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The Editorial



With 20 years of war in the North and the East along with its destructive impact on the rest of the country, it is time to pause and consider the pros and cons of sanctioned killing, with killer weapons supplied and high powered vested interests fanning racist feelings to keep the evil separatist torch burning.

Who gains from a war and who becomes affluent there by? Where is the peaceful life humans were born to inherit?

Our limited efforts have revealed that continued war has created new social conditions and situations as we become poorer and poorer. Life's strength and resistance to survive is nevertheless clear.

This issue of our journal examines these new conditions, the new positive efforts strong men and women are making to overcome difficulties and problems so that the new generation can start life under less traumatic conditions.

We have identified some of the problems confronting them, gender specifics in the man made war, life in the camps, signs of building newly, traumatized mentally sick people needing attention and care, and last but not least we note and pay tribute to a woman who gave up the rest of her beautiful life in the cause of the desperate and the disappeared, and that is Manorani.

Eva Ranaweera

Many Are the *Problems*

Despite some recognition that women in conflict areas endure the bulk of cruelty, there is little being done to prevent this. Women are forced to tolerate miserable conditons including health and education and an increasing rate of violence in their homes or refugee camps. A great deal of assistance is needed, and the potential exists for women to be positively involved in the peace process.

Difficulties that arise for women in conflict areas vary extensively. From lack of privacy and mobility, to coping with change in status and severe acts of violence. These problems impact strongly amongst children.

Women and their families in camps, live in distressing and cramped conditions. They must change clothes, sleep and bathe with minimal or no privacy. Often going without water for bathing is a regular event, as men bathe first and use the water. When women bathe, other women guard the area, holding sheets for privacy. This is evidence of the male dominance within camps.

Health and education are basic human rights ignored in the camps. Health care in all areas is very minimal. Bad food and the lack of food lead to nutrient deficiencies that can result in anaemia (iron) and blindness (vitamin A). The lack of food contributes to depleted energy levels and high susceptibility to infection. It is also a factor in emotional problems. Medical care at times is not available and women and newborns have died in the absence of a midwife.

Many schools in the conflict areas have closed down and those left open involve long distances of travel. This travel is either impossible or carries very high risk. Women are at constant fear of children being assaulted, caught in cross fire or kidnapped. Although children under Sri Lankan law should attend school until age

16, this is not often the case. A child reaching O/L is rare in conflict areas.

Many women inside conflict areas can be forced to change their identity and status. Women who have lost husbands must erase all signs of 'auspiciousness' a passed or rite from better days, and are pronounced ritually in-auspicious. This declares women unimportant and incomplete without men. At the same time, female headed households are considerably disadvantaged compared with men. While there are various grants and loans, loans can not be paid back and patriarchal claim take part of grants. A woman's lack of education is frequently exploited. In conflict areas many women are illiterate and unable to fill out forms for grants. Therefore, she must receive the assistance of various people to help complete the forms. Finally, when the woman receives her grant, she has lost a substantial amount of it to those who were apparently there to help. Poverty is one of the greatest issues for women in these camps.

Violence against women in conflict areas is extreme. It includes rape, torture, assassinations, body searches and checkpoint terror. Domestic violence is high. Security is poor causing decreased mobility and ability to work, once again leading to financial difficulties. Mobility is also hindered with the fear of crossfire. Women often confine their daughters to the home or camp, dreading checkpoint rape and other acts of violence. An example, is seen in the well known case of 18 year old Krisanthi

Kumaraswamy. Returning home from school, Krisanthi was abducted and brutally murdered. Her mother and two others, were also murdered in their search for Krisanthi.

Rape has been said by some authorities to be a 'normal' consequence of war. The fact that rape occurs so often does not make it 'normal.' Rape is a deliberate attempt to humiliate the opponent, the woman and the community. Women are being used as a weapon in war. They are harassed and tortured repeatedly because of the political activities of people around them. Those women who are single and/or widowed receive most sexual violence, frequently by soldiers and men who protect their own women and children.

empowered to build new lives. Women should be trained and educated on how to utilize money for long-term self sufficiency. Counselling that is focused on women's support for husbands has been undertaken. It is however, one sided and rarely shows the need for support of women. This is an example of the absence of understanding for womens' difficulties and their needs.

Finally, it is important to note that some women have successfully taken on new roles and have become empowered to free themselves from cultural constraints. However, many women feel guilt for these changed gender roles. In spite of the atrocities, women should not be looked at as victims only, but as those who can take action. Women have the ability to reveal brutalities and become involved in empowerment and peace resolution for all.

Women are frightened to talk out about the distress they face for fear of persecution. However, if they don't they are continually harassed anyway. The lack of options for women in conflict areas is of great concern. Rarely do they have any choice but to suffer the consequences of being treated as inferior.

While there is much need for relief, current attempts may actually be prolonging problems. Many women wishing to settle in their place of refuge are dependent on handouts from NGO's. There is a need for women to become self-reliant and



MS.

Excerpt from Media

"The story of the Women of War is different to that of the men. Their story is written in the war photos of lines of women looking for their men in camps or looking for food. Similarly, in times of war the ordinary subordination of women is amplified and the usual threats to the female in society become a greater possibility. For example, according to the US State Departments Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices Worldwide in 1995, rape has become a deliberate weapon of terror for the LTTE now; a number of victims were raped during the LTTE massacre of civilians in the East in October last year. Women in the North have faced similar threats, particularly during the times of IPKF. Real number of these raped and molested will never be known".

**Towards Change by Dharshini Seneviratne - Sunday Times plus
March 17th 1996.**

Aluth Avurudda - Border Village

*We have had a long drought
And our tongues thirsted in the dry air
Not quenched in a moistureless wind,
And the graves, since the sand was shallow
Did not dig deep, the fish grew still and sluggish
Beneath the stone stirring mud, the fins grew matted
With silt, dead things crowded in sunken pits
Or live things sought coolness in buried earth
But suddenly it rains blood and the river bed
Has new currents, the fish gloat in the sudden push
Of its thick froth welling over the sweltering stone
But soon they feel crowded out, strange creatures
Jostle, long shredded hair knotting and knotting about
Bodies, and the white snarl of teeth
Biting into the fruit of their own tongues
Know that death has a savour.*

*The nibble at the breast and the deep suck of
Hunger does not yield white milk but the taste
Of a thick cloy from a burst red honeycomb.*

*That morning mats were rolled up and put away,
Beds tidied and pillows readied for the next night,
The oil in the cold pans still smelt of honey
Where the flies now dance,
The plantains that had ripened still lay uneaten
While the yellow skins slowly blackened
And began to smell spoilt,
The hearth lit at the auspicious hour boiled over
Spilling its froth of bloodmilk, now look,
The pots are empty their flesh mould kindled
On new flames*

*Listen to the new ditties of the raban pada,
The sharp staccato splutter of machine gunfire*

*And those who had prayed at the Cross
Sharing in Christ's agony, now taste in their
Dying, the bitter sop of their own blood,
Here on our own soil, both Golgotha and Gethsemane.*

Jean Arasanayagam



In the Camp

A study carried out by F. Zakariya and N. Shanmugarathnam titled Women and Displacement in Sri Lanka exposed startling facts on camplife and the continued gender discrimination inspite of the increase in number of female Headed Households.

"Women bear the greatest burden of suffering caused by wars."They say and continue "In Sri Lanka, where a war has been going on since 1983 in the North-East, internal displacement is an endemic phenomenon that changes the lives of women in many ways that redefine their roles and the socioeconomic and political spaces available to them. While the whole country has been affected by the war, it is the civilian populations in the villages and towns of the Northern and Eastern districts that bear the brunt of the violence, violations and deprivations it unleashes. More than a million have been internally displaced over the past 17 years from these districts and border villages. The displaced population included large groups that were forced out of their homes at gunpoint. A distinct feature of the war induced displacements is the growing number of war widows and female-headed households. In 1994 it was recorded that it was 21% (Census and statistics 1994). There has not been any comprehensive official update of these figures since 1994. More recently, some NGOs have estimated that there were 4800 war widows in the North-East alone."

We have selected 3 case studies and issues arising from them for our publication.

