclusion of young children from the formal labour force. However, the incidence of child labour in the informal sector and especially in domestic service is a matter of concern.

Compulsory education regulations have not been introduced so as to penalise employers who violate the laws on child labour. An Education Statute of 1968 and the free education scheme gave children a legal right to education from the age of five to sixteen. Yet, indigency of parents and exploitative labour practices ensure that poor children are placed in employment and also fail to enter or drop out from the school system. Employment as well as education laws need to be strengthened to prevent parental and adult exploitation of children in employment.

Sri Lankan statute law, proclaims the philosophy of nineteenth century English law and makes failure by the father to maintain a minor child a criminal offence. Maintenance on behalf of a child is usually claimed in adversarial litigation in the Magistrate's Court. These legal procedures are ineffective to ensure that a child receives family support. The current Janasaviya programme may in time operate as an effective social security system of support. At the moment, children of all classes cannot easily obtain financial support through maintenance litigation, particularly in circumstances where appeals are filed and they delay the enforcement of court orders. There is an urgent need to simplify the procedures for maintenance litigation so that child maintenance cases can be completed speedily. Legal aid and counselling for such litigation is also necessary. In addition, some social security benefit system must be introduced on behalf of children, if parents without means are not to be exclusively dependent on litigation for the purpose of obtaining child support from liable relatives. Such a social security benefit system may also



help to minimise the risk of parents abandoning children or sending them in exploitative employment. It may even help to contain the phenomenon of migration for Middle East employment, which has placed many children at risk of neglect and abandonment. (17B)

The present system of justice in civil litigation is adversarial. This does not help children who are the focus of conflict in custody or matrimonial litigation between parents. Most countries have found that children's interests are best protected when family disputes are resolved in an atmosphere conducive to counselling and conciliation. The present Family Courts are in fact District Courts which are adversarial in their approach to litigation involving children.

(c) Protection for Children in the Criminal Justice system (18)

The legal system of Sri Lanka is positive in its approach to child survival and development, and even in regard to a child's civil rights. Laws in these areas focus mainly on rights rather than protections. The Criminal law by contrast adopts a significant protective stance and is meant to deter child exploitation and abuse. The Penal Code (1833) contains many offences such as abortion, infanticide, kidnapping, abduction and rape which are especially meant to protect children from physical abuse and prevent unlawful infringement of personal liberty. However law enforcement in this area is very weak. Besides, there has been no effort to resolve some important conceptual issues.

Sri Lankan laws such as those on custody and maternity leave identify the rights of a woman with those of her minor children. Yet the law on abortion is child oriented without recognising a woman's rights in respect of her own body. Therapeutic abortions are not allowed except in extremely narrow situations. The rigidity of abortion laws has placed both the mother and child at risk from back street abortions. The rape laws permit consent to be pleaded as a complete defence even in the case of a young child, if she is above the age of twelve. The consent defence can also be raised in custodial situations such as domestic employment, where the child is under the control of the man accused of rape. In some legal systems, the burden of proving consent is shifted to the accused in custodial situations, so that he must establish that the woman consented to sexual intercourse. This does not represent Sri Lankan law, so that it is difficult to obtain a conviction even

in cases where the victim of rape is a young child between the ages of twelve to fourteen.

The Laws on child abuse are also inadequate. Incest is not a crime under the Penal Code, while Part V of the Children and Young Persons Ordinance (1939) on cruelty to children has never been brought into operation. Physical assault and abuse of children must be prosecuted as the highly technical offences defined in the Penal Code. This makes obtaining convictions for physical injury other than homicide, difficult. This is one reason why many of the acts of gross cruelty perpetrated against employed and adopted children or children in the family go unprosecuted. Besides the Juvenile Court Magistrate in Colombo, before whom the child victim of such abuse is usually produced has no jurisdiction to impose sanctions on the adult. The adult's conduct thus goes unpunished unless the Police is willing to make an effort to investigate the case and initiate a prosecution in the ordinary courts.

The law on prostitution and trafficking in children is based on nineteenth century colonial legislation - the Vagrants Ordinance (1841), the Brothels Ordinance (1885) and the Penal code (1833). Inevitably the provisions regulating prostitution in public places in the former Ordinances, and those regulating female prostitution and traffic in women for the purpose of prostitution, do nothing within their net to the new form of boy prostitution that has surfaced as a problem in recent years. The laws on trafficking are also inadequate to deal with problems concerning sale of children for adoption and export of small boys to the Gulf States for camel riding. Some executive action has been taken recently to tighten immigration controls in regard to travel abroad by small children. However, many boys who are already in the Gulf States as camel riders have not been traced because of the failure to identify their camps and negotiate through diplomatic channels with their employers.

Statutory controls on use of children in the film industry and for pornography can be found in the legislation regulating employment of children, and obscene publications. (19) Penalties in the Obscene Publications Ordinance (1927) have been increased recently. But it is not clear whether the controls cover use of children in pornography. Frequent use of children in advertising as well as the public advertisements for use of children in advertising suggests that the system of regulatory controls and licences on this subject is not in operation. Inadequacies in drug law enforcement have encouraged the use of even small children as couriers in the local drug trade.

The Children and Young Persons Ordinance (1939) was a Statute that was enacted so as to provide a system of juvenile justice for children in trouble with the law. This statute provides for a system of probation, and the rehabilitation of children with criminal convictions, or with a history of delinquency. It created a system of juvenile courts and also provided for the removal of children from malfunctioning home environments and their placement 'in care,' either with a responsible adult or an institution. The statute provides for separation of child-offenders from adult prisoners. However the lack of an adequate cadre of probation officers and judicial, prison, and institutional facilities, has resulted in various problems.

There is only one Juvenile Court based in Colombo so that ordinary Magistrates Courts are required to handle cases of child offenders. Children are sometimes placed on remand with adult offenders for minor offences. On the other hand women who are detained or committed to serve sentences of imprisonment may be placed in these institutions with their small children. The recent practice of 'rehabilitating' street children appears to result in a misuse of both the Vagrants Ordinance and the Children Young persons Ordinance. Children are picked up by the police, separated from their parents, brought before the Juvenile Courts, and placed 'in care' in various institutions. (20) However, the official word used in making these placements is 'remand'. This in itself reflects the approach of the authorities to this interference with personal liberty.

The Wimalaratne Committee on Sentencing of Young Offenders produced a report on this subject (21) The suggestions for reform made in this report have not yet been implemented. However the concept of a 'Children's charter' of Rights has been surfaced once again by government, and it is likely that the subject of juvenile justice will receive attention. It is not clear whether there will be any effort to relate these reforms to new problems that have surfaced after the Wimalaratne Commission produced its report. This is partly due to the lack of an effective consultative process in initiating law reform.

Unlike in other areas, the major problem with the administration of criminal justice is the inadequacy of law enforcement. This situation is worsened by lack of public awareness of legal rights and responsibilities, and the virtual non-existence of mechanisms for obtaining representation for the child in legal proceedings. The Probation and Child Care Department does not have adequate resources. Unless individual lawyers are persuaded to intervene, and



agree to flow a case on child abuse, the child's situation does not attract special concern. Adult violations of the law, even as it is, go unprosecuted. The absence of a committed policy of law enforcement this encourages further violations. This is seen clearly in the area of child employment in domestic service, that is a fertile source of child abuse.

Conclusion

The theoretical framework of the law in regard to children's rights has areas of inadequacy. However, it is in the main geared to delivery of justice to children. Gaps and loopholes in the law in general, and the constitution in particular should not be continued, and some major reforms can be introduced in the areas discussed above. However, the need of the moment is not so much theoretical change in the statement of children's rights but an effective and committed enforcement policy. This need is specially urgent in regard to imposition of penalties for adult abuse and exploitation of children. The protective stance of the law cannot become meaningful unless there is such a committed law enforcement policy. Judges, lawyers and law enforcement authorities are required to respond with greater sensitivity to the child's right to receive justice through the legal system.

Crucial to this process is the provision of facilities for independent representation of the child's interests in legal proceedings. At the moment several official administrative units handle issues relating to children - the Children's Secretariat, the Probation and Child Care Department, The Women and Children's Affairs Division of the Ministry of Labour, and the Women and Children's Bureau of the City Police, in Borella. Yet when a problem such as that involving trafficking in boys for camel riding in the Middle East or child prostitution and pornography surfaces, there is no single authority that can be moved to take effective action on behalf of the child victim. This is a lacuna in the existing administrative arrangements for dealing with problems relating to children. The gap in official response is felt more keenly because non-governmental organisations in Sri Lanka which do assist children placed in difficult circumstances have mainly service oriented programmes for them. These organisations have not, as in India emerged as activist organisations that seek justice for the child in society and through the legal system.

Unless the State, individuals and these organisations combine to place protection of children's rights high on their list of priorities, legislative reforms and a new children's charter will not bring justice to children. A child placed in a well functioning family unit will in general enjoy the rights granted by the legal system. Intervention on his or her behalf may be necessary only on occasion. It is the child in difficult circumstances or from the malfunctioning family unit that needs the special protection of the legal system. Such a child depends on effective law enforcement and legal representation to claim his legal rights.

Law enforcement is fraught with problems in a situation where there has been a total breakdown of law and order. The anguish and suffering of children conscripted forcibly for armed combat in the North and the East, and rendered homeless refugees in their own country cannot be alleviated by Charters and Conventions of Children's Rights. However, laws articulate values that can set standards when an effort is made to implement them. Thus enforcement of existing laws where political realities make law enforcement possible is an urgent need if children's rights in Sri Lanka are to mean something more than empty rhetoric.

Notes

1. Age of Majority Ordinance (1865) as amended (1989)
- 1A. Tesawalamai Code (1806) Part VII refers to sale of children; also, Robert Knox An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon (1681)
2. Spiro E. Law of Parent and Child (1985) p. 257; Goonesekera, S. Law of Parent and Child (1987) p. 206
3. Goonesekera *ibid.* ch. VI
4. *Ibid.* p. 253
5. Hansard (1934) Vol. 1 & Vol. II, Debates on Children and Young Person's Ordinance.
6. Constitution (1978) Ch. III
7. Art. 12 (94)
8. Arts. 27 (13), 29
9. Ceylon Daily News Oct. 1990.
10. Penal Code (1883) S. 303
11. Arts. 15 (1) to 15 (8)
12. Unreported cases on school admission; *Samanthileke V Perera* (1990) unreported; *Wijestiriwardene V Kumara* (1989) 2. Sri Lanka R 312
13. Art. 16 (1) Art 120 to 124
14. *Ummul Marzoonal v Samad* (1977) 79 NLR 209; *Burhan v Ismail* (1978) 2 Sri LR 218
15. *Ghouse V Ghouse* (1988) 1 Sri LR 25
- 15A. Goonesekera *op. cit.* ch. VII
16. *Ibid.* Ch. VI
- 16A. *Ibid.* Ch. II, IX; note 15 *Supra*;
- Adoption of Children Ordinance (1941)
17. Matrimonial rights and Inheritance Ordinance (1876); Kandayan Law Ordinance (1938); Jaffna Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Ordinance (1911).
- 17A. Children and Young Persons Ordinance (1939) provisions were repealed. Now see Employment of Women Young Persons and Children Act (1956) and the Employment Regulation (1957).
- 17B. Cumararatunga L. K. Sri Lankan Domestic Aides in West Asia. Kiribamune S and Samarasinghe V. (ed) Women at the Crossroads, Vikas (1990)
18. Goonesekera S. Child Prostitution in Sri Lanka. Lawasia (1987); Goonesekera S. Violence against Women, Centre for Womens Research, National Convention Papers (1989).
19. Obscene Publications Ordinance (1927) as amended (1983)
20. Film screened on Rupavahini on 'rehabilitation' to coincide with Children's Week, October 1990.
21. Sessional Paper No. VI (1988).

less at birth. It may be due to the birth of a baby before 37 weeks of gestation when it is called preterm, or to intra uterine growth retardation when it is called small for dates (SFD) or Light for Gestational Age (LGA).

Sample surveys done in Colombo by the University Paediatric Unit over two decades and presently at sentinel sites in Sri Lanka by the Family Health Bureau suggest that Low Birth Weight is a public health problem. The University data relates to the distinction between preterm babies and SFD babies. There is also evidence from many developing countries that low birth weight influences neonatal mortality, contributes to high rates of morbidity and mortality in the first few years of life. It also adversely affects the potential of human development.

In Sri Lanka, from 21 — 30% of births are less than 2500 grms. Over 80% of these are Small for Dates and these reflect the adverse environmental influences viz. the health of the mother.

Our data on maternal age and parity highlight these as important variables. Mothers under twenty and over 35 tend to have small babies. Parity enhances growth up to para 3, after which the maternal resources are no longer adequate to provide a favourable environment.

There is a positive association between maternal stature and weight and the weight of babies. It appears that stunted growth is principally due to poor maternal nutrition while with further decrease in birth weight, other pathological features like maternal toxæmia and congenital abnormalities assume more prominence in aetiology, either as



direct or contributory causes.

Identifying mothers at risk of producing low birth weight babies must be done on previous performance, parity (more than 3), presence of blood pressure and poor nutritional status of mother. Our study indicates that for well grown babies, the modal maternal weight is around 46 — 49 kilos.

Despite genetic variability the causes of low birth weight are embedded in the environment. There is association between low birth weight and crude indicators of socio-economic development such as per capita income, per capita energy consumption, percent urban newspaper circulation per 1000 population, radio and TV per 1000 population, population per physician and so on.

The existing socio economic factors during mother's preconceptional period and even during her childhood and girlhood may have an important effect on the birth weight of her babies. At least two generations would be required to eliminate this problem of low birth weight.

Serial studies in the unit do not reveal any changes in the distribution of low birth weight nor a change of the average birth weight in Sri Lanka.

It behoves health administrators to look into this problem of poor nutritional status of women and its reflection on future generations of children.

Postnatal Mortality Due to Diarrhoea

The most important cause of death in the older infant is gastroenteritis. To quote the Registrar General's figures, 45% of deaths due to gas-

troenteritis occur in the 0 - 5 year old age group. Of these 46% occur in infancy and 54% in school children.

Studies in the University unit in Colombo, reveal that 50% of admissions for diarrhoea occur under one year. Although respiratory diseases top the admissions to this unit and gastroenteritis comes second, the highest number of deaths in the unit are due to gastroenteritis.

What is also important is that only 10% of these were being breastfed at that time. Even those, were receiving water and fruit drinks in an unsatisfactory feeding bottle. 87.5% were formula fed by 3 months. Thus inappropriate bottle feeding is begun in a family that can ill afford it.

Breast feeding often fails early in the neonatal period as there is no antenatal preparation for breast-feeding. Mothers are not enthused with confidence that they will be successful in lactation. On the other hand, they often leave the maternity ward with a bottle. There is urgent need to look into maternity ward practices as an important step in promoting breast feeding.

The award of three months maternity leave is a wise step to promote breast feeding. It also make breast feeding prestigious and trendy.

In a South East Asian inter-country study of perinatal mortality and morbidity, feeding difficulties have been listed as an important determinant of this. Information and investigations suggest that breast milk protects not only against bacteria and viruses that cause gastrointestinal infections but also protects against systemic infections. Therefore breastfeeding must be safe guarded.



We observed that poor sanitation and impure watersupply in the urban sector have been conducive to the occurrence of diarrhoea among formula fed babies, whereas in the rural sector this problem of poor environmental sanitation is not so acute.

