

# Costs of War

## Challenges and Priorities for the Future

National Peace Council  
2003



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May 2003

Printed by



41, Lumbini Avenue  
Ratmalana, Sri Lanka



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This booklet follows the publication of a revised research report on the 'Economic, Socio-Political and Human Costs of the War in Sri Lanka,' 2002 published by the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka and the MARGA Institute. This publication aims to summarise some of the key messages of the research in a more user-friendly format and to update some of the statistics in the original report. The booklet is available in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

The National Peace Council would like to thank all those who contributed to this publication in particular Dr. Godfrey Gunatilleke, Marga Institute, K.W. Janaranjana, Simon Starling and Bethan Copley.

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# CONTENTS

## Section 1

What were the Costs of the War?

Human

Social and Political

Economic

Environmental

## Section 2

What are the Continuing Costs  
of the War?

## Section 3

Addressing the Legacy of War



## Section 1

### What Were the Costs of the War?

We have all, in every community paid the costs of Sri Lanka's war, which lasted for nearly two decades. We have paid in many ways - through the death or injury of relatives and friends, through additional taxes, through increased prices of basic supplies, through restrictions on our movement and freedom of expression, through increased fear and insecurity, and through lost opportunities for economic development. In February 2002 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), under which both parties agreed to cease hostilities.

The human, social, political, economic and environmental costs of the war and its legacy are explored in this booklet. The testimonies of ordinary Sri Lankan people about the impact of the war on their lives are complemented by facts on various costs of the war. As you are reading think about the many ways that YOU have paid for the war and in what ways you and your community continue to pay.

This booklet and all costs mentioned relate to the internal armed conflict waged between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE and their allies - between 1983 and the ceasefire of 2002.





## 1. The Human Costs of the War

### Death, Injury and Disappearance

Those killed, injured or 'involuntarily disappeared' paid the highest cost of the war. **It is estimated that 65,000 people were killed – half were civilians and the majority aged between 20 and 35.**

If the average age of those who died is taken as 30 then the loss of life amounts to 1.8 million life years!

*I received a letter informing me of my son's death. I could not take part in the last rites. I learnt about his death five days after he was buried. I could not bear to think that he was buried like an orphan. I could not share my grief with others. His sisters lost their only brother.*

Mother of a Tamil soldier

Those who lost relatives and friends experience a lifetime of loss. Many who lost their main household earner face economic problems that add to their suffering.

*Our Church celebrated its festival. The children were watching and saw their cousins going together with their father. They then said to each other, 'that is how we too would have gone if our father had been living.'*

Widowed woman from Jaffna

If the average age of those who died is taken as 30 then the loss of life amounts to 1.8 million life years!

**It is estimated that in the war 17,648 LTTE cadres and 14,790 security forces personnel were killed.**



The numbers of widows and women headed households increased dramatically. Widows are often vulnerable to social exclusion, poverty and harassment. In Jaffna alone there are 18,000 widows and around 400,000 women live in shelters across the country.

*My husband's family blames me for what happened...Society looks on us with a strange eye...Always they see something wrong in us.*

Young woman widowed victim in the Central Bank Bomb, Colombo

3,687 Government soldiers were reported missing in action. Families of those who have disappeared are unable to grieve and often live in hope that their loved one is still alive, even years after their disappearance.

*My sons are in the Sri Lanka Army. In September 1998, in Kilinochchi, about 650 of our children's bodies were lying dead. They were packed in plastic bags. But I do not know whether one of my children was among them. We could not even see the bodies. My child was a part of me, but I have been deprived of finding out whether my son is dead or alive.*

Woman from Kandy - 1998

We don't know how many civilians were disabled during the war. According to the Ministry of Defense, 10,343 Government soldiers were permanently disabled. Those disabled often suffer discrimination, difficulties in obtaining employment and a lack of recognition for the sacrifice they made.