Case 1 -

Kalaimagal is 31 years old. Her home town was Nawalapitiya but she resided with her parents in Kilinochchi. Her mother died while they were in Kilinochchi. After her mother's death she did casual work and managed to eke out a living. In 1994 with the resumption of hostilities, she came with her father to Vavuniya and stayed in this camp. A few months later her father passed away and Kalaimagal was forced to live by herself. During this time a relationship started between her and another man who was already married, but she was not aware of that. He had promised to marry

her. One day after a heavy dose of liquor he approached her with the intention of making sexual advances. Kalaimagal tried to escape from him and ran away but somehow he got her, gagged her and raped her. She complained about this to the camp police who got hold of the man and beat him. After a few days the man left the camp. Today Kalaimagal is left with a 2 months old infant waiting to leave the camp and in the hope that her relatives from Nawalapitiya will come to take her.

Case 2 -

30 year old Rajeswary left Matale to resettle in Kilinochchi and has 3 children all below the age of 10. With the outbreak of war the family was displaced and came to this camp in 1998. She was not aware that her husband was previously married and separated at the time she married him. He was a habitual drinker and after they moved into the camp he started drinking more and started beating her and even the children. Pieces of firewood and ekel brooms were used to beat her for no reason at all. Rajeswary thought that he had started to beat her in order to find a reason to go back to his former wife and revive the old affair. His former wife was now living in the same camp with her own husband.

In the camps it is the normal practice for the relief entitlements ie. cash payments to be given to the 'head of the household' - the man. Rajeswary's husband usually collected these payments and gave only one fourth of the total amount to her for family expenses. He was also a casual labourer but his earnings were never shared with the family. In spite of the continuous beatings, Rajeswary did not want to leave him as she said that within the camp it was not advisable for a woman to live alone. Therefore for personal security she was prepared to put up with his beatings.

Case 3 -

Saraswathy, 35 years, was married for the second time and has a 5 year old daughter. She is from Jaffna and was displaced during the operations in 1994. Her husband is already married with 2 children. They are all living in this camp. He is a heavy drinker and was beating her every day. One day she finally made up her mind to go to Jaffna and leave the camp but the camp welfare officers and the Grama Sevaka were protesting and resisting to

release her on the grounds that she will lose her rations and also that they will have to adjust the registration records, sign the necessary papers etc. Saraswathy could not bear to hear the repeated negative answers and said that she was going to take poison if they did not let her go. A government officer who happened to be around asked her in a callous tone, "so, do you have money to buy the poison?"

While this was going on a high level government officer coordinating relief and rehabilitation walked in with a team of visitors. Saraswathy came running to explain her situation, cried and pleaded with the officer to let her go by falling at his feet. It was quite a painful sight with Saraswathy running around in a desperate state and the government officials - all men standing around watching silently. The women in the camps also stood around helplessly. The coordinator in his own condescending manner accepted to sign the papers saying, "We'll let her go and make the adjustment in the records; after all we are here for this".

From the above cases several issues surface.

- a) Violence and abuse of all forms (physical, psychological and emotional) is widespread in the camps and women victims are left in their isolated state having no resource to support, protection or justice. Men's perpetually drunken state is an excuse for committing violence against women. The camp community (men and women) remains passive spectators.
- b) Men have multiple relationships violating women's individual right to choose. While the community devalues the victimised women, the violators assume a 'pseudo legitimacy' as there are no formal laws operating to charge them. "Informal laws" or an unwritten code takes precedence here, though not as a result of custom or

tradition but as a consequence of women's enforced captivity and a breakdown of the 'moral economy'.

c) Women are excluded by design from access to family based entitlements and resources even when these are disbursed by the state and state agencies. Maleheads of household are given preference in spite of women shouldering multiple responsibilities for the family and men being habitually drunk and, or abandoning their moral obligations.

d) Women are prepared to 'trade off' their only economic entitlement (in this case the rations), self worth and spirit for the sake of 'buying their freedom' enduring humiliation in this process. And even if it meant going to their original village where the war was ongoing and this freedom too was limited in time and space. Neither was this 'free' and supposedly different reality totally secure and perfect. For other women who have weighed their equally vulnerable single status as against enduring the beatings of a violent husband, many have opted for the latter as personal security is considered to be more important than living alone.

e) Children also suffer equally or more and are traumatized as a result of violent fathers. They need mother's care and attention more than ever as women are left with the children most of the time. However, very few women are able to handle this and the future of the children is affected greatly.

Violence can be physical, psychological, and also 'structural' which includes the whole spectrum of controls operating in the war zone as well as destruction of social support mechanisms, and devaluation of a woman's own identity and self worth. To quote Oloka-Onyango, ".....Structural violence, extending from poor nutrition, inadequate health care (including a lack of contraceptives, coerced

sterilisation and forced abortions to mention only a few factors) to limited access to education and other resources combine to create a situation of severe discrimination against women which international law has yet to address in a forthright fashion. While all of these are problems common to a situation of stability, they are doubly problematic in conditions of flight and displacement' (Farha 1998).



Under normal conditions, women who are subject to violence have recourse to the state law and can frame charges against the violators. It is considered a crime against the state and police have to take action. But here the only recourse women have is to complain to the camp police who only know and practise one form of punishment - beating, taking the law into their own hands. The victimised woman does not get any support from the community or fellow camp women either. Women who have been sexually abused and find themselves pregnant and who want to get an abortion have to travel out of the district, which is not possible unless they find a guarantor to sign the bond to obtain a pass. Thus, even if they manage to find the money and take the risk of an 'unofficial' abortion, there are other structural determinants that work against these women. The vulnerability of women to all

forms of gendered violence therefore, is reinforced by both collusive and coercive forces operating simultaneously.

- 1) How do these women though differentially located, perceive their extremely vulnerable status and deal with these issues which they have no escape from?
- 2) How does the traditional role of the community within the camp environment unfold to take account of the increasingly gendered violence breeding itself from within?

Adopting a life cycle approach to give meaning to the reality of women in war, may be useful in developing our own knowledge further. There are reports every day of women and young girls facing violence and sexual abuse in their lives. Young girls and female children of poor families are also deprived of their right to education, nourishment, health care, parental attention and in addition there is a possibility that they also are subject to violent environments at home. Young girls and female children in the camps while being equally affected by the deprivations accompanying poverty in schooling, health care, affection, being subject to family violence etc, do not have a conducive environment to study, suffer harassment in the schools, at army checkpoints, while being vulnerable to rape and abuse within the camps and outside. Early dropouts from school and early marriage have also been reported from the camps.

Early marriage of young girls may be a way out for mothers who have to continuously protect their daughters. At times these girls are married off in their teens and may also be subject to violence themselves or they may be separated (with no formal divorce procedures existing in the context of war), with no means of maintenance for children. In other cases, women may be widowed due to death or disappearance of husband and hence living by themselves. During this stage, some of these women have a second marriage with a man who is already

married and with a family. The violence - structural, physical and psychological continues throughout a woman's life cycle in the camp context and in the end she is left with more children to fend for. At this stage there are signs that children who have perpetually dropped out of school start begging in the streets. In some instances, some of the abandoned or separated women are even pushed to have multiple partners as a survival strategy in a no-choice situation.

There is no doubt that the conflict has increased pressures on women with the total loss of their endowment - entitlement bases and has increased their vulnerability to violence while narrowing the spaces available for redress and support. Women are also very reluctant to talk about their plight and violated state. This may also partly explain why more women are seen in the temples as we were told by a local woman wage earner, "there is a big crowd nowadays and the kovil is like a town, there is no space for us to cry out our own inner sorrows". Women do realise that they cannot rely or depend on any outside support and have lost confidence in seeking protection or being protected in an openly hostile environment. In such circumstances they tend to turn towards themselves for support through mobilising the 'self' from within which is the only means over which they have control. This could be the 'safety valve' measure, which more women now seek as a strategy - family planning methods - be they temporary or permanent in spite of these having long term consequences on their health status. The basic motive behind this is to protect themselves from the burden of another possible pregnancy (with no way out) in the face of increasing violence and sexual abuse within and outside the camps. Women thus recede back into the 'personal space' and into their own, to draw on the only endowment at their disposal - instinctive knowledge. Of course this may not be the answer to all the violations that would still go on but may give some temporary solace to women.

extracted from Women and Displacement in Sri Lanka researched by F. Zakariya and N. Shanmugaratnam.

WOMAN UNKNOWN

Tilina Weerasinghe

The villagers said that she had committed suicide, as soon as they saw her inert body. Everyone agreed that she had committed suicide.