In Sri Lanka, children grow well up to about 4 months on breast milk alone. They need to have complementary feeding from that time. We have proposed different recipes both at home level and at commercial level from locally made foods. These are cereal and legume mixtures, and therefore rice-based with soya or green gram or cowpea. A green leaf or carrot or golden pumpkin added to this would provide the Vitamin A requirement.

Person to person education has popularised this and more mothers accept it now and do not wait until late infancy for the rice-eating ceremony as they did before. This message therefore is important and must be dispersed throughout the country to prevent faltering of growth in infancy.

The growth chart must be available at every clinic so that health workers can detect the earliest altering of growth to give advice regarding this type of feeding.

The age distribution of malnutrition is as follows:

Age in months	Acute	Chronic
6-12	8	11.8
12-23	17.3	24.3
24-35	5.3	23.3
36-47	4.8	19.3
48-59	0	11.3
60-71	0.3	13.2
Average Sri Lanka	6.5	21.7

Although international workers could not justify this prevalence of

malnutrition with falling rates of infant mortality, it appears that the network of health services do support the malnourished. Hence IMR in Sri Lanka is not an indicator of the nutritional status of the community. Still the unconscious prevalence of malnutrition needs attention. The supplementary feeding programme has not been well targeted. There are several leakages and logistic constraints in its distribution that over two decades it has failed to be an effective nutrition intervention. It has to be revamped.

The greatest impact seems to have been in relation to the immunisable disorders. It is like a fairy tale for those of us who have battled for years (since the fifties) against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, tuberculosis and measles. The decline of these diseases since national immunisation in our life time, with its further acceleration through the expanded programme of immunisation is a tribute not only to national workers in health services and training. The multilateral agencies such as WHO and UNICEF with their dynamic leaders have played a great role in reducing death and crippling disease in the whole world.

Measles had been identified by us as one of the important infections in precipitating malnutrition. Our cry for immunisation against this disease has now prevented acute malnutrition. In fact kwashiorkor is seldom seen. But chronic undernutrition or marasmus has functional effects on growing children causing stunting and apathy reducing their physical and mental potential.

Follow up of growth curves among preschool children shows the number of acute respiratory infections that cause failure to thrive.

Sleeping in a huddle in poorly ventilated rooms is the background to recurrent respiratory disease. Not only the infection but also poor feeding practices during illness cause weight loss. Here again a health message of motivating children to sleep alone in corners rather than rebreathe each others' contaminated air is important. It is obvious that acute respiratory disease is the commonest infection among children (vide table) and most of this could be thus prevented until better housing is available, before the year 2000.

Diarrhoea is the other problem that assails the child when foods other than breastmilk are added to the diet. One cannot underestimate the value of the scientific formula of the century in fighting deaths due to gastroenteritis. Jeevani has been popularised for rehydration and should reduce the need for intravenous therapy. Yet, traditional recipes of home-based solutions have a great role as they are already accepted by the people. King coconut water, lime juice and rice conjees prevent dehydration.

One must highlight the need for pure water and sanitation. There are still too many families sharing one toilet and a way-side tap or well. Shigella epidemics with the attending toxæmia cause fatality and diarrhoea still remains at the top of the list of mortality in childhood.

Personal hygiene in food handling is another message that must pervade the whole community in our fight against killing diarrhoea.

The impact of new drugs in the control of worm infestations is reflected in the low admissions for complications due to worm infections. The old drugs had many side effects which we saw in the fifties—both uncontrolled migration and

Contd. on page 14

CHILDREN ON THE ROAD TO CRIME



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In Sri Lanka which boasts of nearly fifty years of Free Education from Kindergarten to the University and having one of the highest literacy rates in Asia, it is distressing to find thousands of children who should be in school, exploited by adults and even by parents, engaged in illegal pursuits which would ultimately lead them to crime. Traditionally children had been employed as domestic servants, pavement hawkers and menial labourers. With the new economic changes and the influx of tourists new and more dangerous forms of activities have emerged which encourage the young to defy the law and induct them to crime.

One of the principal factors if not the key one promoting child labour is underemployment or unemployment among parents. The parents of employed children and young persons are not against them being employed, instead they tend to encourage them. Parents in the low income group do not regard a child of 10 as a dependent but as a co-provider sharing family responsibility. A disabled or sick parent or a drunkard father will prompt a child to seek employment. It is clear that poverty and large family size draw children to the labour market. Very often it is the first or second child in a large family who seeks employment to support the younger siblings. Many of them do not have a criminal background and they do not always come from broken

homes, but the nature of their employment could pave the way to delinquency.

Listed below are some of the trades to which young children are forced into:

1. Pavement **hawking**.
2. **Domestic** employment.
3. **Conductors** in private vans.
4. Employed by adults in **illicit brewing** of liquor and taping of trees.
5. Employed by adults in **illicit felling** of trees and **growing of ganja**.
6. Employed in groups in **fishing camps** or "wadiyas".
7. **Illicit gemming**.
8. Employed as unskilled labourers in **garages** and **bicycle repair shops**.
9. Employed as **cleaners, messengers**, lifting heavy weights in hotels, boutiques and markets.
10. Professional **Child Beggars**.

The most common among these is the employment of children as domestic servants. A survey done among apartment dwellers in three suburbs of Colombo has revealed that one in every three middle class households employs a child as a servant. The reasons for this increase of child servants are not far to seek. Earlier young women of the age group 18-35 years and older women of the age 35-65 years used to come from the villages to the towns and suburbs as domestics. The younger group has now found more lucrative employment as house maids in the Middle East. The older group is also difficult to recruit because, these women say that they have to look after the children of their daughters who have gone to

the Middle East. Also many girls from Villages who would have normally taken to domestic employment, now find that there are more attractive avenues of employment open to them such as factory work specially in garment factories in the Free Trade Zone. Hence domestic labour is hard to find and very expensive. As a result the cheapest source of labour, children are exploited to the maximum.

Children are brought from villages or tea estates by an agent (who is invariably a relative) who is paid by the employer of the child. These children come from very poor and sometimes broken families. The typical background of a servant child would be a father who is an estate labourer and a mother who has deserted the family for another man or vice versa. Usually the parent who is left behind is too poor to cope with the situation as many of these families are very large. The agents then appear on the scene to take away the children to urban homes.

These children are not sent to school by their employers. They are given food and clothing but not paid regular wages — perhaps a meagre allowance. They work irregular hours and are given various types of jobs like cooking, washing clothes and cleaning. Some of these children maintain links with their families and may even send their meagre earnings to their parents. Some of them remain in employment because they are better off than if they were at home and also with the fervent hope that their employers will find a suitable job for them later on. But those aspirations are rarely realised.

Apart from the physical injury and sexual abuse which threatens a child servant he or she could be easily lured by circumstances to

indulge in petty thefts. These could be due to dire necessity or acts of revenge due to non payment of wages. There are many cases of such thefts committed by child servants or ex child servants who have run away from their employers. The life histories of some prostitutes show that they were employed as children in households, seduced by their masters or made pregnant by them and then driven away. Unable to face their families again these women have ended up as prostitutes sometimes with babies in arms. Statistics related to the whole island obtained from the police headquarters in Colombo regarding suicide by children and young persons reveal that a large number of them were domestic employees. It is clear that the employment of children as domestics will endanger their mental and physical health and very often place them on the path to delinquency.

Pavement Hawking: Walking around the street of the big cities one sees large numbers of children selling foodstuffs, trinkets, toys and lottery tickets along the crowded pavements. Their ability and youthful high pitched voices are their assets. More than half of them have migrated from the village and have their roots in the village. Others are slum or pavement dwellers. A large number of them are below 14 years of age. With the growth of TV advertising, increased demand for certain consumer items and free flow of goods, the number of children hawking on the pavement has increased considerably during the last few years. Since they can earn money and be independent and go back to their home in the evening (if they have any), many of the youngsters enjoy this type of self employment rather than being under an employer. But the real danger that threatens the future of these child hawkers is that they are exposed to



criminal elements which are a feature of urban pavement culture. There is evidence that unscrupulous adults and big mudalalis engage the services of such children in peddling drugs.

Employment of children of adults in the illicit brewing of liquor and illicit tapping of trees:

The illicit brewing and sale of liquor has become almost a cottage industry in this country. It is widespread in the sense that it takes place in the alleys and by lanes of large towns, suburbs, villages, forested areas and even in the new development areas. Whole families are involved in it; the men prepare the brew and women and children do the distribution and sales. The children are employed in the hope that if they are arrested the magistrate will deal with them leniently. If a child is fined for an excise offence the man behind the scene will pay the fine and the child will go back to his trade. According to statistics received from the police headquarters the numbers of persons under 18 arrested for excise offences are as follows:

	1984	1985
Males	2975	2438
Females	345	339

The numbers arrested are only a fraction of those involved in the offence. Some of the big timers in the business are rich, and wealth can purchase influence, so that they have means of circumventing the laws. The children they employ, who should be in school are trained to defy the law and will eventually follow the same trade. They are forced by the nature of their trade to associate with disreputable acquaintances, thus opening fresh avenues for crime. Illicit liquor is as-

sociated with prostitution to attract more customers.

Employment of children by adults in the illicit felling of trees and growing of ganja:-

These offences are prevalent only in remote villages and in the newly colonised townships all of which are in the vicinity of forests. When confronted by the police the adult offenders often remain in the background and the children are sent to face the law in the hope that they will be treated lightly. But the real danger is that from their early years the children are trained in illegal trades, and they are not even aware that they are committing an offence. In the case of ganja growing there is the added danger that the children will get used to the drug.

Children who work in fishing wadiyas:

These children are taken from their parents by agents with promises of a rosy future elsewhere or are kidnapped on their way to school. The hundreds of children reported missing and not traced by the police are very likely toiling away as bonded slaves in some sunny beach. The children work in fishing camps in small remote islands off the north western or eastern coast and their whereabouts will never be known by their parents. They are employed by powerful traders to process fish in the blazing sun. They are not paid wages but are clothed and fed and they gradually learn the trade. They are virtually slaves and are never allowed to leave the camp. In one instance 8 small boys between the age 8 - 14 years were freed from a fishing camp by the Minister of Fisheries in the government.

Conductors in Private Vans:

Since the privatisation of the transport system, private vans and bus owners began to employ boys usually between 14 - 18 years as criers

and conductors in vehicles. A study was conducted by the Women's and Children's Unit of the Labour Department using a sample of 60 such boys. Forty two of them were between the ages of 17 and 18. Almost all of them admitted that they had received a few years of schooling and now they felt that their parents were too poor to maintain them any more. So they had no other choice but to take up this job so as to fend for themselves and help their parents. One boy of 12 years said that his father was dead and mother was a daily paid labourer. He had 3 younger sisters and his mother's meagre earnings were insufficient to support the family. So after 3 years of schooling he stopped his education and took up this work of collecting passengers for a van. He gave all his earnings to his mother. His only aim was to give his sisters a good education.

Many of them took to this job in order to tide over a difficult period till they found better and more stable employment. Some admitted that because of their poor educational standard they could not get anything better. Since there were very few young people over 20 employed in this manner it is known what these boys did when they attained that age. Some of these boys interviewed admitted that their employers exploited their labour. They had no regular hours or leaves for meals. They had to face abuse from the



public as well as from the employers.

Child Beggars: A recent study of the beggars of Sri Lanka has shown that begging has become a profession and that children are exploited for the purpose. In 1976 - 77, in the City of Colombo alone there were 1438 child beggars; but the numbers have increased rapidly since, due to the influx of tourists and the growth of organised begging using children to stir the sympathy of the public. Moreover, the fact that children have been stranded by the sudden demise of their parents due to natural disasters and terrorist violence, have contributed to the increase of the child beggar population. The child beggar is sometimes used as a tool by tricksters who are bent on collecting money by enticing unsuspecting people. The young beggars are trained to pretend to blind or dumb to evoke deep sympathy, to identify would be contributors and houses where would be sympathisers live. There are a number of children produced in courts for running behind tourists begging for money and other objects. From professional begging to crime is an easy path.

Although it is clear that in many instances the nature of employment is such that, it may well be the foundation of a delinquent career

yet the whole issue of child labour has received low priority both by the state and by the rest of society. The reason for this is that child labour affects the lives of poor and destitute children who are inarticulate of whose voices are never heard.

The present laws dealing with the subject are outdated and modelled on colonial English legislation. Even the terminology and the types of employment given in the Legislative Enactments are no longer relevant. New legislation should be drafted in keeping with the recent socio economic changes and the new forms of exploitation of children that have emerged in the recent past. Legal controls should be publicised from time to time if they are to operate as restraints.

Above all the state should make every effort to ensure that the benefits of free education reaches the poor child; otherwise the whole system would be a mockery. Children of 10 and 12 are selling lottery tickets on the streets or engaged in domestic drudgery while the state provides free education and text books from kindergarten to the University.

Strict prohibition supported by publicity and media coverage will act as a positive disincentive. Among a literate population the use of the media and active community support through local grass roots organisations can change social values. ■

Contd from page 13

obstruction, requiring even surgical intervention.

Whipworm infections which were chronic causing chronic diarrhoeas, prolapse of the rectum and malnutrition were problems in the past. The new drugs are effective. Thus the worm burden is less. But the prevalence in the community is still high. It reflects the lack of sanitary facilities as well as the poor health education on this topic of worms.

The pattern of disease as seen over three decades in the children's

hospital is a reflection of the host of preventable disease in childhood.

PATTERN OF DISEASES				
	1950	1967	1972	1978
Respiratory diseases	613	1252	1684	2388
Gastrointestinal disorders	510	600	765	647
Intestinal Parasites	1332	434	529	273
Nutritional disorders	683	217	165	147
Nervous disorders	159	399	336	325
Total admissions	2166	374	4002	4219
1950 — C. C. de Silva, D. C. Rattef & Priyani Soysa				
1967 — S. Nallainathan and Priyani Soysa				
1972 — N. Wamasuriya and Priyani Soysa				
1978 — Marguerite Uphoff				

This table as well as declining IMR demonstrate the effectiveness of the curative services. It appears that the correct health messages have not yet reached the people, preventing many diseases.

The basic problems are those of poverty, lack of resources such as good housing, access to food, water and sanitary facilities. Until these are universally available in this land

of ours, attention to deeper problems of childhood, inherited and malignant, will be second in priority. Children themselves cannot mobilise the funds for priorities for child care so that they can face the challenges of tomorrow unhampered, unhampered by physical, mental and social handicaps but with their full potential for adulthood. Now we speak on behalf of those in the world of tomorrow. ■



CHILD PROSTITUTION – A GROWING MALAISE

Dr. Gamini Jayakuru

Dr. Gamini Jayakuru, Director of the STD AIDS Control Programme in Sri Lanka, Secretary National AIDS Committee and Consultant Venereologist

It seems that most of the children who are engaged in child prostitution in Sri Lanka are boys. Some of them are as young as seven years unlike in the case of girl prostitutes. But generally the boys seem to take up to prostitution at about the age of 12 and their active service, if you may call it that lasts till about the age of 18-20. Thereafter they are too old for the trade. They move away from the scene and subsequently become Managers and procure younger boys for the same trade. In fact some of them seem to have done pretty well in life and now they are respectable citizens.

A sociologist should make a study as to how extensive child prostitution is because we get to see only the people who get infected with sexually transmitted diseases when they come to us seeking treatment. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. A reputable sociologist has estimated that there are about 30,000 boy prostitutes in Sri Lanka. There is another estimate which places this number at 3,000. I believe that the correct estimate will be something in between.