*Before I was blinded there was a whole days work before me, so many little domestic needs to attend to, so many hopes. Now there is nothing. I only live in the futile hope that some day some ray of light will fall on my eyes...Just imagine my condition it is as though I have been put into a prison for the whole of my life.*

Young man blinded in Central Bank Bomb, Colombo



All sides are guilty of serious human rights abuses and terrible acts of violence. These include the massacre of civilians (including women and children), indiscriminate bombing, rape and torture. In violation of international humanitarian law, both sides killed those injured or captured in battle. Thousands of survivors (both soldiers and civilians) were and continue to be traumatised by these brutalities.

*War has changed our lives so much...we cannot think of the morrow...if we go to the field and begin to till we begin to think of the calamity that befell the village...we do not have the heart to work. Everywhere in the village there is only fear.*

Yakawewa Villager - 1998

Fear and insecurity increased throughout the country, violence and terror was widespread and unpredictable. Many political leaders and party members were assassinated. Around 130,000 families of soldiers lived in constant fear that their relatives would be killed.

*We are watchful and suspicious of every visitor to the village. It is after the attack that the village received guns for its defence. But then the threat to the village was greater. Because the LTTE would like to capture the guns...everyone here has got used to the environment of war.*

Anuradhapura Villager - 1998

Internal conflict deeply damages and erodes the moral values and foundations of society and creates a pervasive culture of violence. Around the world conflict between states and militant movements often erupt in fierce and brutal forms of violence. There is a slow process of dehumanisation as people live amidst and adjust to continuing violence and suffering; as access to weapons becomes easier both legally and illegally and as violence invades various political and social institutions undermining the democratic process.



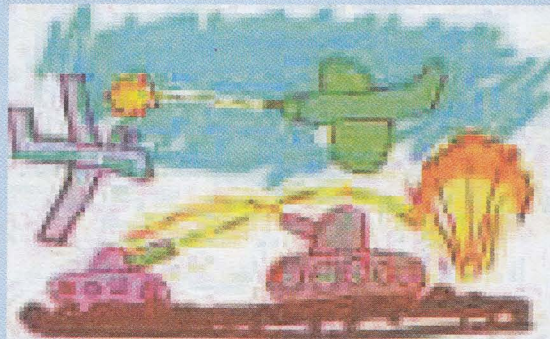
Children were particularly affected by the war:

- Many were killed, injured or traumatised by violence.
- Around 250,000 of those displaced were under 14.
- Hundreds of boys and girls were recruited as child soldiers.
- Education was disrupted. The drop out rates in the North and East increased and became the highest in the country.
- Many children lost one or both parents - deprived of their protective love and care.

For example, Packiarajah was born in a village in the North. When he was 10 years old he witnessed a scene of mass slaughter and rape by Indian Peacekeeping Forces. He died at 15, caught in an encounter between the army and the LTTE.

*Children now play war games...their world of play consists of operations, bunkers, jeeps...children have become scouts and spies for the village. Even a 7-year-old child can dismantle and assemble a T56.*

Villager from Yakawewa





## Landmines

Around 700,000 landmines were planted during the war by all sides. Landmines have killed and injured thousands. They are indiscriminate and remain in the ground for years. Landmines were often laid in heavily populated and fertile agricultural areas.







### Displacement and Homelessness

In 2001 it was estimated that approximately 1,116,000 Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese were forced to leave their homes due to the war. Approximately 800,000 moved to other parts of the country, deprived of the security, familiarity and privacy of their own homes. Many left Sri Lanka as refugees to seek asylum abroad.

**The number of people displaced is the same as the entire population of Uva Province!**

*Eating, sleeping, all our household work has to be done in one place. We cannot sit and relax...we sleep on a piece of mat...we felt like committing suicide...we suffered such a great deal.*

Lakshman Anthony, Fisherman from Niyaru



Displacement and homelessness cause immense trauma. Displacement was often sudden - a lifetime of social and economic relationships destroyed in a single day or night. 40,000 families were housed in welfare centres - the children born there never knowing a normal life. Some families were forced to move again and again, from one temporary, (and often inadequate) shelter to the next.