Two army men and a few constables came a little later. It was then that the villagers came close to the dead body.

"Is there anyone here who knows this woman?"

There was no reply to the senior police officer's question.

"If there is anyone here who knows this woman, kindly come forward," he said. This time he raised his voice.

●

He really did not expect a reply. But it was a question he had to ask, under the circumstances as an officer of the police force.

Everyone recognized her as a Tamil woman. She was quite dark. She was wearing a nose stud. A few brown stained dirty pieces of cloth removed before she died were strewn about a few feet from where she lay. A silent heap.

Those ragged bits of clothing softly swayed in the breeze....

Her breasts thrust forward in death were like any other woman's. Round breasts with brown stained nipples. They could have been breasts kissed and touched at one time and suckled by two tiny lips at another. They were lifeless now.

Her chest struggling for a last breath was now serene. There would be no more struggle.

Her legs and thighs looked as if they, too, were resting after some strain. Covered with brown dust her feet stretched away from her body, a struggle against a force ended.

Her long curly hair, a shade between a light brown and black, was spread on the ground, anyhow.

Why had she come secretly to a border village in these war torn areas?

This was what everyone, confused, bewildered and frightened, was whispering and murmuring, ignoring the fact of her death.

Or her murder.

●

There were no witnesses to her death. No human beings, not even the trees or the stream that flowed down below where she lay.

The people believed that the stream flowed quietly as if nothing had been seen because the gods had ordered every ripple to be silent.

There was just one bit of cloth among the rags enough to cover the nakedness from her chest to her knees.

" Will the person who saw this body first come with us to make a statement."

There was no one. Her body had to be taken to the army camp. The two service men and the two constables did not think the time wasted on these inquests was worth their while. Nor did the man who had first reported the news of the dead body - he who had at first been ready to give any evidence regarding the murder.

Tamil woman. She could claim any name. any name for a Tamil woman. Only she knew who she was, whose daughter, whose wife. Only the gods could take a decision about her death. Or the river, the silent witness to her murder...may be the dark dense trees whose yellowed leaves scattered about her body helped to cover her nudity... they are the ones to be charged with giving evidence about her murder.



The inquest could be of any type. They could give her any name, any place where she had come from. May be they would call her Lechchimi Thangamma.... Rani....Saraswathi Or any name befitting a

It could be that she would never have needed to go to the army camp ever again. If her village was part of the theatre of war, she could have gone earlier to the army camp closest to her village. Or maybe she

was taken there... maybe she was taken there against her will. She could have been the bride of a soldier for a few hours...or she may have stayed there for a day or two, maybe a few days.

with men confidently and without fear? Did she get anything to eat for lunch? Or dinner?

No one knew any of these things.

The people in all the neighbouring villages live in constant fear and uncertainty. They do not think of men or women, they are not curious or interested.

The people whose lives are limited to thinking of their own lives got up one morning and found the dead body of a woman.

On her nose was a small stud.

That was all they knew.

It was a comfort to them if the body would be removed from their village as speedily as possible.

Perhaps she, like many of her friends from her village, left the army camp as yet another woman who would never have seen the soldier after her short honeymoon.....hurt, pained, in sorrow, angry. This could be a trip she set out on to find his village, or a journey she made to say farewell to the lovers whom she met only at night.

She may be a woman who was fleeing the war, afraid for her life.

" She has committed suicide!"

The body will decompose soon.

Or a combination of all these.

WHO IS SHE?

Had she ever been to school? Did she learn to read and write? Had she learnt to speak

Life.....war.....death.

From - (Women Writing - Translation by Vijita Fernando)

BUILDING NEWLY

Women living in conflict zones go from one crisis to another and society continually changes. New ways of living arise out of destruction, new forms replacing the old are resisted, but since they arise out of new needs, replace the old which are not applicable any more.

Inoka Priyadharshini

Researcher searches in two villages for new and positive signs in the "building newly".

Eight villages of Pollonaruwa District bordering Batticaloa District which belonged to two main villages were selected for the field study. The two main villages are Ihalagama & Pahalagama while in Ihalagama village the small villages identified were Udagama, Medagama, Harasgama and Singhegama. In the village of Pahalagama small villages identified were Salmalgama, Nelumgama, Olugama and Manelgama. Except for Olugama in the Pahalagama area all other villages were started with the resettlement projects of the government. Olugama was an old Tamil village while the villages around Ihalagama came under the accelerated Mahaweli scheme. Prior to 1980 people were not living in the area although the adults feel

that there were Muslim people and Tamil Veddhas occupying the areas which had access to water. In addition the workers of Triconamadu and Kandakaduwa Live Stock farms had lived in these areas. At present this place is known as Harasgama. After the incidents in 1983 the Tamil people who were living in Harasgama went to another area to reside. Most of the villages around Pahalagama are mixed villages with inter-marriages of the community. The population was not composed of many women in the area. The population figures are not clear as the Census Report is not specific. According to Grama Niladari reports compiled by the Divisional Secretary the following data was collected. The most number of women belong to Olugama village.

Table No. 01

Population According to G.N. Division and by sex

Area	Village	No. of Families	Female	Male	Total
Ihalagama	Udagama	158	172	211	383
	Medagama	233	308	328	636
	Harasgama	121	130	180	310
	Singhagama	279	110	317	427
Pahalagama	Olugama	130	535	474	1009
	Manelgama				
First Phase		40	86	89	175
Second Phase		92	224	244	468
Third Phase		35	50	185	235

Source : Village Level Data (1992/93) - Dept. of Census and Statistics

As identified, in the field study in two stages the data indicates that although the study areas belong to one geographical zone in the Mahaweli area the people's standard of living varied from each other. The main occupation of people from Ihalagama and Pahalagama is agriculture. Due to the war and natural disasters it is not visible that the agriculture sector is successful in the area. People in the area at present face a lot of difficulties and more affected are the women.

The primary change that has taken place in the lives of women of the two villages due to war conditions is the promotion of women to the position of head of the household. Female headed households are a new phenomena visible in Sri Lankan society in the last two decades.

At the national level the households headed by females had shown an increase from 16% in 1981, to 18% in 1982 and 21% in 1994. The increase in the female headed households in the Polonnaruwa District is 5826 (12.8%) in 1981 to 11,943 (15.7%) in 1994.

There are several other reasons for the increase in female headed households as shown by Kottegoda / Samuel.

1. The death of a husband, due to involvement in war by shells, bombs, explosions and shooting.
2. Disappearance without evidence.
3. Kept in custody.
4. Involvements in a military organization or abandonment by husbands.
5. Inability of husband to come back to the family. (1996 : 12 -13)

But the women from Ihalagama and Pahalagama who are considered in the study had other reasons in additions to the above specially the women in Pahalagama.

Table No . 02

Reasons Influencing Women to be Heads of Households

Village under study	War	Suicides	Natural Deaths	Other reasons
Salmaigama	08	03	28	28
Nelumgama	01	03	04	38
Olugama	36	09	26	71
Manelgama	-	-	09	06
TOTAL	45	15	67	143

Source : Field Study

According to the above table only 45 have become female headed households due to war. 67 husbands died of natural causes. The largest number 143, died for other reasons. The peoples livelihood in this place is paddy cultivation and in the recent past as the people were unable to get a good crop, a number of farmers (15) committed suicide by drinking pesticides. The other reasons are women's participation in economic and social activities, and becoming active after husbands left them.

The trend of females becoming heads of households due to war is seen in Olugama village. As Olugama is a Tamil village the males had joined the LTTE. Death due to war, disappearances, migrating abroad and getting killed by other militant organizations are some of the reasons for the creation of female headed households in this village. In a field study we met a 28 year old mother of two named Nirmala. She is a Tamil woman married to a Sinhala husband who was killed by the LTTE, due to him being Sinhala.

Because of the creation of female headed households the females had been affected physically and socially. Physically she had to struggle for quality of life and improve her economic standard; they depend on the meagre assistance government provides. The social structure of the family has broken down and more responsibilities are placed on the women. In addition the women have a different status in the society as a female headed household. In spite of the criticism of the society the females have more freedom of movement where as the Tamil Women are restricted.

Out of the 2 villages in the study (Ihalagama and Pahalagama) the female heads of households in Pahalagama are more active than the women of Ihalagama.