Apparently Sri Lanka has a world wide reputation for boy prostitution. In fact this country is considered to be a haven for those people who

enjoy sex with children. Two other countries that have the same problem are Philippines (where in Manila they have a large number of boys who are engaged in child prostitution) and Bangkok. But from what I have seen in Bangkok the age group seems to be somewhat older than the children here. There, most of the male prostitutes are young adults rather than children whereas in Sri Lanka it is more or less the children.

Boy prostitutes seem to start on this trade apparently with the tacit consent of the parents. A few sociologists have reported to me that in most cases of child prostitution the parents are in the know and they have given their consent. This is an extraordinary disturbing development and we are trying to communicate with the parents and educate them about the dangers involved.

Boy prostitution is generally prevalent in the areas starting from a little North of Negombo and extending right upto Tangalle. There are also more affluent types coming from richer homes in the suburbs of Colombo. I would say that this trade is fairly wide spread along the western coast line which roughly corresponds to the tourist resort areas. In and around Colombo this seems to be mainly an activity that is patronised by the upper middle class and the middle class children. But in the tourist resort areas like Negombo and Hikkaduwa it's mainly poverty that drives these children into prostitution. There are cases of children who have been sexually

assaulted and abused, becoming prostitutes later. Boy prostitutes mainly cater to tourists. Therefore we have to educate our people about the dangers – specially now with the AIDS epidemic which is widespread in a number of countries. The tourists who come from those countries are a risk group because they may be carrying the AIDS virus.

Child prostitution can have a number of disastrous effects on the victims as well as on other children associating with them. The children who engage in this trade sometimes collect a lot of money and they get used to an affluent life style. This attracts other children too who are known to drop out of school and take to prostitution as a result. Then there's the psychological traumas which these child prostitutes will go through. They may not be able to adjust themselves once they move out of this trade. By that time they would have got addicted to the affluent life style and may be even drugs and as a result they will end up becoming young delinquents. Needless to say this is disastrous not only for the children concerned but also for the society as a whole.

I have not done any studies as such on the sociological aspects of child prostitution and my experience is limited to treating children who get infected with STDs. But based on my discussions with these children and also with sociologists who have carried out studies on these aspects, I tend to think that child prostitution is a highly organised trade. In fact the children are known to be transported from one area to another depending on demand.

As to whether we will be able to overcome the problem of child prostitution, will depend on our health education programmes – the impact it will have on the parents

Contd on page 21

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN



by Sumana Saparamadu

Sumana Saparamadu a graduate of the University of Ceylon with a first class honours degree has been writing books for children since 1957. She's also a regular reviewer of children's books. A working journalist from 1955, she's currently the editor of *Tharuni* and *Athuru Mithuru* a children's weekly.

Many think that tuition and television have weaned children from books, putting an end to leisure-time reading. Tuition, the drag that begins at year 3 in school, has indeed deprived most children of a very pleasant and profitable pastime, for their out-of-school hours are taken by treks to and from "classes". But this is not so in the case of television. On the contrary, teledramas have kindled in many children a desire to read the story enacted on the TV screen. A classic case in point is *Amba Yaluwo*. Another was *Hath Pana*.

Children who master the art of silent reading very early and cultivate the reading habit, read *Hath Pana* and *Amba Yaluwo* and go on to *Madol Duwa* prime favourites - before they leave primary school, despite the egging on by parents to put story books aside and concentrate on the grade 5 scholarship exam.

What of the average child?

What do they read?

What books are there for the under 12s?

How accessible are they to the average child?

Ilangaratna's books including *Amba Yaluwo*, and Wickramasinghe's *Madol Duwa* belong to the category of juvenile literature, which

is outside my purview. I shall confine myself to books in Sinhala for children under twelve.

Under 12 is a wide age group in reading skills, as varied as the backgrounds the children come from. This group can be sub-divided roughly into three groups: from 3-5 years, 5-8 years and 8-12 years, with much over lapping.

In Sri Lanka, children are initiated into reading - අකුරු කියවනවා before they complete the 4th year.

3-5 years is the age of the picture-book, from the initiation into letters until the child starts formal schooling, and the biggest lacuna is here. The only picture books available are the හොඳි පොත් - elementary readers - which teach rather than entertain the child.

Recently when I was browsing in the children's section of a leading bookshop. I heard a well-dressed man who seemed to be in his mid-thirties asking a sales girl for picture-books - පින්තූර පොත්. The salesgirl was puzzled for a moment, and when the man explained that he was looking for books for his little child, the girl replied: "These are all story-books හොඳි පොත් (primers) are on the counter over there".

The only picture books she knew were, obviously, readers for beginners with pictures and words printed in large type. That was to be expected for there are hardly any books of the kind that, that particular father was looking for.

There are no books for that age in a child's life when the parent can sit him on the lap and read the rhymes and jingles, pointing to the pictures in the book and keep him interested, may be, for half an hour. At this age - three plus - the child is already familiar with some of the rhymes and may even be able to repeat the odd phrase.

The only book I was able to pick up from a mound of books, at that bookshop, that came anywhere near a picture-book was Surangani Ellawala's *Tikiri Liya*. The illustrations are animated and the colours bright and gay, with the text, reduced to the bare minimum, set in a type large enough for a little child to decipher. She should have done away with the story of *Bandalage Hava*, and had only the verse, as with *Tikiriliya* and මලලිසි මමයි. The book is priced at Rs. 19.50. Alas!

It is surprising and deplorable that no publishing house has considered it worth spending on an illustrated book of rhymes, jingles and "raban pada" etc. which are plentiful in our oral heritage.

චුටිගේ සෙල්ලමිගේ (Chuti's Playhouse) written and illustrated by Sybil Wettasinghe was a delightful book for the pre-school child. Published in the mid sixties it has long been out-of-print, not because it has had its day, but for reasons of copy right. Some of her verses like කලු මාමිගේ කලු ගොතා have gone out of the playhouse into the national heritage of children's rhymes.

I have seen it published in a children's weekly with no mention of the author, whose name has passed into oblivion as the verses passed from mouth to mouth. Ms. Wettasinghe can take comfort from the knowledge that she has enriched our heritage of oral literature.

The lacuna of picture-books interspersed with rhymes and jingles, and tiny tales for tiny tots, is slightly - very slightly - filled by the weeklies for the pre-school child. But these weeklies are an ill-as-



taken to the song ගුණේ පුකුළු බිලි.

No social changes, or changes in tastes have diminished the popularity of the poems of Munidasa, Cumaratunga, Ananda Rajakaruna and the monk-poet S. Mahinda. Their appeal is ageless. If there is any poet in post-independent Sri Lanka whose compositions come anywhere near the poems of these three writers it is W.A. Abeyasinghe. His *සුඛසාගරය* (Sukhasagara) in his 4th Series, which won the award for the

and illustrated edition of his *සුඛසාගරය* (poems for tiny-tots) or even of some of his more popular poems like *ගුණේ පුකුළු* and *ආනන්ද කවි කාමරය*.

As a child approaches the day when he/she will light his/her 6th candle, the child wants poems that conjure scenes he/she can see with his/her inward eye and stories that are told quickly with things happening, enabling him/her to race along with the author, chuckling or crying.

The years 5-8 have been described as the "in-between age", when the child has out-grown the picture-book but is not yet ready for the long story.

There are books in plenty for the five to eight year olds but quality is in inverse proportion to quantity. Books for this age-group have become a profitable field for the hack writer and the hack publisher.

The impetus to book publication for this group came with the change of the medium of instruction in the primary classes to Sinhala in 1947. This change created a demand for supplementary readers in Sinhala. It was in response to this growing demand that H.D. Sugathapala, then an assistant teacher at the Royal Primary School, and an inspired educator, brought out *කුඩා හරා* (Kuda Hora) to supplement ment his *කවි සිත* readers, which ready opened up a new vista in children's book publication.

Kuda Hora, written and illustrated by Sybil Wettasinghe is a landmark in the history of children's literature (Sinhala), and the watershed in book publication. It set the pattern for children's books for this in-between age. So great was its impact, that 35 years after its publication in 1955, books for the primary school child, came out with



sorted spread of rhymes and stories, words and numerals, purporting to teach the three Rs.

Many books of poems for the pre-school child and the child in the next age group (5-8 years) have been published, but hardly any have seen re-prints. Uninspired, banal versifiers cannot stir a child's imagination and children recognise and reject anything "written down" to them. Some lyric writers have succeeded where the versifier failed. Note how children have

best children's book this year, is a delightful piece, the kind of verse that four and five year olds will love to read aloud and repeat by rote after three or four readings. The illustrations are, alas! beyond the child's level.

Annual pujas are paid to Cumaratunga on his death anniversary and a great tamasha marked his birth centenary (July 1987), but neither his followers nor his heirs, or the Ministry of Cultural Affairs have yet thought of bringing out

rigid uniformity in size, lay-out, appearance, and type of lettering, all conforming to the pattern of Kuda Hora.



Kuda Hora was also a new conception of the children's story-gay, humorous and fun to read. It is the fantastic and improbable happenings that hold the awakening mind in this in-between age, when nothing is impossible, Ms. Wettasinghe's books all have this quality which accounts for the many re-prints. Her *උඩ ගිය බඩ* has seen seven re-prints in 10 years.

The International Year of the Child (1979) was a fillip to aspiring-writers, and more books for this age-group have been published in the 80s than in all the 33 years since the switch over to Sinhala in schools. After IYC came a spate of trivial and imitative stories, uninspired, repetitive and boring and shoddy in lay-out and production.

There is an awareness among parents and teachers of the need for more varied and better children's books, and there are no end of seminars and workshops on book production and writing for children. Prizes are offered for the Best Children's Book of the year, awards ranging from the prestigious Sahitya Award of the Ministry of Culture to National Youth Council Awards, Book Council Awards, and awards by publishing companies. The phrase *සම්මාන දිනූ* 'award winner' is printed on the title page of these books to make them appear to give the best to the child while, in many cases, actually offering the worst.

The 80s brought a flood of the worst and the most tasteless children's story books ever produced in this country. A few exceptions are *ලිකිරි සහ පමයා* written by Krishna Tennakoon, and illustrated

by Surangani Ellawala, Hubert Disanayaka's posthumously published *හින් නුවන* and Viraj Abeynayaka's *පෙන්නප්පු*, the Cultural Council's Award for the 'Best Book' in IYC. Although somewhat didactic-teaching kindness to animals-children will find the unexpected ending most satisfying.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and the National Book Council buy a certain number of books to help writers meet their printing-costs, but has this aid been an incentive to better writing and better book production? My candid opinion is that it has helped many a hack writer and hack publisher.

Parents, teachers and even writers seem to believe that books are not for pure pleasure, that children's reading material must have a purpose, must improve and uplift. They are unable to accept that an imaginative story could exist entirely on its own, without purpose or moral, that it can be read and enjoyed by children without any detrimental effects.

And so the books produced at workshops, and by writers who have participated in workshops and seminars, lack the basic ingredient of a children's story- its readability. A child will read and re-read his favourite books and with each fresh reading his delight is increased instead of dulled.

Who buys these books anyway? Not children. Children never buy books. Do kids have the Rs. 20/- now necessary to pay for a 16 page or 20 page book? These are parent-oriented and teacher-oriented books. The adults are taken in by the large type, the colours, the 'be

good-do good' message and the complete absence of dread and fear.

Parents, grand-parents, aunts and uncles give these book as gifts- books that instruct them in rites they already know, and repeat for children their routines- getting dressed, going to school etc, books that tell simple-minded tales and stories that anthropomorphize animals in maudlin ways. No horror, no wonder, no fantasy.

But the child is enticed by the comics- the *චිත්‍ර කථා*, sneaked into the home by older siblings, which fulfill their thirst for adventure, terror, danger, suspense, fear and fancy. These *චිත්‍ර කථා* are alas, accompanied by sadism and worse, by ghastly writing.

By the time the child has passed his 8th year, if no well-written exciting books have been given him/her, he/she, soon becomes a voracious reader of comics- *චිත්‍ර කථා*.

There are fewer but better books for the last group 8-12 years - fewer because it is not as easy to write a story that runs into 40 or 48 pages as it is to hash up something to fill 12, or 16 pages. So, only these with a love and flair for writing have attempted the longer story.

In an essay such as this written at very short notice, and in the span allowed, one cannot do more than call attention to outstanding books the writer can recall.

One that stands out, in narration, illustration and production, among the books of the 80s, is *සුදු අලියා* by E. Galloluwa.

Lal Premanath de Mel's *වන දරුවෝ* is available but not **Father**

Don Peter's ජනනා දරුවන් a book greatly in demand but, for some unknown reason, not reprinted. Rowen de Costa's පැවරුණු පොත published 30 years ago has seen many reprints, the latest with a jazzed up cover and colour illustrations. Although the title page says it is for grades 2 and 3, it is one of the better books for children in grades 5 and 6.

Cumaratunge wrote his තෝ පුදු පුදු පුදු and ජන පුදු for children in grades 3, 4 and 5 respectively. Children who attended Sinhala schools in the thirties, apparently had the ability to read and the capacity absorb and enjoy what they were offered at those particular age levels, but not the modern child. There is too much 'play-way' in his learning. So they will have to wait until they are in the sixth or seventh year in school, to read these classics.

More than sixty years have passed since Cumaratunge wrote these three stories for children, and they still remain the high water - mark in our children's literature. Animal characters have always been a part of the Sinhala child's world of fancy

viz පැවරුණු පොත, ජන පුදු etc. Cumaratunge went further, anthropomorphising animals as no folk tale has done. පුදු පුදු and ජන පුදු are on par with Kenneth Grahame's 'Wind in the Willows', a world classic.

This then is the standard of the books for sale to day, and the ubiquity of dull, shoddy books, prevents parents and children becoming aware of the good books that have always been available.

How accessible are books to the child who wants to read? Parents will buy books if they are not so highly priced. Witness the rush to bookshops in September-Sahitya Month when books are offered at discount prices. Publishers maintain that with the high cost of paper and the 40% discount demanded by bookshops, it is impossible to price even a 16 page book at less than Rs. 18 or Rs. 20 to-day.

In the bigger schools children have a regular 'library period'. Libraries do exist in rural schools but the present writer's observation is that many Headmasters and Headmistresses are more concerned about the audit checks when they will be answerable for missing books than

with inculcating the reading habit in children.

Why do publishers bring out books so dull in content and shoddy in make-up? Often the text submitted by an aspiring writer and accepted by a publisher, is passed on to the printer for setting. The printer does it his own way or as his fancy dictates, with no thought of the age-group it is intended for.

Ambitious writers are in a hurry to get their books printed and published, and to keep printing costs down, reduce the number of illustrations to the minimum.

When a reviewer comments on the book's unsuitability for children of that particular age group, the writer is piqued: 'a jealous rival has written this review or got it written'.

The lack of unbiased and intelligent reviewing has been one of the principle barriers to better books, to any improvement in the selection of reading material and the production of books for children. It is also one of the main reasons why many parents remain unaware of the better books for the sons and daughters. ■

Contd from page 17.

will be the decisive factor. If the parents can be persuaded to keep the children away from tourists and if they are able to manage economically without the money these children earn through prostitution then this problem can be handled. But if on the other hand the necessary impact of our educational programmes are not felt in these sensitive areas (the coastal belt

from Kochchikade to about Tangalle) and if the parents desperately need the money these children bring in then I suppose this problem will continue. As far as I know there aren't any rehabilitation programmes to help these child prostitutes either.