*The home we lived in had mud walls and a cadjan roof but we had all the basic facilities, water, sanitation, and space and freedom. But now we live as though we are in a cage...they say this building was used for rearing poultry. How can children study in these conditions? Often we have to queue for water or to use the toilet. We are given a permit for four hours to go to town. The officers in the camp are very strict, if we are late we are closely questioned.*

Displaced Tamil mother - 1998

Moving into new communities can be difficult and painful. Outsiders often experience hostility and resentment, especially if they move into areas with already limited resources and employment opportunities.

### **Life in Border Villages**

Communities living along the boundaries of the North and East suffered particularly from fear, insecurity and poverty. Life became very difficult in these areas where previously Tamil and Sinhala communities enjoyed an integrated way of life with close personal and economic relationships.

*The Tamil village was close to our settlement. The Tamil villagers bought fish from us; they brought us vegetables, milk, a sweetmeat made of gingelly seed. We lived like members of one family in great amity. We can not understand why this happened to us. Things changed so suddenly.*

Villager from Yakawewa





*Think about how the war affects different people in different ways? During conflict men and women take on different roles and have specific needs and concerns. Women are often more at risk from sexual violence and carry a greater burden in caring for their family.*

*However, women are not just victims of war but take on many roles - as fighters, teachers, farmers and peacebuilders.*



## Summary of Human Costs

- Approximately 65,000 people killed - at least half civilians.
- Thousands permanently disabled.
- Approximately 1.2 million displaced persons and refugees of whom:
  - 66,000 live in camps in India
  - 40,000 live outside camps in India
  - 200,000 live in the West
  - 800,000 live in Sri Lanka
- Thousands suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illness related to or resulting from the war. Over 9,000 troops continue to receive post-recovery treatment from the army rehabilitation unit.
- An estimated 30,000 - 40,000 people deserted the army during the conflict. They often took their weapons with them and now face high levels of unemployment having limited skills outside the military.

Sri Lanka has the highest suicide rate in the world and around a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line. The war has been a contributing factor to both these problems.



## Social and Political Costs

*When I was 11 years old, my father was arrested. We went to look for him and were told he would be released after his interrogation. Later we learnt that they had tied him up in a gunny bag, poured kerosene oil on him and set fire to him.*

Woman from Batticaloa - 1998



The war damaged the democratic foundations of our society and created a culture of violence and impunity. Human rights were restricted and abused. The nature of war undermined political transparency, accountability and the potential for corruption increased.



## RESTRICTIONS AND ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The human rights of Sri Lankan citizens were restricted and abused due to the war. Tamil communities were particularly affected and the population of the North and East were almost entirely deprived of their democratic rights. The whole or parts of Sri Lanka were under a more or less continuous state of emergency from 1984. The Government and security forces used their increased powers to restrict many civilian protections and freedoms. These included:

**Freedom of Expression** - including the democratic right to demonstrate and protest.

**Freedom of Information** - The Sri Lankan Constitution recognises freedom of speech and expression as fundamental rights. But the media was banned from all combat zones and in 1988 the Government imposed direct censorship on all foreign media reports relating to security operations. The Government increased its power to seize printing presses and to close newspapers and broadcast stations.

A Special Media Information Centre was established to 'approve' all material produced inside Sri Lanka. The LTTE also limited the freedom of expression and restricted the media in the areas it controlled. Violent forms of censorship were imposed to silence opposition and dissent. Those who voiced opinions disliked by the warring parties - journalists in particular were murdered, arrested or disappeared. The authorities on both sides often failed to reveal information to families on the fate or whereabouts of loved ones.

**Freedom of Movement** - Both the Government and the LTTE operated strict controls on civilians. Large parts of the country were out of bounds for civilians and special passes were required to enter certain areas. At times people in the North and East were issued with passes restricting them to one area, preventing any travel outside.