The females of both villages are not happy that they are unable to give a proper education to the children. In the study it was revealed that 130 children in Olugama village are not attending school. The reasons for this given by the women are that the mothers do not have sufficient cash for the children's needs, and lack of transport

facilities. Due to this the children have become income earners. Some of the children have become domestic servants in the city.

When taken as a whole, in both villages the same social environment exists. Most of the women are angry due to the experience of violence and the status given in the society for female headed households. They are angry and resentful with the government for not providing adequate services. In addition they are afraid thinking their children will be taken into custody, or join the defence forces or join the militant force and may not become good citizens with socially acceptable behaviour. In addition the women have become sick due to ill health. If they die there may not be anyone to look after the children. In addition the young widows are worried that other men may harass them. As a direct result of physical and social influences the women have changed. There is a change in their identity.

In a war situation every citizens' human rights is open to be violated. It takes place all the time, but when the rights of a woman is considered separately they take a more serious turn. In this respect sexual violation against women is not a new trend. It has happened through out history. Sexual violence is not limited to women. Men too are victims of it. Yet, due to many reasons women have become the target of sexual violence. She is open to pregnancy. Besides, she can be socially ostracized. From being disqualified from marriage she can also be permanently harmed and disgraced, raped, forced into prostitution and forced into pregnancy. In a war situation what is under normal conditions termed 'woman violations' take a more meaningful stand. Women become the victors' property and the point at which his deprivations and sufferings find an outlet. It is also meant to disgrace the males of her community.

From the area under survey one such incident was reported. An elderly woman (62) declared a soldier violated her. But the research pointed out detection of the woman choosing to participate in such activity.

More over large scale prostitution is prevalent in the area, and rape becomes not necessary.

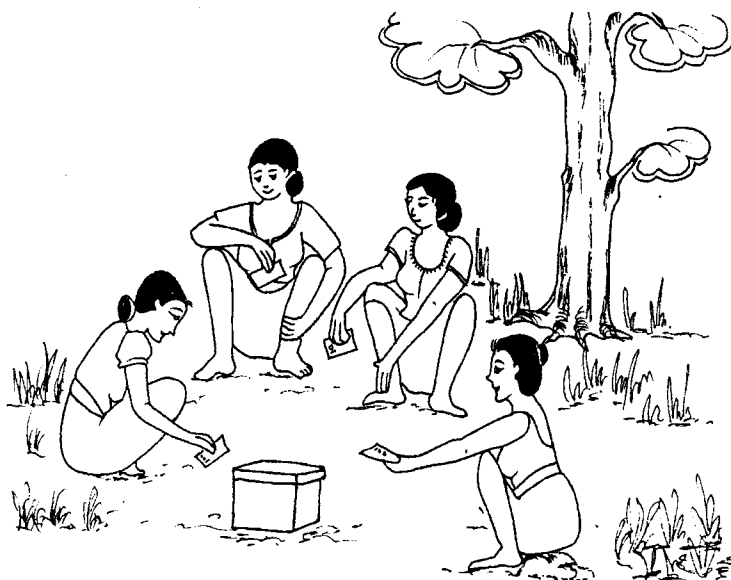
What are the strategies adopted by women to face sexual violence arising within a war situation?

Although the two selected areas are within the same zone the capacity for being adopted by the women to face it are varied and of different types. We can identify their capacity for bearing up under mental, social and economic conditions. The widowed women who have become heads of households and majority of other women have become helpless in the study area.

These are some of the comments made to the researcher. However, even without any threats in the Ihalagama village, the women had the same opinions.

The women who had lost their husbands in both villages initially had assistance from relations and neighbours in abundance. In addition they appreciated the hand given by the school teachers in the area and the mental relief provided by the temple.

The women who are heads of households had to face many problems when compared with the other women in an armed conflict situation. She had to face a new status.



The females were very keen to inform the researcher of their own problems and sufferings. They were very friendly. They informed about their problems with wild animals and the forces. It is important for them to be given a hearing which is an outlet at a time when they are mentally depressed and are in the midst of an armed conflict. In comparison with Pahalagama village it was found that these women had not thought of any alternative arrangements to face the situation.

Regarding this some of the replies were:

"Useless doing anything"

"The elephants destroy our crops, the tigers kill our men when they work in the fields. (agricultural)"

"as there are land mines the fear of getting out of the houses is present"

She had to attend to her children's future, children's education and mental protection needed as a single parent.

In a few villages (Harasgama & Manelgama) the Montessori school started by the villagers accommodate the children between ages of 10 - 12 to give them an education. Due to lack of materials there were instances of Montessori schools closing down.

When comparing the two villages the women in Pahalagama are more developed pursuing economic tactics and new thoughts. According to J.E. Bush and E. Pizs-Lopez the women who face conflict environments tend to follow four kinds of tactical measures.

They are :

1. The people who provide for the family (relations and friends) tried to change them to suit the situations within the existing environment. It is a way of better management of existing resources.
2. The women continue to do the work previously done by the men.
3. Migration (internal and external).
4. The women due to acute need fall prey to socially unacceptable and even under normal conditions, not approved activities.

We were able to identify that out of the four tactics the first was followed by the majority of women. As a whole women from both villages have followed the first tactic in the initial stages but the women from Pahalagama have started adopting various economic involvements by now. Although the women who had become heads of households had tried to follow the second tactic of economic activity but due to difficulty of following the same pattern as the husband some of them have changed to other economic activity.

The women of Pahalagama have formed teams under a leader and started small scale self employment projects and a 'cheetu' system (monthly contribution as a means of saving). By this system the women were able to go to the town during the week ends and buy provisions for the house. The self employment projects were based on animal husbandry, batiks, making sweet meats, making dried fish, handicrafts such as mat weaving, reed products, and coir products. Out of these women only a few were literate, those women provided few basic skills in costing, reading and writing to the other women. According to the study lhalagama - Pahalagama focused on women living in conflict areas, the following is recommended to improve their quality of life.

1. Provide methods of income generation on a permanent basis for economic stability. Provide infra and supra structural facilities for the women who have started self employment projects.
2. The children who do not go to school or the dropouts should be provided with education facilities which could be extended to the adults who are keen in getting themselves educated.

It is essential to educate the community to look at the female headed households in a positive manner. Also provide counselling service to the women who are mentally depressed. This service should be provided by the community from someone within the community itself.

However constraints will be many. The villages are situated in the conflict areas. There is an acute need for permanent peace. The war zones should be organized as peace zones.

*Based on research by Inoka Priyadharshini
Translated and compiled by Seela Ebert
Narangoda.*

Women Writing

In the last issue of Voice of Women, volume five issue six, we inadvertently omitted to mention that the story Menika by Vijita Fernando was inspired by a poem of the same name by Yasmine Gooneratne. We regret the omission.

Gender Specifics

Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran

The gender specific burdens and responsibilities in the reproductive sphere are often carried out under very desperate conditions in the refugee camps. The single women live in fear of sexual harassment. The women who have males in the family are given protection. The men protect "their" women, the girl children, wives and mothers, but look upon the other single women as sexual objects to be targeted. The single woman becomes sexually vulnerable, being not "possessed" and therefore not protected. The women complained that there was no protection for them. The women were very careful not to name the offenders for fear of reprisals. There is some kind of solidarity amongst women, who look after the other women and grown up girls when the elders have to go out of the refugee camps on various missions.

The human suffering of having to be displaced from their own habitat to which they were used and which has become part of their lives can only be understood when one experiences it. It was often told by the women - "You must undergo this pain to realise the depth of it, the agony". Of course we conceded the point to them without reservation.

They have little spaces partitioned into bed rooms, cooking area and perhaps a corridor. The partitions are done, rarely with cardboard and often with sarees and sheets donated by others. The women have to change clothes and sleep without an iota of privacy. They often ask another woman or a girl to stand in watch so that peeping toms can be avoided, the so called rooms and kitchen have no doors.

It is the same scenario with the toilet use and when bathing. Both men and women have to bathe from the same containers where the water is collected from the lorries on a daily basis. If the women wait too long so that the sight is clear of men, there is no water left for them. They are not used to bathing in public and were very shy at the beginning. But they said it still continues to be an uncomfortable experience as men do not usually behave well. They used a lot of euphemisms as manner of explanation in their talk. They ended up saying "You must only experience to know". The single unprotected women indeed are more vulnerable to these experiences.