Finally I must refer to another aspect of child abuse. This involves both male children and female children. We can't blame that on the

tourists or foreigners, it is something that is done by our own people. Most of these people who abuse children sexually are mentally sick. Now that is worrying. I have seen children under one year who have been sexually abused sometimes by the parents and sometimes by close relations and domestics. So the age range is from under one year to about nine or ten years for the type of sexual abuse. ■

(Based on an interview)

STREET CHILDREN – AN OVERVIEW



by-Tyrrell Cooray

The writer was in the Sri Lanka Administrative Service and when he moved out of the public service he was Deputy Commissioner, Probation and Child Care Services. He now works as a Programme Co-ordinator in Early Childhood Development for Save the Children Fund (UK) and has responsibility for the street children project of the Fund.

My name is Raja. I have a brother Sujith, older to me and a sister, Renuka younger to me. My mother, brother and sister moved away from my father about ten years ago. They began to live on the streets. I was with my father for a few years but life was intolerable. Then I joined my mother. We all live on the streets now. I have had six years of schooling. My brother had only two. My sister has never been to school and she is now following classes to make her ready to go to school. I am now 15 years and my brother is 16. We cannot get back to school now. We are now learning a trade in a workshop. We will have our own workshop when we grow up. My mother lives on the charity of other people. When we have a little free time after trade-classes we collect old tin cans and sell them to supplement the family income. We have some money we get while we are learning a trade. Last week the few clothes my brother and I had were stolen. I have a step-father and he ill treats us.

Raja, Sujith and Renuka the names are fictitious but the words are those of a child aged 15 years who live on the streets of Colombo, represent the hundreds of street children in Sri Lanka and of the millions in the world.

Accurate and even recorded statistical data are not available to

assess the magnitude of the problem or the proportion of street children, whether they be children on the street – working children who still have family connections of a more or less regular nature or children of the street to whom the street is the home.

For practical purposes the concept of street child is understood as any minor who appears to be without adequate protection in that the street has become his/her usual abode.

Public attention in our country was focussed on the beggar and vagrant problem for the first time in the early part of the century. According to Sessional Paper XLIX of 1906 there were nearly 700 homeless vagrants mainly of South Indian origin who had been displaced from the estates. The first House of Detention was established on 1 April 1913. In the year 1941 an inter-ministerial conference was held to discuss the beggar problem which was they described as a "social nuisance". An investigation into the problem was mounted in the middle of 1941 but was abruptly terminated in view of urgent matters connected with the war effort.

The House of Detention came to be administered by the Department of Social Services which was established on the recommendations of the Social Services Commission of 1947.

A study done by Redd Barna in 1986 on the situation of 228 street children in three main areas in the city of Colombo where street children concentrate showed that 63 per cent of them belonged to the 11-15 years age group. Most of the children were in the critical school going age of 6 to 15 years.

FINDINGS

Some of the main findings of the survey are (1) the majority of the street children are drawn into the street world from the poverty stricken areas of the city and its suburbs. (2) the problem in the family environment and related economic difficulties have pushed a considerable number of children into the streets. (3) most of the parents were engaged in extremely low income jobs that do not provide them with the capacity to support families (4) large number of street children have not a formal education (5) many street children are engaged in occupations which provide them with meagre daily income for which they had to toil hard (6) many children want to learn and acquire skills and engage in productive professions (7) many of them want to learn and engage in productive occupations.

A survey mounted by the Colombo Municipal Council in April 1988 showed a total of 1651 persons on the streets of Colombo of which number 1148 were single individuals while 503 were in family units.

There is no legal provision in Sri Lanka which entails a prohibition on begging. However some of the provisions of the Vagrants Ordinance implies a prohibition on begging. The Ordinance says "every person being able to maintain himself by work or other means, but who shall wilfully refuse or neglect so to do, and shall wander

abrad or place himself in any public place, street, highway, court, or passage to beg or gather alms, or cause or procure, or encourage any of his family so to do, excepting priests and pilgrims in performance of their religious vows shall be deemed an idle and disorderly persons. Such persons are liable to be punished."

PROJECTS

Agencies and projects in different parts of the world address the issue of street children and street youth in different ways. In our own country The House of Detention at Gangodawila and Ridiyagama (Dept. of Social Services) and the House of Detention formerly at Koggala and presently at Hikkaduwa (Dept. of Probation and Child Care) are the only government sponsored institutions offering residential facilities for those who fall into the category of vagrant. The definition of the term vagrant under the provisions of the House of Detention Ordinance is (a) any person found asking for alms (b) any persons not being physically able to earn, or being unwilling to work for his own livelihood and having no visible means of subsistence. A non-governmental agency - Badulla Social Services District Committee offer a sort of night shelter and rehabilitation facilities for street families.

The House of Detention at Hikkaduwa is exclusively for children while Gangodawila offers facilities for children and older groups. These institutions offer rehabilitation measures to those who come into residence with a view to integrating them into the wider society.

Save the Children Fund (UK), Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children Fund), the Colombo City



Mission a group of religious nuns (the Sisters of Perpetual Help) and the Dept of Probation and Child Care Services offer non-residential facilities for street children. Redd Barna the City Mission and DPCCS work in Colombo, UK Save work in Colombo and Kandy and the religious nuns work in Negombo. Activities include day care for under-fives, literacy classes for non-schoolers and school drop-outs, skills development for older children, health care, and income generation. Programmes are designed and implemented by these agencies as re-educational strategies to alter attitudes of dependency and wean these children away from negative ways of life. A way out is offered to hundreds of helpless victims of circumstances. A fair chance is given to them to escape permanently from their current state of dependency and shape their own future. Another objective of these programmes is to change the attitude of harsh indifference of the wider society and get a humane response.

These programmes are based on the voluntary participation of street people and there is no coercion. The facilities are provided on a non-residential basis. They use an enabling strategy based on participation. The beneficiaries of the project will not receive charity but will become partners in the form of aided help - help. Of course, the starting point are the immediate needs of the child - food, shelter, protection, care and an opportunity for a better future.

An attempt is made to answer the requirements of the child in the most urgent areas including safety, health, nutrition, emotional devel-

opment and vocational training. Access is facilitated to schooling and medical assistance. The project would teach the children an honest job and enable them to earn a reasonable wage that would carry the child into adulthood. These programmes aim to develop in the youngest the capacity to judge the adult world around him/her critically.

These agencies offer shelter, care, education and training, in various combinations. They are aware that these street children and street youth have been deprived - perhaps cruelly cheated - of some aspects of normal childhood and early development and an attempt is made to restore to these victims of circumstances in some measure those aspects.

These combinations are part of the total attempt to assist and guide the family in the building of a dwelling with regular employment and a home of their own.

SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

What is evident from studies and from the experience of people working with street families is that this is a mounting problem. The children inhabit the streets in search of money to support themselves and frequently to assist in the support of their families as well. Poverty, difficult living conditions in the home and family fragmentation could be identified as the main causes of their being on the streets.

The majority of street children have families. But these families are unable or unwilling to meet the basic needs of their offsprings. As a consequence the older boys and the girls must leave their home to look for some way to produce income. They have to spend long hours working and living on the

streets. These children have their own troubles. It is not comfortable to sleep on the hard, dirty pavement. While they are on the streets they are without the protection of the family and the community. They are therefore, very vulnerable not only to economic exploitation but they are exposed to sexual exploitation as well and serious physical and moral dangers. The situation of the girls in its scope and gravity are more pronounced than that of the boys.

These marginalized children are often seen as petty thieves, hooligans, good-for-nothings, ruffians and parasites. This may be true in certain cases but certainly not true in all cases. They are struggling for survival; they are carving for affection, they have no aim in life and they are trying to identify with their parents, family and community. Street children and street youth live from hand to mouth, from one moment to the next. As a result some of the areas in which they are totally lacking are respect for property, self discipline and the idea of planning over time. On the streets these children meet their peers and this allows compensation for emotional and other forms of deprivation. The street allows a variety of experiences. All this means that these children mature too quickly for their age and emotional level.

The removal of a child from his/her accustomed environment can be a response. This has been a conventional response at that. To separate a child from his home and community and to place him/her in a situation of total dependency can only increase his/her social isolation. Moreover he/she will lose even the street skills that help him/her make his/her way in a harsh and often hostile world. He/she will return to the same situation in which he/she was and he/she will be less



able to deal with it. Marginalized children need more access to more of the community and its resources.

An alternative response is to discover ways to help street children lead a productive and healthy life in their own environment. Their ties to family and community could be reinforced and this would break their isolation. They could be provided with the means and the services necessary to develop their own initiatives and build a future for themselves.

OUTCOMES

It is a productive exercise to make provision in all programmes for the children to be heard and to participate to some degree in the planning of activities for them. This course of action helps them in breaking down their sense of isolation and allows them a place for them to develop their own initiatives. The thrust then is not to direct the children but gently guide him into positive opportunities and this is what any wise parent would do.

There are people who care about these children. There are people who believe that all children irrespective of where they are have a right to a happy childhood. The work these people do is demanding. This work demands considerable interest time and dedication. Work with street people require a rare degree of courage, initiative and perseverance. Any programme, strategy or mechanism established to help these children must enjoy credibility by both the community in which they are situated and the children they serve.

Work with street children in many parts of the world not including our

own country has shown that a community-based approach is possible—an approach that helps children develop and succeed in the context of their own families and communities. There is no need to be bound to a narrow model. There is a great deal of flexibility possible. Of course, within diversity these are commonalities.

We would identify some outcomes one would expect to be produced in work with street children. These outcomes could be grouped as (1) physical outcomes such as (i) improvement in general health obtained mainly through adequate nutrition and access to curative and preventive health care, and (ii) access to shelter and clothing (2) emotional outcomes—access to adults accepted by the child and who serve as positive role-models to whom the child could relate and with whom he/she could establish feelings of affection and respect for adults who would stimulate his/her self-esteem and identity. (3) educational/intellectual outcomes such as (i) school attendance until at least functional literacy and other skills for independent living are attained. (ii) development of a critical capacity sufficient for questioning and judging reality and judging the world around him and finally (4) economic outcomes—improvement of income through organized work while providing protection against exploitation and moral dangers with the added result of contributions by the child to the improvement in the material quality of life of the family.

The thrust in a programme strategy for street children is to help children take themselves from marginalization to full participation and personal development.

Street children have to be given a chance to help create themselves.

Contd on page 25

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND REHABILITATION OF CHILDREN



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Commissioner of Probation and
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Children tend to become delinquents due to lack of proper guidance and adequate protection. Therefore, a programme at national level to rehabilitate such children are very much in need today. Advice was sought from Great Britain in this regard, and Mr. J. V. Hill, a child specialist from the country, came to Sri Lanka in 1952 and started a programme of rehabilitation of delinquents. In order to extend this programme a Department of Probation and Child Care was set up in 1956.

Mr. Hill introduced the system of certified schools in Sri Lanka for delinquents by starting the Certified School at Hikkaduwa. Its aim was to admit children between the years of 12 to 16 who had got involved in illegal activities. This

was to be done through a legal process and the object was to mould the character of these children on a positive way.

A pilot programme concentrating on juvenile delinquents scattered throughout the island was implemented at Hikkaduwa. By 1960 the number of juvenile delinquents thus admitted reached 736.

It was difficult to rehabilitate such a large number of children in one institution. Therefore, seven certified schools were set up subsequently at different places in the island. Local officials were sent to Great Britain and were trained to carry on with the management.

At this time the most serious offence committed by child delinquents was acts of minor thefts. Minor offences included disobedience to parents, aggressiveness, addiction to smoke, ticketless travel in trains, loitering and running away from school. Therefore simple guidance was adequate to rehabilitate those children. Rehabilitation was also effective because there were adequate human and maternal resources.

Though rehabilitation project was very popular at the beginning from 1979 onwards there has been a speedy decline of such projects as indicated by the following data.

Year	No. of certified Schools	No. of inmates
1979	7	308
1981	5	272
1982	5	180
1983	5	168
1984	6	173
1985	5	162
1986	4	149
1987	3	138
1988	3	109
1989	4	102
1990	3	78

These data show how Certified Schools have been closed down from year to year and how the number of child offenders benefiting from rehabilitation decreased. There has not been a corresponding decline in juvenile delinquency.

A major reason for this state of affairs the laws have not been changed adequately with the pass of time. Although the laws and regulations relating to many other spheres of activity have been revised to suit the requirements of the times, the laws relating to juvenile delinquents have not been revised for the last forty five years. Under the provisions of the law only a police officer or the relevant officer of the Municipal Council (in the case of a city) can arrest a child delinquent and bring him/her before a court of law. Due to this shortcoming in the law the number of juvenile delinquents who are subjected to rehabilitation is going down steadily.

Contd from page 24

The question is do we have to offer services to these young people or do we have to serve them?

Security and a healthy environment coupled with proper understanding of their problems can make a street child or street youth to be indistinguishable from his more fortunate contemporaries. It is said that when nature and nurture are reconciled, youngsters with the grimiest histories can show an astonishing power of recuperation.

There should be close coordination between the police, the judiciary, the prisons and the Department of Probation and Child Care. But unfortunately the reality is from this. In fact, the coordination that should exist especially between the prisons and the Probation Department appears to be declining in the recent times. According to the provision in the law every delinquent child of less than sixteen years must be sent to a certified school. Instead more and more such children are being sent to prison as its shown in the table.

Year	Male	Females	Total
1983	927	121	1,048
1984	808	113	921
1985	485	78	513
1986	453	96	549
1987	486	91	577

Source: Administrative Report of the Prison Department (1987)

Due to the shortening in the law, relating to child delinquents these 3,668 children have been deprived of their fundamental rights. The law specifies that children should not be kept with adult prisoners because they might be subjected to molestation by the adults or might start imitating the adults. But this condition has not been fulfilled.

The manner in which young children become delinquents has changed greatly. Today city streets have become training camps for juvenile delinquents. The tendency of mothers to leave their children and seek foreign employment, the homosexual practices which have invaded the country mainly due to tourism, and the use of narcotics have created fertile breeding grounds for juvenile delinquency. Although new delinquent tendencies have emerged among the young, legal provisions or programmes to combat those tendencies have not come into existence.



Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation

A major challenge to young children today is narcotics. Thousands are addicted to drugs although reliable statistics are not available. The

Age Group	Year 1983	Year 1984	Year 1985	Year 1986	Year 1987
22-30	913	1,097	1,133	1,407	1,294
30-40	698	709	748	957	823
40-50	312	314	286	573	388
50-60	177	169	118	13	172
Above 60	86	90	63	8	80
	2,186	2,381	2,348	3,138	2,837

number of these getting addicted is rising rapidly but there are no institutions to provide these with the necessary treatment. It is questionable whether the volunteer organisations which provide services have any sympathy for these people. However, society must pay attention to these persons.

There are no suitable institutions in which children below 16 years who are addicted to narcotics can receive indoor treatment. The available non-government institutions are not at all adequate. About 50% of child prisoners are drug addicts. This situation is likely to get worse in the future. Therefore it is essential to make use of the funds allocated for the purpose and to create new means of treatment.

Another major fact for delinquency is illiteracy. The levels of literacy of those who have been identified as juvenile delinquents are as follows:

1. Those who never went to school 16%
 2. Those who went to school for two or three years but are illiterate 64%
 3. Those who have received primary education and can write their name 18%
 4. Those who have gone to school upto the 8th year 02%
- 100%

What these statistics prove is that illiteracy and ignorance have greatly contributed to child delinquency.