The major problems in their own words was bringing up the children. The fatherless child syndrome becomes more pronounced in the life situation in the refugee camps. The children are exposed at a very young age to adult behaviour. Speech mannerisms games and behaviour are copied without any checks and balances. The older men use these unprotected children to serve on them, send them on errands and the mothers are helpless by the gender belonging and by their single status. Being older in age these men have the power to order the children around. The mothers confessed that both the daughters and sons are exposed to facts of life at a very young age. Love making takes place in the open or behind the saree partition. Teenage marriages have become common as a result of these. One mother told us that children become bad, *Kettupokirarkal*. They grow up fast, they are ripe when they are young *Pinchila Muthtuthukal*.

The male protection being absent, woman on the one hand are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Being ever-teased, commented upon on their walk and mode of dress, they are sometimes openly invited but more often suggestively given signs. On the other hand they are scared to talk about these experiences, while being silent they are harassed, if they become vocal and identify the culprit to strangers and to those outsiders who appear powerful (the beauracrats, the NGO personnel and the

researchers came under this category) the situation can become dangerous and more overtly violent. It was a shameful experience for us to feel helpless and ineffective in offering any kind of remedial action as we could not simply find out who is who. Their "this one" and "that one" remained unidentified through out their conversations. We could only bring it to the notice of the NGOs that work in the camp and to the AGA of Trincomalee. The women felt and rightly so, that the out-siders who come and go are not there to morally support them or protect them when the retaliation takes place.

because they are culturally conditioned to a "one man in my life" theory, but rather for practical reasons. They fear that the children will not be accepted and treated well by the new husband.

The Sinhala woman whose husbands are killed by the L.T.T.E. did not express any anti-Tamil feelings. They were wise enough to separate the L.T.T.E. from the Tamil people, and their experiences with the Tamil neighbours have also helped to formulate their attitudes and feelings. One woman said that when the L.T.T.E. killed her husband, the Tamil neighbours hid them in their house. Another woman said :

In many areas of social and familial behaviour, the Sinhalese women in the camps subscribe to a very similar cultural pattern of behaviour. Their concern with the children's education, suicide syndrome and the loneliness and feelings of alienation are similar to those of the Tamil women. Under the study that they belong to the politically hegemonic ethnic bloc has not conferred any special privileges. They suffer due to the indifference of relatives. Stories similar to what we heard from the Tamil women are repeated by them sometimes with the same words, sentiment and phraseologies. At the level of the widow syndrome, there is indeed a difference. Rigid patterns of seclusion and cultural and social marginalization to which the Tamil women are subjected to are absent among the Sinhala people. There are no rules and conventions imposed on them culturally, but socially due to worries and financial constraints the Sinhala women keep away from socio-cultural events that take place in the neighbourhood. Besides, they avoid leaving the children in the camp. Unless it is absolutely necessary, they do not go out of the camps. Children cannot be left alone, they say for many reasons. Then they tell us what the many reasons are.

We are very friendly with all the neighbours. We do not think of ethnic belonging, whether Sinhalese, Tamil or Muslim we mix with all of them freely. We take part in their festivals. When I burnt myself Tamils looked after me and my children. They are generally very helpful.

The same kind of feelings were not expressed by the Tamil women. The mass scale killings and disappearances caused by the state apparatus and its attendant brutality have made them refer to the state as Sinhala State and condemn the Sinhala agency. However, they were not anti-Sinhalese in the way they conducted themselves, but two of the older sons have vowed to avenge their fathers' killers. The response of the mothers' was that there is no point in harbouring feelings of hatred towards anyone and destroying themselves in the process and becoming killers themselves. That the Trincomalee Tamils have not interacted with the Sinhala civil society or enjoyed the Sinhala neighbours' company or hospitality is a major factor in this process of constructing consciousness of friendship or hostility.

Regarding their attitude towards remarriage, there is also a difference. They too do not want to marry, not

The general pattern in the women's consciousness was that they hated violence and war mongering and longed to have peace and tranquility amidst them. There were many women who were yearning for peace and wanted the state and the LTTE to put a stop to the war brutality forthwith. There were instances where they politicised the personal, the whole familial household related experiences to the ongoing war. They were quick to identify the problem.

The nation as a whole is under seige - seige of hatredness, suspicion and "mutual murders". Our children are affected. What do we hope for them? Insecurity, worries, tension poverty and starvations. The war must stop.

Though many women shared this kind of helplessness, the women in the refugee camps were more articulate in their expressions.

●

With the father absent and the mother often depressed and sick and poor, the children are exposed to various problems at various levels. In most homes the children are found to be unhappy, malnourished, under educated and often rebellious as remarked by the mother. That they are rejected from the society for various reasons is one aspect of this story. That they are subjected to a series of negative attitudes is a far more tragic story. State terrorism, inter-ethnic tensions and rivalry have constructed a series of anti-feelings. One of them a Tamil said

The Sinhalese community in uniform shoots, mutilates, tortures, arrests and kills the Tamil and Muslims.

A Sinhalese woman said

The Tamils want to have a bigger share of the cake, they are selfish and destructive like the L.T.T.E.

Another Tamil woman said

"The Muslims want to drive away the Tamils from the Eastern province and want to enjoy all the benefits, not only the Sinhalese but the Muslims are also against us".

These are the common sense feelings of the families who have lost their bread winner and the children grow up in this environment. What they experience in school both from the peer group and from the school as an institution has another dimension. Poverty, which has deprived them of all childhood longing has left deep scars in their minds. A mother's story of how she met the problem of a childhood longing has even subverted her own religion.

"My son asked me to buy him a bicycle. I cannot afford it. I told the teacher to tell him that it is against our Muslim culture. He didn't ask for it later".

That the teacher, under the circumstances has complied is not strange.

The child as a refugee has constructed his/her own marginalisation as an outcaste. Both in the village and in the school the refugees are treated as outcaste vagabonds. Among the communities that are affected by war, poverty and insecurity, there is a hierarchy created as refugees and those who belong to the land, their own habitat. The refugees are cast in an idiom of otherness and referred to derogatorily as refugee children, as *ahatipillaikal* with social and economic

meanings of marginalisation. This construction is not a caste or class variation of hierarchy but something beyond that, and is based on a belonging and non-belonging to the habitat and the land of one's birth.

The discussion with those living outside the refugee camps has brought out the same kinds of the structural deprivations and basic needs such as water and privacy in shelters. But how they felt and how the others treated them within the construction of refugees have hurt them badly. They expressed their feelings at great length.

Households and Levels of Poverty

The household is not a personal dominion or a hide out from the political ruffle. It is always situated in the political sphere though an image of being personal and

care and religiosity. In reality however, this image is always contested in general and particularly for many women it is a site of unshared labour, a site of violence, a site of sacrifice and suffering. The single woman in the present household though is rid of the patriarchal structural dominance. The ideology of patriarchy which is pervasive crosses the boundaries of the door step and the fences and is very much present in the form of gossip, sexual harassment and other exploitations and oppressive intrusions from the public domain.

Apart from these which are connected to the absent scenario of the husband, the other major problem faced by the women is poverty. Poverty which has made the child stop going to school, poverty which has created child labour of having to work outside the house and inside the house, poverty which has helped create disobedient rebellious children, poverty



private with in-built mechanisms to shield away the market oriented competition is woven around it. It is also constructed as a haven for the domain of expressive love and

which has made the children attack the mothers asking for food, has also various other dimensions. It has converged with other social inequalities to create

oppressive situations. The father-less and husband-less syndrome by themselves would have been less traumatic, but the fact that it has economic repercussions which have led to lack of power, socially as well, has indeed created traumatic conditions for all those who live in poverty.

Women complained rather helplessly of the one or two meals a day, about the hungry children and the labouring children who earn a supplementary income to their mothers' wages. The bread winners who have died have not saved enough. Not by design but by accident, the entire sample of hundreds of households of the Muslims and the Tamils, are from a low class. Hence this study is of a class that was earning a hand to mouth living even when the bread winners were alive. Now without them the supplementary income the women earned has become the main income.

The women go to the field to weed and clear the soil for daily wages. They make food at home and sell them from home through the children who do this in the mornings before they go to school. This means the women get up at four a.m. They spoke about the conditions of their labour, how tiring it is and how worn out they are by these daily chores and having to sit in front of the fire for long hours. Some of the women weave mats and rugs and sell cadjans which are taken to the market by themselves or the children. Thirty six women said that they have no means of subsistence. Five are working as seamstresses, two pounding paddy. Three are engaged in poultry, selling eggs and birds. Six are working from home, weaving mats, containers and cadjans. Three work for daily wages as weavers in a weaving centre. Twenty six women are in some kind of petty trade making and selling hoppers, string-hoppers, running small boutiques, rearing goats and cows and twenty women are working as agricultural labourers in the fields.

Poverty has affected the children in various ways. But the women are affected physically as well. They did not have to

speak about their physical conditions much though they did so. The women looked weak and pale, worn out by the physical labour on the one hand and lack of nutritious food on the other. They complained of various illnesses of which anaemic conditions were the most frequent complaint. Aches and pains and arthritis were also talked of often. The women complained of black outs and weakness. The complaints explained by the women are symptomatic of both their mental and physical conditions. One can easily come to this conclusion though not with medical precision. Whenever the women spoke of illness they always linked it up with the kind of labour they do for their living. Rice pounding, paddy pounding, sitting in front of the kitchen fire, in bending positions for long hours in the field and standing in the wet fields for long hours are related to chest pain, losing eye sight, body aches and arthritis. That they cannot continue this miserable existence, this life of poverty, life of insufficiency, this life of hunger, and this life of starvation was repeatedly mentioned to us.

They have a low esteem of themselves as living below standards. They are bitter and frustrated.

Latest Release

Gendering Humanitarianism - An Annotated Bibliography on Gender and Capacity Building in Armed Conflict by Bhawani Loganathan.

It is a resource published by International Centre for Ethnic Studies and is the result of a project capacity building in the Conflict Zones.

The bibliography is compiled from reports, journals, press articles databases and covers women's health, income generation and peace building. It is a useful guide for researchers, policy makers and community workers involved in these areas.

Vigil

There was an all night vigil in the city
Which I didn't go to
But I remained awake, candles burning
In my brain.

For that one night left out of my life
I keep now perpetual vigil
Thinking about the world, destruction,
Cesspits of bombcraters and napalmed fish
Swimming in those poisoned waters,
Think about the countryside exfoliated like
A bald head every root dug out never to grow
Again, every crevice of earth filled, its nostrils,
Its orifices clogged with toxic mucus
Crippled trees, deformed torsoes of nature.

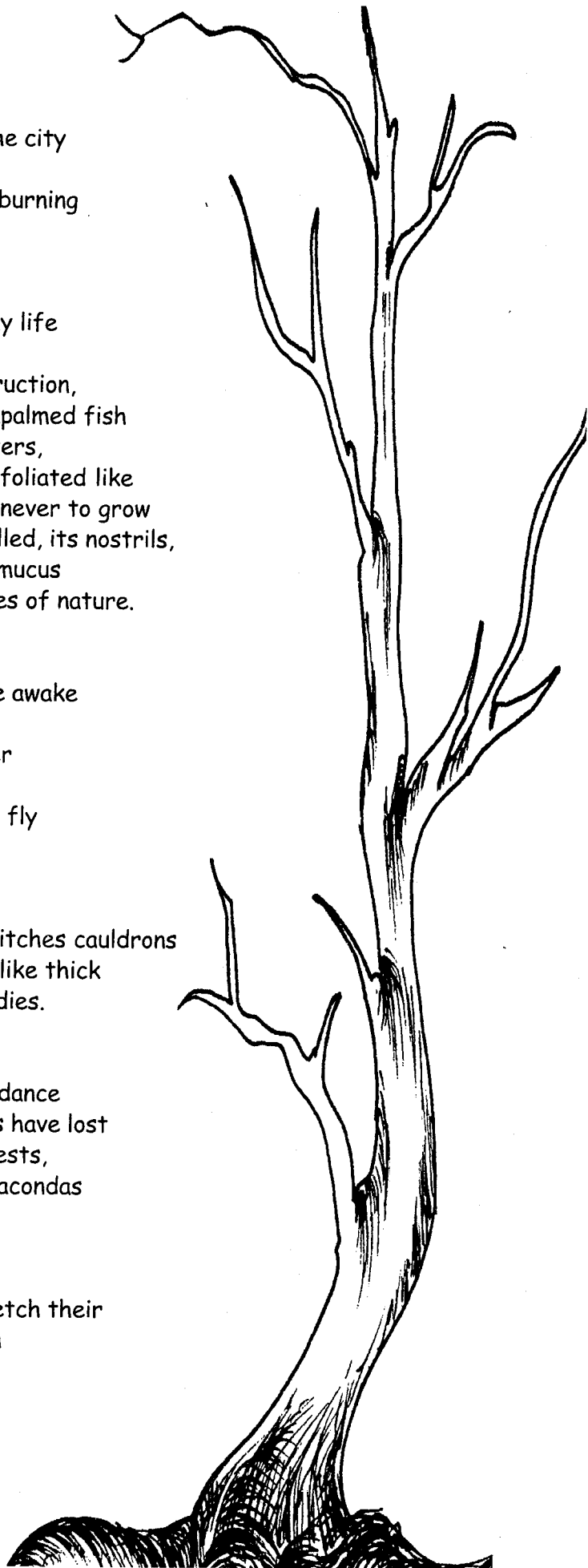
That all night vigil still keeps me awake
In its perpetual sleeplessness
There were placards I remember
A war that's fought
"So that rich kids could sail and fly
Ski and Dive."

The oil wells are bubbling like witches cauldrons
And the housemaids bear welts like thick
Red banners draped on their bodies.

At the circus the crazed bears dance
In their cages and the elephants have lost
All memory of ivory and the forests,
The wilderness is tamed, the anacondas
Replete

In dolphin land the piranhas stretch their
Jaws and ribbons of white flesh
Float like festival streamers
Before they're torn apart and
Gorged.

Jean Arasanayagam



Traumatized

This report examines traumatized women in war situations and identifies the main causes and symptoms which will enable us to review current treatments and suggest recommendations.

Defining Trauma

Trauma is a force so strong it causes a person's defenses to break down, leaving them incapable of an effective response. The stress created is so severe, it will affect nearly all people living in a conflict situation. Trauma is more than just a stressful event and is characterized by the emotional response it produces including helplessness and intense fear.

Symptoms associated with trauma are diverse. Often women do not realize that what they are feeling is a result of the trauma they have encountered. Doctors or medical staff also rarely see this relationship. Many complaints are seemingly physical but have a strong link to psychological and mental anguish. To oversimplify the broad range of individual responses, one may include headaches and bodyaches, loss of appetite, loss of interest in daily tasks and sudden fits of crying. Later these can produce an inability to love and nurture children, severe punishment of children and violent temper tantrums. In severe cases nightmares, insomnia and phobias can be seen and finally complete withdrawal and an inability to interact.

The ability to treat these symptoms depends entirely on the severity of each individual case. In some cases, such as the example of withdrawal and lack of interaction skills, treatment over an extended period of time can still be inadequate.

Causes

The types of trauma women encounter are as varied and complex as the symptoms they produce. They include loss, threat of life, torture, displacement, abduction and murder of loved ones. The uncertainty and impermanent state of their living conditions due to war is another factor.

Loss may include family members and friends, the home, employment, even trust, security and self-respect due to the action or threat of rape. Loss of family members in the context of war leads to much additional pain and suffering at a time that is already extremely stressful. Women are forced to either witness the death itself or the bodies of loved ones that are mutilated or decomposed, including massive bleeding and grotesque sights, sounds and smells. This has horrific psychological consequences for the woman, resulting in permanent mental images that affect her daily life and sleep. Triggers bring on immediate anxiety and panic. In the case of disappearances, women cannot mourn their loss or are given an unrealistic hope of survival that consumes all her energy and resources. The lack of a body seriously hinders the healing process, causing a build up of emotional problems.

The emotional consequences of being forced from home and community are enormous. These are places of comfort and safety. It brings stress due to loss of a home and then with new conditions. The dependence entirely on others brings about a loss of dignity and feelings of helplessness.

Torture is a tool of power and control. It brings about a constant fear and psychological pain just as great as the physical pain it causes. Those who survive torture are severely effected, they are weak mentally and can have a deep mistrust for friends and society in general.