Another fact or contribute to delinquency is the mother being sent to prison for some offence. The number of mothers who were imprisoned in the last few year as follows:



The children of such mothers deprives of these cases and protection go astray and most of them end up by becoming servants of the underworld and later a delinquents. Imprisonment of mothers, more than that of fathers, affects young children adversely.

Those families troubled by quarrels and disunity in the family, imprisonment of mother or father, or death or remarriage of mother or father are identified as disorganised families. These disorganised families also have become a serious contributory factor to the spread of juvenile delinquency.

A change in type

In the act the juvenile delinquents came from uneducated families. A

Contd. on page 39

THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA



By H. L. Hemachandra
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Introduction

Article 27 of Sri Lanka's Constitution states "Complete eradication of illiteracy and assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels."

All successive Sri Lankan governments since Independence have launched various programmes to improve school enrolment and to reduce educational disparities. These include free education from the Kindergarten to University, expansion of education through a network of primary and secondary schools spread throughout the island, introduction of mother tongue as a medium of instruction at all levels, provision of scholarships, common curriculums including Science and English; and provision of free text books and mid day meal. These programmes have contributed to the rapid expansion in school enrolment over the last five decades.

In 1989 about 2.1 million children were enrolled from school year 1 to year 5 and about 1.4 million children were enrolled from school year 6 to year 10. Total number of children who were in school from school year 1 to 10 in that year was about 3.5 million. School participation rate among children in compulsory school going age group of 5-14 years have increased from 57.6% in 1946 to 71.6% in 1953 and 75.1% in 1963 and decreased to 65.3% in 1971 and again increased to 83.7% in 1981. This indicates a general increase of 26.1% in school participation among 5-14 years age group over the past three-and-a-half decades. The decrease in

1971 was mainly due to the change in the minimum school admission age. School participation rate of 15-19 age group has increased by about four fold from about 11% in 1946 to about 42% in 1981.

Apart from this general increase at national level there have been improvements in enrolment at the level of sub sectors of gender, age, geographical sectors and districts - see Table 1 and 2. However, school participation rates in almost all the districts in Northern

and Eastern provinces would have come down during the last few years owing to the violent conflict in those areas.

Disparities in school participation among the sub groups have also gone down over the last few decades. For instance hardly any difference can be seen in school enrolment between boys and girls. This goes for urban and rural children as well.

Despite all these positive developments Sri Lanka is still far from achiev-

ing universal level of school participation among children in 5-14 age group. In 1981 16% or one out of every 5 children within this age group was not in school. Further 50% or 8 out of every 10 children of 15-19 age group were out of school. There seems to be a stagnation or a slight decrease in child literacy in 1980's. Literacy rate of children within 10-14 age group has decreased by 1% from 89.8% in 1981 to 88.8% in 1985/86.

During the same period literacy rate of those who are within 15-19 age group has decreased by 1.4%. (See table 3).

Non admittance and dropouts

Children who are not attending school can be divided into two main categories - children who have not been admitted to school and school drop outs. In 1985/86 of the children within 5-14 age group 13% had not been admitted to

Table 1
Percentage of Children Attending School by Age Group and Sex 1971 & 1981

Age Group	1971				1981			
	All Island	Male	Female	Difference	All Island	Male	Female	Difference
5-14	66.8	66.6	66.7	0.1	83.7	83.8	83.7	0.1
15-19	31.5	36.5	22.4	14.1	41.2	41.2	42.7	-1.5

Source: Census of Population and Housing 1971 and 1981.

school or had not received any school education (See table 4). However part of these children who belong to 5-9 age group were admitted to school later as late comers. Children who had not received school education till they reached 10 years of age generally will never be admitted to the school in the future. In 1985/86 of the total number of children within 10-14 age group 4.2% had not received any school education. In 15-19 age group this percentage was 8.5.

During the School Census year 1985/87 4.25% of the total student popula-

Table 2
Percentage of Children Attending School by Age Group and Sex 1971 & 1981

Age Group	1971				1981			
	All Island	Urban District	Rural District	Difference	All Island	Urban District	Rural District	Difference
5-9	66.8	66.6	66.7	0.1	83.7	83.8	83.6	0.2
10-14	31.5	36.5	22.4	14.1	41.2	41.2	41.0	0.2
15-19	31.5	36.5	22.4	14.1	41.2	41.2	40.8	0.4

Source: Census of Population and Housing 1971 and 1981.

tion from school year 1 to 9 (which corresponds to the 5-14 age group) had dropped out. (See table 5). This rate varied from year to year. Relatively



Reasons for Non Schooling

At the national level analysis many studies indicated that the main reason for children not attending school are the cost and the opportunity cost of education. Mass poverty prevent the utilization of available educational facilities. Although free education, text books and midday meals are provided, it is difficult for poor parents to spend money on children's admission fees, facilities fees, clothes, stationery and other requirements.

The existence of child labour in its various forms is another factor which prevents these children from schooling. The drop out rate is higher among boys than among girls mainly because more employment opportunities are available for boys than for girls.

Lack of adequate interest on the part of parents or guardians is another main reason for children not attending school. Indifference towards education is linked to the low educational level of these adults and their awareness as to how to use the educational facilities available in their areas.

Table 4
Percentage of Children Who were illiterate by Age Group and Sex, 1984 and 1985

Age Group	Sex	1984		1985		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
6-8	Male	28.5	23.0	28.8	23.8	26.3
	Female	27.7	24.0	28.4	24.2	26.1
9-14	Male	25.1	17.8	24.9	20.0	22.5
	Female	25.7	21.8	26.0	21.0	23.4

Source: Census of Population and Housing 1984
Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey 1985/86

a large percentage of children leave the school system after G.C.E. (O.L.) and G.C.E. (A.L.) examinations. This reveals that drop out rates are higher among older children. The drop out rate among boys is higher than among girls - unlike other Asian and developing countries. In addition to non enrolment there is an educational wastage consisting of repetition and absenteeism. These incidences take place more among children from poor socio-economic background attending schools which have relatively less facilities.

The enrolment rate is at a low level at the beginning of the school admission age - 5 years. After the peak level at age 8 enrolment rate begins to decrease due to increasing drop out rates and absence of new admissions.

Since the education of children is highly emphasised in Sri Lanka for proper development of literacy and numeracy, all children should complete primary education. Any changes in the enrolment rate at primary level, particularly at early primary level, reflect corresponding changes in the literacy rate in the same age group currently and in younger age groups in the future. School education develops skills and provide a foundation for self learning. Therefore children who do not complete at least primary education lose these opportunities of acquiring knowledge and information which will serve to improve the quality of their lives. To obtain any vocational training successfully primary or secondary education is a pre requirement,

Therefore a child who does not complete primary education becomes relatively more disadvantaged even at the lowest level of the labour market.

Contrary to the general trends there are pockets in the country consisting of children who are most disadvantaged - economically and educationally such as urban slums and shanties, estates, settlements and remote villages. A study

Table 4
Percentage of Children who had never been to school by Age Group, Sex and Site, 1984

Age Group	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
6-8	21.0	21.1	22.0	24.0	21.5	22.6
9-14	22.2	22.5	24.4	27.0	23.3	24.8
Total	21.6	21.8	23.2	25.5	22.4	24.2

Source: Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey 1985/86

on the educational needs of non-school going children of selected slums and shanties in Colombo city in 1984 shows that 19.3% of the sample of children within 6-8 age group and 9.8% of children within 9-14 age group had never been to school. A similar study conducted in a set of inferior villages (old villages and colonies) in 1985 reveals that 14.4% of the children within 6-8 age group and 19.9% of the children within 9-14 age group were not in school. According to the Labour Force and Socio-economic Survey 1985/86 in the estate sector 46.6% of the 5-9 age group and 24.9% of 10-14 age group had never been to school.

Table 5
Dropout Rates by School year in government Schools 1986/87

School year	Male	Female	Total
2	0.71	1.07	0.89
3	2.16	2.05	2.12
4	3.40	2.69	3.06
5	5.85	4.52	5.21
6	6.67	5.30	6.01
7	7.60	4.96	6.30
8	7.14	5.29	6.21
9	8.24	8.03	7.11
2-5	2.30	2.50	2.42
6-9	7.12	5.18	6.17
2-9	4.74	4.73	4.73

Source: School Census 1987, Ministry of Education



Health facilities too contribute to the non-attending of children. It is estimated that 0.5% and 11.8% of the children in the 0-11 age group are suffering from acute malnutrition and chronic malnutrition respectively. These percentages for those who are in the 12-23 age group are 10.8% and 24.8%. Poverty and indifference of parents have a strong impact on child malnutrition. Provision of mid-day meal in the form of biscuits, kola-konda (and later granting money for mid-day meal) to school-going children has not yet had the desired impact on strengthening their nutritional status.

Inadequacies of the formal education system too contribute to keeping children out of school. Children of low income families are mostly concentrated in disadvantaged schools - schools without proper material facilities, a qualified teaching staff and adequate sanitary facilities. In addition to these, class room environment and teaching methods in these schools are unattractive to retain pupils. Though such schools can be seen in both the urban sector and the rural sector they are more common in remote areas and estates. The long distance between the school and home in remote villages also contribute to children (particularly small children who are too young to walk long distances alone) not being able to attend school. Though 95% of the 9805 schools in the country have primary classes, nearly 15% of primary school-going age children have no schools within two miles of their homes. (1989 figures)

In settlements and in some rural areas where paddy cultivation is the main economic activity a child is a high valuable economic input. Since school calendar is not adjusted according to the economic activities, high absenteeism is recorded during peak cultivation seasons in these areas. This also results in these children dropping out from school at early stages. In estates, there is a high demand for children as paid labour and domestic workers. Schools in this sector generally have only primary grades. These result in low school enrolment / participation and early drop outs.

Absence of parents as a result of death, migration to Middle East for employment and desertion also adversely affects the schooling of children - especially in the socially and economically disadvantaged families. Non-availability of Birth Certificates for children is a common incidence in these families and as a result children are not admitted to school at all. Low aspirations, negative feelings towards education and lack of hope about the future of their children are relatively higher among these parents. The educational level and occupation of parents, home environment and material facilities available and the size of the family are also contributory factors.

Non Formal Education

Non formal education can play a very important role among these children who are not going to school. In 1981 the Non Formal Education Unit of the Ministry of Education introduced a non formal education programme - part time 'literacy classes' for out of school children. However, by now the number of these centres has increased only upto 325 and a large percentage of them are limited to low income neighbourhoods in the Colombo city. Therefore only about 12% of out of school children in the country benefit from these centres. An evaluation of these centres in 1980 revealed that the drop out rates in these centres were as high as 28% (at level II) and 78% (at level III). The rapid expansion and development of these centres is needed today.

Pre Schools

Pre-schools prepare children for their next stage school by developing their attitudes and psychological abilities to adapt to the new environment in the school. In Sri Lanka though pre-schools are expanding and at present they cater to less than 25% of the children within pre school going age group of 1-4 years. While most of these institutions are conducted by private sector and non-governmental organizations, majority of the best pre schools are limited

to upper class and middle class children in the urban areas. The majority of the children of pre school going age in socially and economically disadvantaged families in the rural sector and estate sector do not have this opportunity. Even in the available pre schools in these sectors most of the teachers do not have any training or the adequate knowledge and skills. Since there is a clear gap between school environment and home environment of disadvantaged and under privileged families in these sectors, lack of proper pre school facilities contributes to the high rate of early school drop outs among these children.

Tuition

Over the last decade tuition classes for school children have rapidly expanded. Earlier tuition was given to a very limited number of children for the subjects only in which their performance was inadequate. But today the majority of school going children (even from early primary grades) attend tuition classes - sometimes for all the subjects they learn in school. Peak levels of participation in tuition are at Grade 4 (School year 5) where the government examinations are held to select children for scholarship and in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 where the children prepare for G.C.E. (O.L.) and G.C.E. (A.L.) examinations. This type of mass participation in tuition is partly a result of increased competition for the limited number of opportunities for higher education and for jobs. Tuition also has become a fashion and a psychological need of both parents and children to a certain extent. According to a study on tuition in 1982 children in high income families in urban areas have access to more efficient tuition than their counterparts.

Most of the tuition classes prepare children for examinations and train them to learn things for a short period of time instead of developing their knowledge properly. Since tuition takes up a considerable time in a child's life the child has no time for leisure, recreation and for the development of other skills. Thus the way it is currently constructed the tuition system partly distorts the school system.

Contd. on page 39

THE GULF CRISIS THE WORLD AND THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY: SOME REFLECTIONS

By Ariya Abeysinghe

Mr. Abeysinghe an economist, worked in the Ministries of Industries, Fisheries, Plantations, Planning, Agriculture, Coconut and Housing in his long career in the public service. He also worked as a FAO Consultant in Rome and a UNIDO Consultant in Tanzania. He also served as special adviser to the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Mr. Solomon Manaluni. Currently he is the Director of Agricultural Planning in the Ministry of Land, Irrigation and Mahaweli, as well as a Visiting Lecturer in Economics in the Universities of Sri Jayawardenapura, and Colombo.

The Background

The Middle East is the natural crossroads of the "old world" or the Afro-Eurasian land mass and the new world - Europe. It is also the "land of the seven seas". Its main resource is oil. About two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves are in this area. Middle East is also a living mosaic of physical types, beliefs, systems, languages and cultures.

On August 2, the Iraqi army entered into the neighbouring Kuwait and occupied that tiny oil rich sultanate. Indeed as events unravelled from day to day at an alarming pace, it was crystal clear that no nation would be left untouched by this move. Saudi Arabia's rulers fearful that Saddam would attack them next agreed to an American request for troop deployment. Refugees began pouring across borders to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, India, the Philippines, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Thus events in the Gulf is and will continue to affect Third World countries like Sri Lanka deeply.

The Beginning of the End of the Age of Oil

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait will go down in human history as the beginning of the end of the Age of Oil.

A historic shift is in the air. Disorder in the Persian Gulf is looking more like the norm than the exception. The world is realizing that it cannot rely exclusively on Middle East oil. Therefore, the world will most likely respond to this crisis with a concerted hunt for alternatives, starting with non-OPEC oil. That's logical, because the dark goo that provides 39% of the world's energy, more than any other sources, will be a staple of the global economy for decades. Neither coal, which is the second largest energy provider with 28% of natural gas, with 21% can quickly replace oil, particularly as a transportation fuel.

But explores aren't likely to find enough new oil resources to make OPEC a non factor in world energy. After the oil price hikes of the 70's, the industry mounted a rig-spinning exploration and development campaign outside OPEC that produced some new suppliers, mainly Mexico, Alaska and the North Sea. This together with conservation, brought down the prices of oil in 1986. But then the demand revived and non-OPEC countries oil production could not keep pace with this increasing demand. When oil consuming countries wanted

growth, they had to draw once more from the wells of OPEC. And they have been returning in such numbers recently that cartel's spare capacity has dwindled from 12 million or 13 million barrels a day in the mid '80s to 4 million. Thus governments and consumers will probably become more willing to pay a premium for non-oil energy such as natural gas and coal, within their own borders, with a view to maximising control of their energy sources. The most likely consequence would be a long, slow ascendance of natural gas which is more available than oil and is evenly distributed globally. (See Table 1)

Table I
OIL VS GAS

WHO HAS THE MOST

Share of World Reserves in	Oil	Gas
Middle East	65.2%	30.7%
Latin America	12.5%	5.8%
USSR and E. Europe	5.9%	38.3%
Africa	5.9%	6.7%
Asia including		
Australia/NZ	4.5%	7.1%
North America	4.2%	6.5%
W. Europe	1.8%	4.9%

Source: Fortune 1990 Sept.