The post traumatic period that follows the initial event plays an important and prominent part in its effects on women. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a persons extreme response following the particular event. It is at this stage that women are often left without support. Many are made to feel guilt for their inability to recover. For example, the following is one ladies reaction to the murder of her husband:

"Mrs J., aged 30 years, was an assistant medical practitioner who had been newly married to an engineer. While travelling by coach, Mr J. had been shot at an army check point and subsequently died two days later. His wife developed a severe form of typical grief reaction with waves of crying spells and acute sorrow. She had strong guilt feelings for not immediately rushing to her husband's side and helping his treatment. Further, she felt guilty that she had not stayed with her husband much longer after marriage so that she could have conceived before his death. She developed extreme social withdrawal and was unable to leave her room and meet people. Her symptoms have been very incapacitating and have prevented her return to work. Her acceptance of her husband's death and working- through her grief have been retarded and her progress slow."

(extract taken from Scarred Minds: The Psychological Impact of War on Sri Lankan Tamils, 1998)

Trauma effects both women and men greatly. Although there is inadequate data to suggest women are more at risk than men, it is clearly seen women are increasingly being effected.

As the war continues, it is likely that women will continue to bear much of the strain. While problems in men are often severe

single events, women must endure prolonged and repetitive traumatic circumstances. Women will often bear the impact of trauma associated with men also. Left without husbands, women are forced to take on the responsibilities of the entire family and face the full impact of war alone. It is this lack of support that makes women so vulnerable to the effects of trauma.

Treatment

Current treatment of trauma is virtually non-existent. Medical care consists of treatment for physical problems and rarely looks into the psychological and mental effects of war. Mental health services are not seen as a necessity, but as a luxury. Physical treatment is insufficient and leads to extra burdens mentally, that can exacerbate problems. In this case, it is important to have both physical and psychological treatment.

On the rare occasion that psychological trauma treatment is given, it is a single event. Different people may enter into conflict areas aiming to give assistance. These people often have little training and are unable to regularly visit the areas in need. This may actually be destructive as women are unable to trust those who are there to help.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need for trauma treatment. But ultimately it may be useless to waste time and resources if treatment is not appropriate or administered effectively.

Initially, there is a need for access to those effected by conflict, especially women in camps. **Often it is difficult to receive access to women as patriarchal hierarchies within the camps mean that women are unable to express their needs, and information must be channelled through men and officials.** It is important that some form of regular visitation by mental health workers be provided to women. There are many women outside

conflict areas that have been deeply traumatized by the war also. It is necessary to give these women much needed support. Greater awareness of help available and how to access it is essential. This treatment needs to be readily available at a viable financial and emotional cost.

biases and pre-conceptions before attempting to assist others. The personnel must also receive regular and up to date guidance and support themselves.

Not only should the level of training increase, but there should be attempts to



An important factor in any psychological treatment is that of continuance. Constant support and follow-up is required. Women must be able to trust those giving support and it is far more effective for these women to be visited by the same people on each occasion that they are treated.

Training of personnel for work with trauma victims should become a higher priority. Workers of mental health in Sri Lanka occupy a very specific field and as such they require specific training. This training needs to focus on listening and analytical skills, but also should address self-awareness and enable workers to deal with their own

recruit more workers. Larger quantities of better trained personnel are urgently required. It is hoped that from this more workers will be prepared to leave Colombo and enter areas of greater need.

In conclusion, the impact of trauma on women in the whole of Sri Lanka is enormous. It effects women's daily lives, sometimes in a manner they do not even realize. While the importance of physical medical care should not be ignored, there is a massive need for psychological care. Overall, more adequately trained personnel in ongoing roles of trauma treatment are needed.

Melinda Shaw



MANORANI

Four days before her son Richard de Zoysa's eleventh death anniversary, Manorani Saravanamuttu entered peacefully into her eternal rest. It was what she had always wanted since that black day, 18th February 1990, when her beloved son was removed so brutally from her and from life, shattering the familiar world she lived in and casting her permanently into a world of pain, loss, fear and struggle which she survived only because of her tremendous moral strength and unswerving courage and determination.

Manorani came from one of the most distinguished Tamil families in Sri Lanka, the members of which had been outstanding in the fields of medicine, law, local government, sport and public service. Her father Manicam Saravanamuttu had been the country's High Commissioner in Malaya and Singapore and Ambassador to Indonesia, during the course of his career. Among her uncles were the highly respected Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu and T.V. Saravanamuttu, who were counted among the most brilliant and able public servants of their time.

I remember Manorani first at Bishop's College as a tall, striking girl with long black plaits. I next encountered her years later in the lively world of the English speaking theatre in Colombo in the late 60s, 70s and early 80s. Although she was familiar with the stage and had performed in a few plays, she very soon assumed the major role which was to be hers in the theatre and also in life: that of being the mother of the rising star, Richard de Zoysa, whose many talents were to extend into other areas, apart from theatre.

A Woman for All Time

Richard's story is very well known and need not be repeated here. Manorani's story began, or took on a heroic dimension, from the moment of Richard's death. From her unshrinking identification of Richard's mutilated body by a scar that a childhood injury had etched below one knee, to the subsequent long travail she suffered in the pursuit of justice for her son, she displayed the most exemplary courage. Her determination to have a judicial process which would name and condemn those responsible resulted in the loss of her practice as a doctor since this endeavour endangered her own life. Due to the oppressive and dangerous political climate of that period, friends cautioned discretion. They wanted her to passively accept what had happened. But she refused to be silent and her outspoken search for justice and truth forced her into exile abroad for five months in the interests of her own security. Her love for her country and awareness of the plight of other mothers and wives whose men folk had met the same fate as Richard, eventually brought her home and shaped the mission which was to dominate the rest of her life. She became an activist in 'The Mothers' Front' which had been formed by women who shared her predicament. She was also able to resume her medical practice to some extent.

When she visited Australia in June 1993 on a lecture tour which was sponsored by Amnesty International, I attended the meeting held in Melbourne. She impressed everyone present with her dignity, the way she articulated her story and her transparent courage. Interviewed by the leading newspaper "The Age" she acknowledged that in different circumstances she would not have pictured herself as an activist. "Prior to my son's death" she said "I was a good old fashioned medical practitioner." But the tragedy that overtook her and other women, she said "...gave me a new purpose in life. At the time I didn't think of it as the natural progression from this devastating event but being a doctor, I think I was looking for a cure. I was searching for justice." She never found justice as it is administered

by the institutions of the state but a Higher Power removed some of the chief participants in the murder of her son, and very probably of other husbands and sons, in a bomb attack which killed President Premadasa and others in May 1993. As the Biblical prophet Hosea says: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

Manorani's foremost concern was that the women whose lives were ruined should be provided with the mental, moral and physical means to rehabilitate their lives. She set this process in motion by forming the Centre for Family Services early in 1993 which was to work primarily with women in the villages. The Centre began its work without any fanfare in the village of Attaragalla in the Kurunegala District with twelve widows who were a lost and disheartened group. Their empowerment to rebuild their lives began with a personal encounter with Manorani and the realisation that they were not the only ones whose lives had been plunged into disorder. There was also the support, for the first time, of an organisation which was committed to actively helping them. This was how the first "Samithi" came into existence and by 1997 there were thirty-eight "samithis" operating in Kandy, Kurunegala, Matara and Moneragala. The policy of the Centre for Family Services was to empower women to take decisions about their own lives and assist them with the means to carry them out. The Centre did not believe in handouts but guided the women in improving their economic status through the development of income generating projects. There were also programs to raise their awareness of social and human rights and the provision of counselling services. For the part that Manorani played in initiating this valuable humanitarian work, she was named Veera Chudamani in the National Honours list of April 1998. She was also the recipient of honours from community organisations.

When I last met her in August 1998 I felt the full force of her sufferings and struggles which now manifested themselves in physical fragility and incipient illness. Having lost her real home and most of her personal possessions as a consequence of her son's death, she had become an occupant of a series of temporary residences and shelters made available by kind relations and friends. Yet, her deep love for Richard, her service to humanity and her love for her country were the enduring impressions emanating from this woman who was now a shadow of her former self.

I will always remember her sweet and gracious smile, the wise medical advice to which I still adhere and the elegant figure gracing many atheatrical event of the good years before tragedy struck. A detail in that latter picture still lingers, the fresh jasmines she always wore tucked in to the side of the 'konde' which knotted together her abundant hair.