An U.N. embargo against Iraq-Kuwait, if effective will remote around 4 million barrels of crude and refined products a day from a world market that consumes about 65 million barrels a day. There is enough spare capacity in Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E. and Venezuela to make up the shortfall. Since there is a need to avoid dislocation, oil companies are raising oil prices and prices are likely to set around \$ 25-30 per barrel for some time.

After that there are two possible outcomes.

- (a) A relatively uneventful siege of Iraq followed by a peaceful resolution and a return to the status quo.
- (b) A shooting war breaks out disrupting Saudi Arabia's production of 5 million barrels a day or the Emirates 2 million barrels or both. This would create the world's first serious crude oil shortage since World War II and drive prices to unpredictable heights.

The USA is the most drilled-up land on earth with 600,000 of the world's 900,000 producing wells. An average well produces about 15 barrels a day in the US vs 0,000 barrels a day in Saudi Arabia. Oil production fell in USA in 1989 by 6% and imports accounted for around 50% of US needs compared with less than 30% in 1985. The world can use several strategies to overcome the shortage of oil.

- (a) Increasing exploration and development
- (b) Stepping up conservation
- (c) Switching to alternative fuels
- (d) Develop national energy strategies and policies
- (e) Promotion of natural gas as a fuel for fleets or cars and trucks
- (f) Improve the gasoline efficiency of cars
- (g) Raise tax on gasoline say at US 5 cents per year per litre for the next 20 years
- (h) Boost research into alternative sources of energy
- (i) Expand the strategic petroleum reserve.

Many nations will be considering similar options in the years ahead and their collective actions is likely to create massive changes in the energy business. The oil industry will embark on its last great hunt. BP estimates that of the 1,300 sedimentary oil basins in the world, 300 remain unexplored because they were too remote or because politics, had placed them off limits.

Both conditions are changing. Technology is bringing far off bas-

ins such as those of ocean beds of upto a mile within reach.

Table I

OIL GIANTS EXPORTS	Revenue - US\$ Billion	Profits - US\$ Billion
EXXON	Revenue - US\$ 60 billion	Profits - US\$ 11 billion
MOBIL	Revenue - US\$ 51 billion	Profits - US\$ 11 billion
ROYAL DUTCH SHELL (UK/Neth)	Revenue - US\$ 45.5 billion	Profits - US\$ 5 billion
BRITISH PETROLEUM (UK)	Revenue - US\$ 42.5 billion	Profits - US\$ 4 billion

Source: Fortune 1991 Sept.

Table II

Exporter	Proved Reserve (1000 bbl)	Main Markets
Mexico	24,000	US 20%, Spain 16%, Japan 9%, France 8%, Brazil 2%
Canada	8,900	US 56%, Japan 0.7%, Mexico 2.2%
Venezuela	58,100	US 44%, N. Japan 11%, Germany 9%, Canada 5%
Ecuador	300	S. Korea 83%, US 21%, Puerto Rico 14%, Panama 1%
Colombia	2,200	N.A.
Argentina	2,800	N.A.
Nigeria	13,600	23% US 11% Spain 6% Germany 5% France 5% Greece 5% Italy 3% Japan 3% Germany 1% Ecuador 1% France 1% Greece
Angola	2,000	N.A.
Egypt	4,300	N.A.
Algeria	4,400	33% Italy 15% Spain 14% Germany 10% US 7% France
Saudi Arabia	258,000	11% France 10% Brazil 11% US 2% Korea
Iraq	100,000	14% Japan 11% US 8% France 8% Bahrain 5% Singapore
Iran	160,000	11% US 10% Italy 15% Turkey 11% Japan 7% USSR 7%
UAE	48,000	Ukraine 14% Japan 11% Singapore
UAE	98,000	Turkey 7% Bahrain 1%
Kuwait	94,500	Japan 47% Italy 7% Singapore 1%
Qatar	1,200	US 5% S. Korea 5%
		Japan 27% Brazil 17% US 11%
		Iran 2% Brazil 1% S. Korea 1%
		Japan 58% France 1%

Source: Fortune 1991 Sept.

Table IV

IMPORTS OF OIL

Country	Annual Amount (Millions of bbls)	Imports as a % of total Consumption
Brazil	223	53
Chile	30	66
USA	2,421	45
Germany	674	97
France	483	96
Italy	461	93
N'lards	352	94
Spain	338	97
Belgium	172	99
Sweden	104	95
Czechoslovakia	120	99
Poland	110	99
Hungary	62	82
Japan	1,191	99
S. Korea	261	100
Singapore	252	100
India	130	38
Philippines	74	97

Table V

Iraq's and Kuwait's main oil importers

US	Imports	7% of its oil from Iraq	2% from Kuwait
Brazil	38%	5%	
France	9%	0	
Italy	13%		
N'lards		14%	
Spain	10%		
Belgium	8%		
Japan		6%	
S. Korea		4%	
Singapore		2%	
India	20%		
Philippines		10%	

Source: UN / OPEC Publication Oil & Gas
Journal International Energy Agency

The Gulf Crisis and Sri Lanka

With this background a Third World developing country like Sri Lanka which is totally dependent on imports of oil and gas and exports of tea and on migrant workers earnings would find it difficult to meet the sudden economic and social catastrophe created by the Gulf crisis.

Gulf Crisis and Foreign Aided Projects

Kuwait along with Japan and the World Bank has funded the tertiary irrigation works in Zone 3 to 6 in System C of the Mahaweli. The

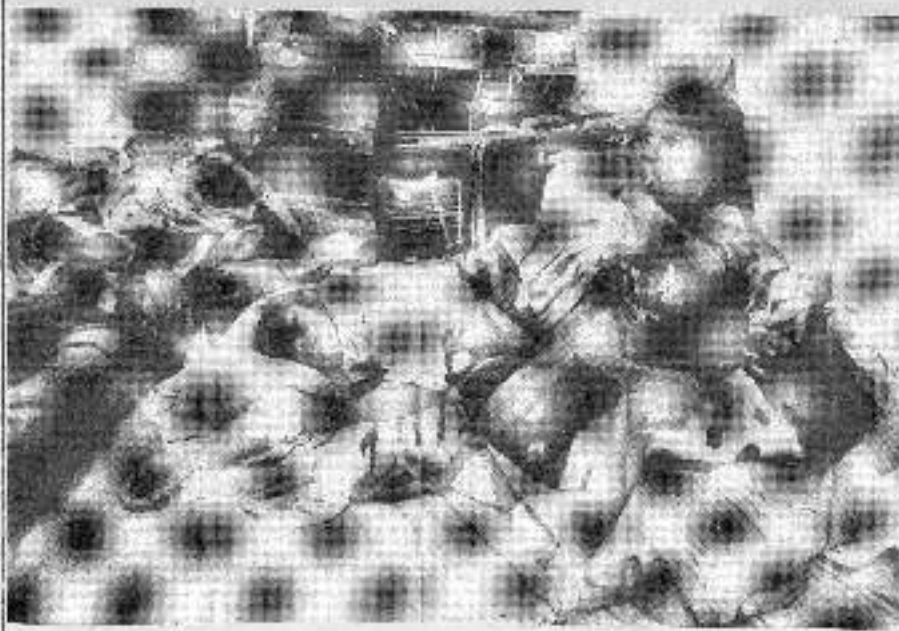
total loan works out to Rs 8.4 billion (US\$ 263 million) of which Kuwait has already disbursed KD 9.4 million and a sum KD 3.5 million is yet to be received from the Kuwait Fund. The loan is valid till 1993. Japan has loaned through the OECF £7,700 million, £ 2,950 million as loan/credit and Rs 3,300 million as Food Aid. Nearly 95-100% of this has been used. The IDA has disbursed Rs 4,068.15 million (73.3 SDR million) as loans of which 67% has been used and 24.5 million SDR are remaining to be used.

68% of the loan from Kuwait Fund has been used. Loan funds are

used to complete downstream irrigation infrastructure in zone 3 and 4, development of blocks 409 and 410. D Canals and F Canals in Zones 5 and 6. Rough levelling, jungle clearing, on farm development improvements to the drainage system, water management training, O & M settlement of 17,200 new farm families are planned under this loan. The benefit accrued so far have been in paddy cultivation in Zones 3-6 from Yala 1988. The area cultivated has increased from 7,711 ha in Yala 1988 giving a yield per ha of 4.1 tons and a production of 30,179 metric tons of paddy to 9,825 ha in Maha 1989/90 with average yields of 4.7 per tons/ha yielding 43,869 metric tons of paddy. Other field crops includes 400 ha in Yala 1989 with chillies (140 ha), red onions (65 ha), cowpea, green gram, big onions (35 ha). There were about 9,342 farmers in Yala 1989 cultivating these crops. The Gulf Crisis makes the disbursement from Kuwait of KD 3.5 million doubtful but the shortfall may be financed by one of the other parties. If Kuwait as a country is wiped out and Iraq only treats it as a province Sri Lanka has no obligation to pay back its KD loan to Iraq since Iraq has no commitment under the loan. If it is written off Sri Lanka could gain by about KD 9.4 million.

Gulf Crisis and the Tea Market

Sri Lanka produces about 207million (1989) to 213.3 million (1987) kgs of tea from an area of 222,000 ha. High grown tea constitutes 35.7% of the total production, low grown 40.04% and medium grown 24.15%. Nearly 204.2 million kgs of made tea are exported, earning Rs 13,663.9 million (SDR 296 million). The value added as a percentage of GDP is 4.5 of total tea exports. Middle Eastern countries take in 58.26% (1989) of the total volume compared to 62.62%



South Asian refugees in Jordan camp: Hunger had become an urgent factor

in 1988. This as a percentage of value is 55.17% (1989) compared to 59.50% in 1988. Volume wise the Middle East takes in 118.9-137.6 million kgs. Iraq takes in 24,166,000-33,958,000kgs or 12-16% of the total volume of export and 10-13% of the total value of

exports. Kuwait imported 2.1-3.0 million kgs of tea which was 0.98-1.49% of the total volume or 1.20-2.15% of the total value. Thus as a result of the trade embargo the demand for nearly 172 million kgs of tea will (earning 15% of the total value of exports of tea) will fall. The value of the total export of tea to Iraq is Rs. 1.4 billion. Therefore we might have to look for new market as ever reduce production.

The Gulf Crisis will undoubtedly affect our macro economic development. It will reduce our foreign exchange earnings and thereby affect our import capacity and the Balance of Payments. Increases in oil prices will affect our energy scenario and transport and production cost. It will also affect the cost of living adversely. Taken with the cost of the war in the North and East of Sri Lanka the effect of the Gulf crisis will be disastrous. The

Table VI

Country Classification of Tea Exports and Percentage Share : Middle East

Country	Volume (Mn Kgs)				% of Total Volume				Value (Rs. Mn)				% of Total Value			
	1986	1987	1988	1989	1986	1987	1988	1989	1986	1987	1988	1989	1986	1987	1988	1989
Iraq	22.7	29.7	35.9	24.1	11	15	15	12	822	1382	1527	1405	8.5	12.3	13.2	10.5
UAR	40.4	37.7	35.4	33.8	19.4	14.7	13	16	1671	1300	1430	1374	18.06	7.94	14.8	14.4
S. Arabia	12.5	14.4	14.8	11.5	6.2	7.2	6.5	5.8	787	971	1001	1089	8.5	8.1	6.1	7.6
Syria	13.4	9.6	11.4	10.0	6.4	4.8	5.2	4.9	400	390	501	476	5.0	3.7	4.1	3.4
Iran	10.0	15.9	12.2	12.8	4.8	7.9	5.5	6.2	412	817	722	590	4.4	7.7	5.9	6.5
Jordan	4.5	3.5	5.1	5.8	2.1	1.6	2.3	1.9	239	224	319	220	2.5	2.1	2.8	1.0
Kuwait	3.1	2.1	2.1	3.0	1.5	1.0	0.9	1.5	175	149	143	291	1.9	1.4	1.2	2.1
Yemen	4.1	4.5	6.9	4.5	1.9	2.2	2.8	2.2	152	207	313	363	1.8	1.9	2.5	1.8
Libya			7.8	6.4		8.3	3.2				433	445			5.5	3.2
Others	8.6	7.8	9.2	8.4	4.1	3.9	4.2	4.1	374	433	424	523	4.05	3.97	3.4	3.8
Grand Total	257.8	251.1	219.8	204.2	100.0	100.0	100	100	8253	10553	12298	13684	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Central Bank

Table VII

Discharge of Trade	Exports					Imports (Rs. million)				
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Ken	469.5	572.0	1294.8	1127.6	1102.8	21.0	19.2	183.2	73.8	358.8
Kuwait	261.0	215.4	190.0	216.0	240.0	242.8	33.1	118.5	138.2	188.1

Source: Sri Lanka Customs, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Budget deficit in 1991 is expected to be 9% of GDP compared to 10% in 1990. The budget estimate for 1990 was Rs 103 billion (US\$ 2.6 billion) compared to Rs 139 billion (US\$ 3.4 billion) in 1991. The revenue in 1991 is estimated at Rs 72 billion (US\$ 1.8 billion) which brings in a budget deficit of Rs 67 billion (US\$ 1.6 billion). Part of this gap is to be financed through revenue and other through loans and foreign aid. But if the Gulf Crisis results in a drop of tea reserves the budgetary gap would increase. Meanwhile the foreign exchange income that Sri Lanka received from 100,000 Sri Lankans in Kuwait and 35,000 in Iraq will also be affected.

Other non-traditional exports to Kuwait and Iraq will also be affected leading to problems in these sectors.

Gulf Crisis and Remittances from Abroad

The net private transfers between 1986-1989 showed an increase from Rs 7,883 million (SDR 242 million) to Rs 10,844 million (234 mn). This consisted mainly of the remittances by Sri Lankans working abroad. The remittances are in the region of SDR 263 million. 150,000 Sri Lankans who lived in Kuwait were remitting around US \$ 100 million. There were about 40,000 Sri Lankans in Iraq. There are a fairly large number in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, UAE and Iran, and if the Gulf crisis continues, they too are likely to return to Sri Lanka. This could result in a decrease in foreign remittances. In 1991 the loss in foreign exchange from remittances will be in the region of US \$ 400 million, which is equal to Rs. 16 billions.

This will have adverse consequences on the following:

- (1) The Balance of Payments
- (2) The urban property and real estate market
- (3) The dependent families
- (4) The purchasing power of these dependent families
- (5) The returnees will have problems of adjustments and finding lucrative employment.

At the time of Gulf Crisis occurred there were 30,000 foreigners from the developed Kuwait and Iraq. They were:

Gulf Crisis and other Imports

The Gulf Crisis will undoubtedly have impact of the imports of consumer, intermediate and capital

Table VIII

Nationality	In Kuwait	In Iraq	Total
American	2,500	600	3100
British	4,000	700	4,700
French	290	270	560
Japanese	278	230	500
Soviet	880	7,830	8,71
Other European	-	-	3,17

Source: Newsweek Aug. 27, 1990

The victims of the Gulf War from Third World countries included.

Table IX

	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladesh	Sri Lankans
Pre-invasion number in Kuwait	172,000	90,000	70,000	90,000
Pre-invasion number in Iraq	10,000	8,000	15,000	n.a
Number in Jordan (Sept. 4)	22,500	10,000	28,000	16,000
Evacuated through Jordan	14,000	9,000	1,500	1,000

Source: Economist Sept 8, 1990

Sri Lanka imports about Rs. 8,716 million of petroleum which amounts 10-14% of our total import bill.

Table X

Year	Value Rs Million	Value in SDR Million	% of total Imports
1987	87,116	128.7	14.4
1988	7,839	183.3	11.0
1989	8,376	181.3	10.4

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka

Fertilizer is mainly inorganic petro Chemical based. therefore the price of fertiliser too will go up. Imports have been as follows:

Table XI

Year	Value Rs Million	Value in SDR Million	% of total import
1987	1,299	34.1	2.1
1988	2,476	57.9	3.5
1989	1,755	138.0	2.2

Source : Sri Lanka Customs

Any increase in oil prices are going to have a direct impact on productivity. Sri Lanka requirement of crude petroleum is 9 - 14 million barrels. Fertiliser imports are 355,000 - 550,000 metric tons.

Table XII

Crude oil imports from best oilfields

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Quantity (M Bps)	11	13	12	10	10	13	9
Value (Rs. M)	7,318	8,542	9,496	5,308	6,121	6,336	6,876
C&F (%)	711	711	727	439	511	464	324

Source: Sri Lanka Customs

Main source of crude oil for Sri Lanka is Iraq and this is barred for black top. Therefore, Sri Lanka will have to find new sources of supply.

goods from economics which themselves have problems due to the Gulf Crisis. The cost of production in these countries would have gone up and fuel price adjustments would be reflected in shipping and handling charges. Thus, import cost will go up and this will add to the already high level of inflation. The composition of imports reveals that 26.1% are consumer goods of which 16.4% are food and beverages. Intermediate goods constitute 56.6% of which the prices of petroleum (10.4%) textile and clothing (12.4%) and wheat (6.2%) would increase. Investment goods constituting 15.0% of the total imports cover machinery and equipment (7.8%), transport equipment (2.3%) and building materials (1.2%). The final result will be an increase in the cost of living which will adversely affect the quality of life of the people. There will be an increase in freight and insurance by about US \$ 50 million in 1991. This is going to increase the cost of imports and will result in a decrease in imports. There will also be a decreased demand for Sri Lankan exports, particularly manufactured goods because of the increased recession in developing countries as a result of the gulf

crisis. High rates in insurance will bring about an imbalance in banking transactions.

Gulf Crisis and Tourism

Tourist industry has been experiencing a downward trend since 1983 (due to the ethnic conflict or later the JVP insurgency). This has been further aggravated by the current war in the North East. There was a marginal improvement in 1989 and 1990 the Gulf War will affect this adversely. Airline and shipping costs are going to increase. So are other related local costs like transport, hotel and food charges. The tourist arrivals which stabilised at 101,910 in 1988 will dwindle down to about 80,000-90,000 and income from tourism would level off to about Rs 2,000 million from Rs 2,749.5 million in 1988. The average spending of tourist per day which increased from Rs 848.71 in 1985 to Rs 1,395.00 cts in 1988 will dwindle to around Rs 1,000-2,000 tourist per day.

The Gulf Crisis and Socio-economic Problems

The Gulf Crisis is sure to have rippling effects on our socio-economic

structure and aggravate an already adverse situation. The majority of the returning migrant workers will swell the already large pool of unemployment and underemployed.

The returnees will find it difficult to fit into other places of employment since no contingency plan for returnees from abroad has been formulated. There are no self-employment projects and the banks have not come out with any plan to create employment for returnees.

The boom in the property market and the demand for durable is likely to dwindle. Increase in unemployment and severe inflation will aggravate a number of social and economic problems. Therefore, the government should come up with a contingency plan to meet this crisis.

The Gulf Crisis and Alternative Development Strategies for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka can adopt several strategies to overcome the above described scenario resulting from the Gulf Crisis. They are:

- (a) Stepping up production of food items domestically
- (b) Stepping up energy conservation measures
- (c) Switching to alternate fuels
- (d) Development of hydro-power
- (e) Promotion of natural gas fuel feeds in Sri Lanka
- (f) Improve gasoline efficiency of cars
- (g) Re cycle the used oil through filtration and re-processing
- (h) Raise the price of gasoline annually
- (i) boost research into alternate energy sources
- (j) Explore potential areas for oil
- (k) Build a 3 month buffer stock in each province to meet any contingency.

No government can do anything unless the population is ready and willing to cooperate. But to find a solution can only be an alternative contingency plan for energy. ■

THE EFFECT OF COCONUT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON PRODUCTION

Dr. D. V. Liyanage

Dr Liyanage obtained his Post Graduate PhD degree from the University of Manchester, U. K. and worked as the Head of the Botany Division, Coconut Research Institute, Lunuwila from 1950 to 1966. He served as a specialist on coconut research and development attached to the FAO from 1966 to 1983. Subsequently he was the Chairman of the Coconut Research Board from 1983 - 1988. Currently he is working as a Consultant on Coconut Research and Development.

Development programmes have been implemented by the Government since 1949 to improve and productivity from coconut lands. They include subsidised inputs and outright grants for a part of the expenditure incurred on field work. This paper attempts to evaluate their effect on coconut production.

Coconut production depends on a number of factors: environment, management, inputs and biology of fruit formation. The last factor is particularly important as palms bear fruits at monthly intervals and their development extends over a long period, exposed to varying environmental factors. The initial formation of spikelets from the flower bud takes place about 16 months before the opening of the inflorescence and fruits are harvested 12 to 13 months later. Thus, fruit development takes place over a period of 29 months. In the current analysis, this period is taken as 3 years for practical reasons.

Consequently, three year moving-averages are presented. The moving-average say for 1980 is the average of data for 1978, 1979 and 1980. This average when used is indicated in the text. Further, the average for coconut production is based on the area under cultivation with bearing palms and not on the total area. The Agriculture Census Reports indicated that 88% of the palms are bearing.

Coconut Development Programmes

The coconut development programs include rehabilitation, under-planting, replanting, new planting and planting

coconuts in citronella lands in the Southern Province. Reference is not made to the programmes to increase productivity—growing pasture, cocoa, coffee and pepper under coconuts -- as the small holder and estate sectors have not supported them due to various constraints.

The first programme: According to the Census of Agriculture Report for 1946, about 40,000 ha of coconut palms were over 60 years age out of the 434 000 ha under coconut cultivation. These findings lead to the appointment of the Ceylon Coconut Commission to suggest measures to rehabilitate the coconut industry. They recommended re-planting of holdings with senile palms and promoting the use of fertiliser. Issues of selected coconut seedlings commenced in 1949 and subsidised fertiliser in 1956. Estates received a subsidy of one-third the cost of fertiliser and the small-holders half the cost. The

palms, cutting contour drains were introduced in 1974; under-planting, replanting and new planting from 1977 and cutting husk pits later on.

Subsidy rates effective from 1 April 1988 were: Table A

The performance of the subsidy schemes up to the end of 1988 was as follows: Table B

Planting coconuts in citronella lands: Undertaken to assist farmers who found that growing citronella was uneconomic. Nearly 9,000 ha were developed in the Hambantota and Matara districts. Coconut seedlings and fertiliser were supplied free and Rs 0.50 was paid for each seedlings for 8 years, provided maintenance was satisfactory. The expenditure incurred was Rs 6.4 million. The general observations are that most of the seedlings planted are dead due to drought and neglect.

East Coast Rehabilitation Project: Rehabilitated 12,000 ha in the Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa and Ampara districts devastated by a cyclone in 1978. It was a composite project designed to provide all the inputs required to develop the coconut industry. An evaluation of the project has not been carried out recently.

Table A

Under-planting	Rs 12,000 per ha in three instalments
Re-planting	Rs 12,000 per ha in three instalments
New planting	Rs 11,500 per ha in three instalments

Table B

Item	Area Developed (ha)	Cash Payments (Rs)
Rehabilitation	91,200	99,400,000
Under-planting and replanting	31,200	127,200,000
New planting	26,400	125,900,000

fertiliser subsidy scheme terminated in 1973.

The second programme: Subsidised coconut seedlings and cash subsidies for filling vacancies, removal of excess

The under-planting programme: It has run into difficulties as 87% of the farmers were not eligible to receive the second and third instalments as they have not completed the necessary field work, largely removal of old palms.

Indications are that the programme would be successfully completed by an insignificant number of persons (1). A basic defect of this programme was the selection of blocks for under-planting with palms relatively young. Naturally, the farmers would be reluctant to uproot those bearing palms.

The re-planting programme: The key problem appears to be the lack of importance given by the implementing agency. Only 17% of the farmers qualified to receive the last two instalments of subsidy (1). On the other hand, replanting in a small pilot project carried out in Hambukana area has been more successful. About 66 ha in 166 allotments were replanted with an improved variety of coconut seedlings - CRIC 65. Inter-crops, largely bananas, were planted along with coconuts. They provided a satisfactory income to the farmers until the palms reached bearing stage, except during first year (2). Although, the project is small, it is based on sound principles: selection of holdings with senile palms, promotion of inter-crops and development on a project area basis.

The new planting programme: it has been carried out in environments not quite suitable for coconut cultivation. The mortality rate of the seedlings planted has been reported to be high: in the Pottalam district it was 47%, attributed to drought (3).

In a survey of 12,000 ha of re-planting and under-planting carried out, 1,760 ha were expected to be in bearing in 1988, but, only 25 ha were in bearing — 1.4%. The delayed bearing offsets the benefits of that investment both to the grower and the government (4).

The number of coconut seedlings issued for the programmes outlined was:

1950 to 1960	: 6,800,000
1961 to 1970	: 15,200,000
1971 to 1980	: 13,400,000
1981 to 1988	: 13,900,000
Total	51,100,000

The expenditure on the implementation of the programmes from 1974 to 1988 was Rs 374,300,000.

Coconut Production Trends

The area under coconut cultivation has decreased from 466,000 ha in 1962 to 419,000 ha in 1981, the existing area is likely to be about 400,000 ha. Domestic consumption of coconuts has increased from 1237 million in 1960 to 1701 million in 1988. The climatic conditions have deteriorated with a higher frequency of drought months each year. Fertiliser has been used only in about 25% of the area under coconut cultivation. These are problems that the industry is facing.

The objective of the development programmes initiated by the Government, except for the citronella scheme, was to increase production and productivity from coconut lands. How far has that been achieved in the light of the distressing factors outlined in the previous paragraph?

The first programme was based on the recommendations of the Coconut Commission and the subsequent one appears to be on an *ad hoc* basis, adding various items over the years, without a reasonable assessment of the problems faced by the coconut industry.

The coconut production trends are indicated in Table 1. The period from 1950 to 1955 is considered as the pre-programme period.

the period (c) dropped almost to that of period (a) as a result of unfavourable weather conditions and the dislocation of management practices in the estate sector arising from land reforms and period (d) showed the highest production with 6700 nuts ha⁻¹.

The surge in production in 1985 and 1986 giving 8300 and 8500 nuts ha⁻¹ is remarkable. Presumably, it was due to favourable climate, planting material and development activities like promotion of soil moisture conservation methods and fertiliser usage. For a continuous period of five years from 1981 to 1986, drought months were less than 2.1 each year. When there was a similar period from 1961 to 1964, production reached 7300 nuts per ha in 1964, the highest figure recorded between 1950 and 1984. About 16 million coconut seedlings have been issued to the growers between 1950 and 1965. Assuming a survival rate of 85%, 10 million young palms in the prime of their life are in full bearing in 1986. They could make a substantial contribution to production. This factor may account for the increase of 1300 nuts per ha in 1986 compared to the production in 1964.

Two significant factors have vitiated the potential for coconut production that would have been possible through the development programmes: extension and climate. Development of smallholdings scattered throughout the

Table 1
Crop yields in relation to the pre-programme period

Period	Nuts ha ⁻¹	Droughts period per year		Fertiliser used per year	
		%	Months	%	(MT)
(a) 1950 to 1955	5,500	100	2.98	100	11,000
(b) 1961 to 1970	6,400	110	1.25	84	64,000
(c) 1971 to 1980	5,900	102	2.69	74	47,000
(d) 1981 to 1988	6,700	116	1.91	67	28,000

(*) Annual average fertiliser used as reported in (5).

Table 1 indicates that there was been an upward trend in coconut production from 1960 onwards. Period (b) showed an increase of 10% nuts per ha⁻¹ over the period (a); production in

country was undertaken. The number of trained extension workers was limited. Hence, they could not cover such a large area, resulting in inadequate service to those participating in the

development programme. In a situation like this, remedial measures to give a satisfactory service to the growers with a restricted staff were known — development on a basis of project areas and nucleus estates — but they have not been considered by the implementing agency. It is known that drought periods reduce coconut production, yet no effort has been made between 1956 and 1973 to promote soil moisture conservation methods. Although contour drains and husk pits were introduced later, an overall plan to conserve soil moisture on coconut lands has not been considered yet.

There is one asset to the country resulting from the coconut development programmes implemented. From 1950 to 1988, 51 million coconut seedlings have been issued to the growers. Assuming that 65% of them have survived, 33 million young palms are growing now, some of them in full bearing status. Their contribution to national production, if maintained in a satisfactory condition, would be at least 2000 million nuts per year.

Production in relation to drought:

The coconut palm has no storage water on which it can draw during periods of moisture stress. It depends entirely on the root system to absorb water from the surrounding soil. Therefore soil moisture is of vital importance for its growth and reproduction. Any prolonged moisture stress during the long period of fruit formation will reduce the quality and the quantity of fruits harvested. The adverse effects of drought are illustrated in Table 2.

Drought period per year (moving average)	Nuts per ha/yr
2.0 months or less	6600
2.1 to 2.5 months	6400
2.6 to 3.0 months	5800
3.1 months or more	5450

The progressive decline in production as the number of drought months per year increases is clear. The drought months indicated in Table 2 are scat-

tered over the years. If they are for consecutive years (Table 3), a different production pattern emerges.

Period	Nuts ha/yr in the last year	Fertiliser used p/yr (MT)
Less than or equal to two months per year		
1961 to 1964	7300	46 000
1973 to 1975	6600	31 000
1081 to 1985	8300	39 000
More than or equal to 3.3 months per year		
1956 to 1958	5200	33 000
1976 to 1978	58 00	34 000

With longer drought periods per year, crop production has been reduced to less than 6000 nuts ha/yr. These figures illustrate adequately the importance of moisture in the soil throughout the year for satisfactory coconut production.

Future Coconut Development Programmes

It is stated that, "The fundamental malaise of the coconut industry, apart from the price problem commented upon earlier, has been the unpredictability of weather. Frequent drought have not only lowered incomes, but have denied the producer of a return for investments in fertiliser, new planting and cultural practices. The element of uncertainty thus introduced by the vagaries of weather also prevents the producer from taking a long term point of view which is essential in a perennial crop industry" (5).

Future planning for the development of coconut holdings should be considered with these inescapable facts as a base. If a small-holder gets a satisfactory farm-gate price for the produce and is insulated from the vicissitudes of weather, he will provide the necessary inputs and management practices to increase production, probably without subsidy payments.

Countering the adverse effects of drought on coconut production is con-

sidered in terms of irrigation only. No doubt, that is a good practice, but due to the high costs involved little progress

has been made so far. Cheaper physical and biological methods could be adopted to minimise drought damage in production as reported in (6).