I know that she longed for peace and to be reunited with Richard. In the blessed Realm to which she has gone, she surely has her heart's desire. Her name, and that of her son will always be intertwined and remembered with honour in the country of their birth.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation. 21.4)

Shelagh Goonewardene

End of a picnic

Sitting on the still warm sand
With evening feathering
through the palms

I watch the rising wind
Ruffle their hair-laughing
profiles sharp,

And feet set firm despite the
swirling swift

Tide, bodies braced taut,
defying pull and drift.

Clear-cut against the setting
sun

They stand, when from the
far line of the sea

A massive ship-destroyer-
slides along

The dusk horizon, gliding in
between

Children and sky quite
blotting out the light.

When it has sailed away the
sun

Has dropped below the edge
into the coming night.

Anne Ranasinghe

From : Against Eternity and Darkness,



Sexual And Gendered Violence

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Refugee situations was the theme of the Inter-Agency Lessons Learned Conference held from 27th - 29th March 2001 in Geneva Switzerland. It was organized by UNHCR with 120 participants from the refugee community, implementing agencies, Human Rights Organizations NGO's and UN sister agencies. Its main objective was to review progress and impact to date on the sexual and gender based violence programmes that had been in effect in refugee camps and IDP settings for the past two years.

Ameena Hussein

who attended the meeting filed in this report.

A Global Overview

- ◆ In South Africa, it is estimated that every 83 seconds one woman is raped: only one in twenty of these cases are ever reported to the police (Vetten: 1995, Tribune: 1991).
 - ◆ More than 90 million African women and girls are victims of female circumcision or other forms of genital mutilation (Heise: 1994).
 - ◆ In a nationally representative sample of 12,300 adult women in Canada, 25% of women report to have been assaulted by their current or former partner (CSS: 1993).
 - ◆ In Zimbabwe, domestic violence accounts for more than 60% of murder cases that go through the high court in Harare (ZWRCN: 1995).
 - ◆ In Canada, 62% of women murdered in 1987 died at the hands of an intimate male partner (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics: 1988).
 - ◆ "Rape has been dismissed by military and political leaders as a private crime or the unfortunate behaviour of renegade soliders", Human Rights Watch, Africa.
 - ◆ "During the armed conflict in Bangladesh in 1971, it is estimated that 200,000 civilian women and girls were victims of rape committed by Pakistani soldiers" idem.
 - ◆ "A European Community fact-finding team estimated that more than 20,000 Muslim women have been raped in Bosnia since the fighting began in April 1992" idem.
- Forms of sexual and gender based violence identified in conflict/refugee situations include:
- ◆ Mass rape, military sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy
 - ◆ Sex in exchange for survival/food/shelter/protection

- ◆ Resurgence of female genital mutilation

It has been determined that a well co-ordinated, multi-sectoral and inter-agency approach can prevent sexual and gender based violence and respond to survivor needs. Prevention and response includes each sector, every actor including Refugees/IDP's, UNHCR, NGO's and the Host Government. All actors engage in continuous review and analysis of anecdotal and factual data to discover the causes and contributing factors and to develop strategies to address the after effects and consequences of SGBV to the individual survivor, the family and the community. A team approach requires referral and reporting systems, co-ordination mechanisms, and engagement of all actors in a collaborative and co-operative effort. Success requires engagement and action of the refugee/IDP community and all actors working with the community to support design and implementation of solutions.

It was recognized that to address SGBV in refugee and IDP situations certain measures need to be taken. Some of them are:

For the community sector

- ◆ There is a need for organizational leadership and commitment to community based multi-disciplinary inter-agency action for prevention and strategic response as evidenced by appropriate resource allocation.
- ◆ There is a need to make sustainable changes in attitudes and behaviours, community awareness, and education through all levels of the community.
- ◆ There is a need for gender training with men and women at all community levels (refugee/NGO/ UN/local population/government etc)

- ◆ There is a need for increased advocacy work to be done through partnerships with the media, human rights groups and national NGO's.

For the health sector

- ◆ Deliver services to rape survivors within 72 hours of the incident.
- ◆ Provide services according to an approved protocol.
- ◆ Build staff capacity to perform according to protocols.
- ◆ Strengthen linkages with local health providers and across sectors.

For the legal sector

- ◆ There should be sufficient resources to address deficiencies in national law enforcement structures, specifically those relating to the police and the judiciary.
- ◆ There should be a basic rights awareness training for refugees/IDP's established.
- ◆ There should be confidentiality in dealing with cases of SGBV in the refugee/IDP settings.

For the security sector

- ◆ Physical planning of camps should be made a priority. Placing of latrines, water, distance to fuel supplies etc should be taken into consideration.
- ◆ Community police drawn from the refugee/IDP population must include women.

- ◆ Develop measures for treatment and rehabilitation of the perpetrator.

For the protection of children

- ◆ Empower children and promote resilience and capacity to survive and move forward.
- ◆ Community involvement is extremely important and recognition of conflicts between community values and international human rights standards is essential.

To ensure co-ordination between all actors

- ◆ Appoint an agency to be the focal point for SGBV prevention and response activities. This agency must have the capacity and authority to ensure that effective and quality services will be delivered in the community through a co-ordinated system.
- ◆ Appoint in each agency or relevant group a person to be the SGBV focal point to promote inter-agency co-ordination.
- ◆ Make sexual and gender based violence prevention and response activities part and parcel of the work done in each refugee and refugee like situation.
- ◆ Provide training for SGBV capacity building for all sectors (Health, Community, Security, Legal and Policy/Donor) and at all levels.

To introduce monitoring and evaluation of SGBV

- ◆ Incorporate monitoring and evaluation from initial stages of project design in order to allocate appropriate resources.

- ◆ There must be multi-sectoral and inter-agency participation and support in processes for designing and implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

Some positive examples of addressing SGBV in refugee and IDP settings are illustrated below.

- ◆ In Tanzania and Liberia the refugee community worked in coordination with UNHCR and implementing agencies to locate suitable sites for SGBV drop-in centres. In each location the community chose the Maternal Child and Health Centre (MCH) because of nearby access to medical services. It was a space created by and for women thereby limiting the possibility of stigma, isolation and a breach of confidentiality. Because women often frequent the MCH there was no reason for a woman to explain why she was there. The inconspicuous nature of the location gives women the freedom to choose to report a SGBV incident or not.
- ◆ In Guinea, Tanzania and Liberia teams of male and female leaders are trained in SGBV awareness campaign promotion, peer counselling and providing safe shelter. The teams are chosen by the community. They are refugees and therefore understand the refugee environment, language and culture, and have knowledge of both the host country and the home country and they have established trust within the community.
- ◆ The Family Planning Association in the Ukraine identified high Sexually Transmitted Incidence rates and complex social / economic problems among urban refugee women. Using existing staff and volunteers, the organisation conducted a special outreach to these refugee women. Training was offered in topics such as reproductive health, literacy and

social / cultural norms and behaviour in Ukraine to support integration into the community. As a result of these training courses, more women sought and received health care, including treatment for STI's. This sensitive and practical approach to addressing client needs for increased access to care, information and assistance eventually brought an additional result : women began bringing their partners to the clinic for treatment.

- ◆ In East Timor over four hundred women in nine towns covering six districts of East Timor, have been trained in human rights programmes as a result of an assessment of Sexual and Gender Based violence conducted in January 2001 by IRC.
- ◆ In Guinea, refugee block leaders and residents provide and maintain their own lighting systems. Kerosene lanterns were distributed to refugee women block leaders with the agreement that these leaders would work with the refugees living in their block to develop systems for

contribution of kerosene, lamp maintenance and oversight. Responsibility is shared among block residents for keeping the lamps filled, cleaned and secure.

It is hoped that these findings will motivate those who work with refugees and IDPs to increase their knowledge and understanding of sexual and gender based violence and the relevant programmes. There should be analysis of sexual/gender based violence programmes to assess what has been accomplished and the impact it has had. Existing protocols should be refined and monitoring and evaluation tools must be developed. The co-ordination mechanisms in prevention / response plans must be strengthened so that all actors belonging to the different sectors work towards a shared goal. There should be a concerted effort towards developing recommendations for future sexual and gender-based violence programmes. And finally there should be a recognition on the part of donors that one of the main challenges in addressing SGBV in refugee and IDP situations is the lack of adequate resources.



IDP - Internally Displaced Persons
SGBV - Sexual and Gender Based Violence



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*"It is your country and the country of yourself
That's raped, no act of love, but wars carnality
Which lusts to death"*

Jean Arasanyagam

(Kali stands with outstretched hands)