Thus, the priorities for a coconut development programme should be: (a) assuring a fair farm-gate price for coconuts, (b) minimising drought damage, (c) promoting biological methods of farm management to reduce the dependence on inorganic fertiliser, (d) continued distribution of good quality seedlings, (e) replanting coconut holdings with senile palms and (f) provision of an extension service that understands the farmer.

If a comprehensive plan to develop the coconut industry incorporating all the above suggestions cannot be carried out due to shortage of funds, it is advisable to suspend temporarily the development activities in progress and utilise all the available resources to promote only soil moisture conservation on coconut holdings for the next four years. That alone could guarantee a production over 3000 million coconuts per year.

Summary

Coconut development programmes have been implemented from 1949 to increase production from coconut holdings. There has been an upward trend in production since 1960, fluctuating considerably with the vagaries of weather and the application of man-

agement practices. Coconut production for the period 1981 to 1983 averaged 6700 nuts ha/yr compared to 5800 nuts ha/yr for the pre-programme period 1950 to 1955. The increase could be attributed to five years of favourable weather conditions and palms planted prior to 1965 reaching full bearing status during that period.

About 33 million young palms are growing now, some of them in their prime of life, as a result of the continuous supply of coconut seedlings to the growers. Their contribution to national production, if maintained in a satisfactory condition, would be at least 2000 million nuts per year.

The application of inorganic fertiliser has not increased production to the expected level, because of soil moisture stress caused by prolonged drought periods. The key factor to increase coconut production is soil moisture conservation. That has not been considered adequately in the past, and hence, vitiated the potential for coconut production possible through the development programmes implemented.

Acknowledgement: The statistics presented in this paper have been drawn from Sri Lanka Coconut Statistics published yearly by the Ministry of Coconut Industries.

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Contd from page 26

thief was committed to fulfil hunger or to meet ordinary requirements. But today the type of offender has changed and even children from families which are economically well-to-do and are considered educated have become dangerous criminals. They rob and murder for a life of luxury. Some of them are of school going age.

Attention of Parents

It has now become clear that lack of parental attention is a major factor

Contd from page 6

of women going out to work and traditional sources of support drying up new support structures have to be established to prevent fresh opportunities for child abuse.

7. Using children as a family resource at the expense of their own development is not generally seen as child abuse. This may stem from the fact that under ancient Sinhala law children could be treated as parental property to be gifted, pawned or sold, to meet families' liabilities (11). Therefore the public has to be educated regarding the concept that childhood is a period of development with special needs and that a child is an individual with rights of its own including the rights to its childhood. This is important for while the law can enforce school attendance it is difficult to exercise controls on the exploitation of children as family labour. Educational programmes are urgently required for this purpose, since studies reveal that with more manufacturing companies "putting out" work to be done at home and with the expansion of opportunities for home based employment, children are used as family labour to work long hours after school at the expense of their education and leisure (12).

Contd from page 29

Expenditure on education
Expenditure on education is no longer considered only as social expenditure but also as long term capital investment. It reduces future expenditure on health and increased the efficiency of the labour force. Studies have revealed that investment in primary education in developing countries gives 100 per cent more economic returns than the same investment in physical assets.

Expenditure on general education per pupil at current prices has shown a considerable increase from Rs 183 - 350 in 1970's to Rs. 426 - 1200 in 1980's. However, national expenditure on general education as a share of total government expenditure has declined from 9% in early 1970's to 5% in late 1980's. Educational expenditure has declined from 5% of GNP in 1960's to 2.5% in 1980's. If defence expenditure has not increased in mid 80's more resources could have been channelled for qualitative and quantitative improvements in the education system.

There are considerable imbalances in resource allocation between privi-

leged and under-privileged schools and resource constraints adversely affect the improvement of infrastructural facilities in ill equipped schools. However many disadvantaged schools are provided with some support in the form of infrastructural facilities by SIDA, UNICEF and Integrated Rural Development Programme.

Conclusion

It is more difficult to increase school participation and literacy from a high rate than from a low rate. For instance increase of school enrolment rate of 5

A child gone astray is a loss to the country. The measures adopted by adults and the society as a whole to combat child delinquency are out of date. Most of these do not meet today's requirements. Therefore there is a great need of a new thinking and new rehabilitation programme for children.

The programme of humanising children must be given priority above all others. The time has come when the attention of all adults must be paid to be need to set up a massive and strong programme for humanising the children with the aim of developing the human resource of our country.

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D - Conclusion

It may be queried whether the conceptualization of Child Abuse in this paper is relevant to an underdeveloped country steeped in poverty and trapped in a political situation where funds for security takes a large proportion of the national budget. Nevertheless international agencies such as UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO have developed standards of child care which this country cannot afford to ignore. Therefore, child abuse needs to be identified and attacked within this broad international framework though the priorities for action must necessarily be determined in terms of the local situation.

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September 1990

1 The Colombo Consumers' Cost of Living Index for September 1990 was 1128.4 according to the Department of Census and Statistics. In August 1990 it was 1,320.0 while in September 1989 it was 85. The average rate for the last 12 months was 849.0 as against 755.01 for the previous 12 month period indicating a 12.0 point increase in the index over the last 12 months.

The Coast Conservation Department (CCD) will begin work on the second phase of its Master Plan for Coastal Erosion Management, this time in the Southern Province to protect the coastal highway from Beruwala to Weligama.

7 A sum of US\$ 5.6 million may be made available by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the efforts in the Asia - Pacific region to control deforestation and environmental degradation. UNDP is assisting national research institutions in improving germplasm for large scale commercial planting and rural reforestation programmes.

10 Sugar was made available to the public at the reduced rate of Rs 25.50 per Kilo at all Co-operative Retail shops. According to the Ministry of Food and Co-operatives announcement, the new price would be effective at DWE outlets from September 10.

A government food purchase delegation has succeeded in contracting for US wheat grain and wheat flour under the PL 480 food aid programme, this year, at prices under much lower than those paid in 1989. Sri Lanka is buying 89,410 mt of wheat grain and 51,142 mt of wheat flour under a facility of US\$ 20 million granted under the PL 480 food aid programme.

11 Australia will provide \$ 250,000 to assist in repatriating people stranded in Middle Eastern countries, primarily in Jordan, according to a press release from the Australian High Commission.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will provide \$ 2 billion in grants to the least developed countries (LDCs) during the period 1982 to 1997.

12 The European Economic Community has provided Sri Lanka with a bilateral grant to facilitate the repatriation of Lankans stranded in the Gulf.

14 The government has approved a resident guest scheme to attract foreign investors and distinguished professionals. Under this scheme genuine investors and professionals will qualify for a 5-year resident visa in the first instance and to Sri Lanka citizenship in due course.

17 The Asian Development Bank recently approved a technical assistance grant of US\$ 250,000 (Rs 10,200,000) to Sri Lanka for the Koggala Export Processing Zone Study, a Finance Ministry release said. The study will focus on the economic, technical, institutional and physical development of the Koggala Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) which will cover about 91 hectares of land in the Southern Province.

19 Sri Lanka has entered into an international agreement as a terminal party on a project involving the laying of a new optical fibre submarine cable system from Singapore to Marseilles in France. This cable, the second on the same route, connects 15 South East Asian cities in the Middle East and Western Europe.

Comprehensive draft legislation for the promotion and development of industries in general and export industries in particular has been gazetted on the orders of Industries Minister. The Bill provides for the establishment of an Industrialization Commission. The Commission will advise the government on policy measures to ensure inter-agency coordination and provide necessary institutional, infrastructural and market support.

20 The government has accepted, in principle, the outline of a multi-faceted development plan for the South of Sri Lanka prepared by the Minister of Industries.

An agreement was signed with the British Government for a grant of \$11 mn (approximately Rs 914 mn) for the forestry project. The British assistance forms a part of forest sector development project funded by World Bank with FINNIDA and UNDP assistance. The objectives of this project are better management of national forest resources, increased production of wood, greater protection of the environment and the creation of rural employment.

Canadian government is to provide an additional sum of up to CD 75 million (approximately Rs 2.55 billion) for humanitarian and economic assistance for the people and countries seriously affected by the Gulf Crisis. The additional assistance will be allocated to Charter Canadian Civilian aircraft to help airlift the displaced people to their home countries - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Egypt etc.

Sri Lanka will lose more than three billion rupees (75 million dollars) this year because of the Gulf crisis, which has raised fuel prices while cutting foreign remittance according to a Senior Government Official.

22 Government has decided to commence the payment of a difficulty allowance (risk allowance) to public officers who are requested to return to work in areas where civil administration has been restored, effective June 11, 1990, the Ministry of Public Administration said. This risk allowance is half of the employee's monthly salary or Rs 500 which ever is higher. The payment will be reduced pro rata by the number of days leave taken including the special leave granted to officers in such areas.

Aranayaka and Andarakanda water service projects, in Kegalle of the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council is now under way and will be completed before the end of this year are sponsored by the World Bank under the Provincial Council Programme to supply pure-drinking water to the rural sector according to a official correspondent in Matwala.

Demand from Middle East buyers is helping to keep Sri Lanka's tea industry afloat despite the loss of one of its best customers Iraq, due to the Gulf crisis, industry officials said.

October 1990

3 The United States Embassy has made a special grant of Rs 6.48 million to the government of Sri Lanka to help defray transportation and resettlement costs of the refugees. The total American commitment now totals nearly Rs 6.5 million, a USIS news release said.

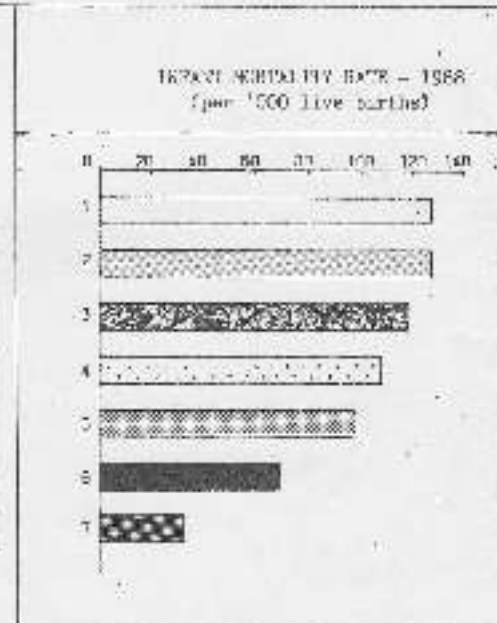
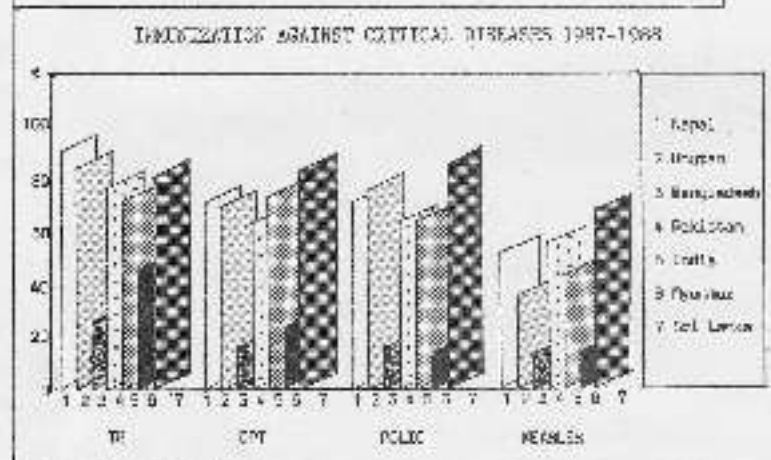
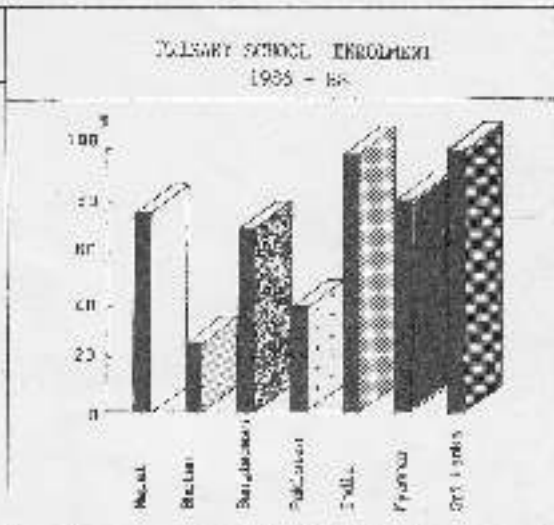
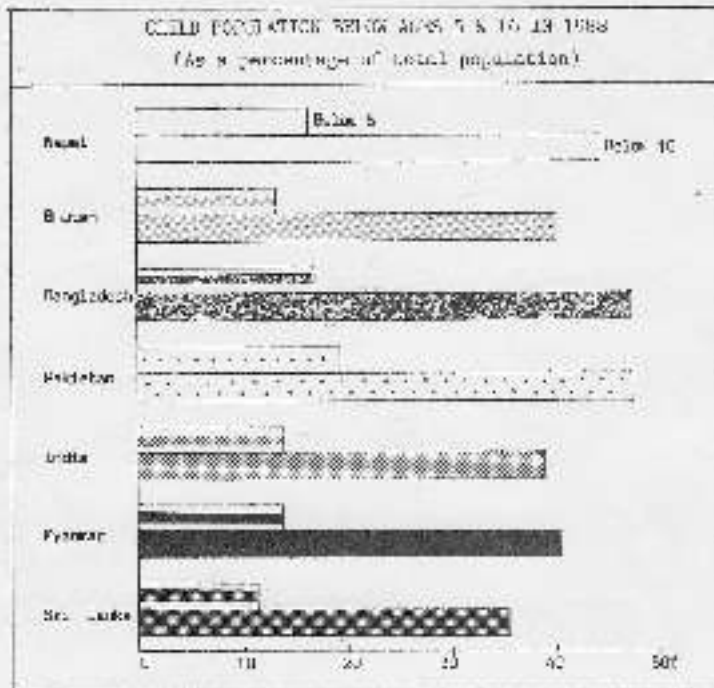
4 The government has approved a proposal to grant a salary advance of five years to an able public servants to buy a piece of land or a house. The Establishment Code permits only a salary advance of two years salary to buy land.

6 The Government decided to offer an incentive bonus equivalent to six months pension to the government servants who opt to retire at the end of this year. Industries Minister said the government has also decided the retirement on reaching the age 65 should not be made mandatory but voluntary and those who retire using these options cannot be re-employed.

The European Economic Community (EEC) has allocated US\$ 7.4 million (Rs 29.6 million) for 50 charter flights to evacuate 14,000 Lankans, Foreign Ministry release said.

8 The government will allocate to the Rehabilitation Reconstruction and Social Welfare Ministry a sum of Rs 1.5 billion for relief and rehabilitation work in the Northern and Eastern provinces, industries Minister said.

STATUS OF THE CHILD IN SOUTH ASIAN REGION



One fourth of the world's population and nearly half of the world's poor live in the South Asian Region. 40 percent of the (455.9 million) people in South Asia are children. About 26 percent of the total number of children below 16 also live in South Asian countries.

As demonstrated by these figures, Sri Lanka maintained comparatively higher standards in the areas of primary education, infant mortality health and nutrition.

Based on: The State of the World's Children 1993 - (UNICEF)

WE ARE EVERY WHERE

Vajra – (a street child)

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