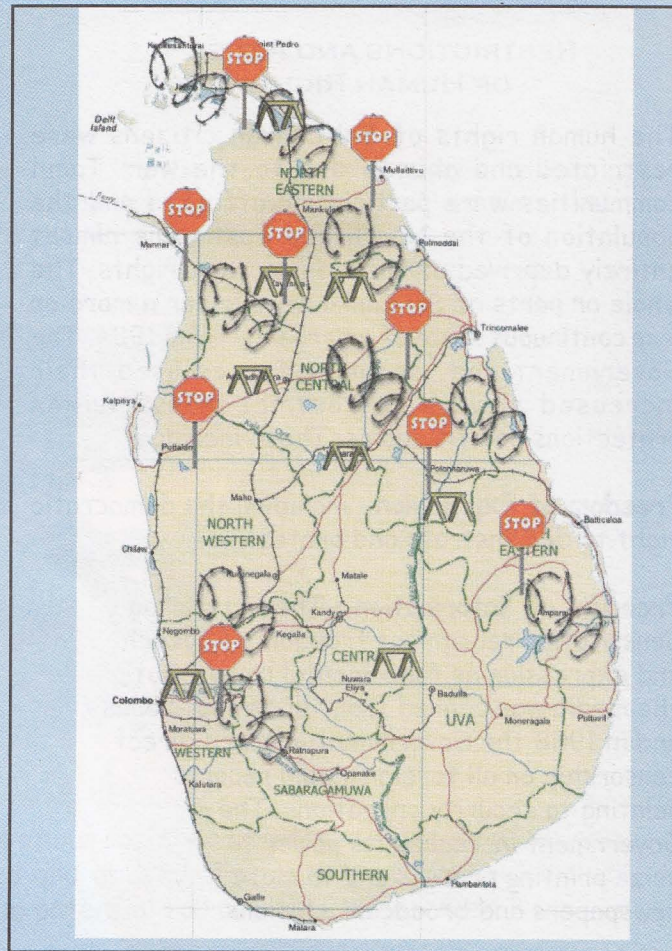
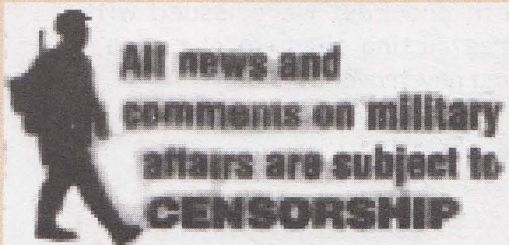




## EMERGENCY REGULATIONS

Under the Emergency Regulations and Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), the police and army were permitted to arrest and detain suspects without charge for up to 18 months, restrict visitor access and withhold information on the place and conditions of those detained. These regulations exceed the limits permitted under international law - in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is estimated that 18,000 people were detained in 2000 alone under the PTA and Emergency Regulations.

A culture of impunity for abuses of power amongst law enforcement officials resulted in arbitrary arrest, killings of civilians, widespread torture in detention, rape and deaths in custody, violations of international humanitarian principles and prolonged detention of people with or without trial.







"Look here it says - 'All war reporting was subject to censorship!' We were denied our right to know the situation within our own country - I have heard that the Sri Lankan emergency regulations were more restrictive than those under the apartheid regime in South Africa."

*We can't go where we want to go even within our own country. I need a pass to go to see my family in Vavuniya. And if they want to come and see me it is very hard. They must leave someone behind each time and get special permission from the police.*

*My friend is living in Wanni. He says that he also has to get permission to leave and must promise to come back, else his family will be punished.*

Young man from Jaffna - 1998



## The Economic Costs of the War

The economic costs include:

- What the Government and LTTE spent directly on the war
- Government expenditure on public safety
- Government expenditure on the needs of those displaced
- Cost of damage and reconstruction to buildings and infrastructure
- Loss of economic output
- Lost opportunities for growth and development

**The estimated costs amount to a staggering Rs 2,451 billion!**

The Government spent more money on the war than on anything else, x3 times more than on health care and x5 times more than on education. We paid for new weapons and then paid to repair the damage caused by them!

Escalations in military operations between 1998 to 2001 account for 28% of this total.

Two-thirds of the total economic cost was borne by the North and East.

*The human costs also had subsequent economic costs. Including the economic life years lost through death and injury, the disruption of income earning activities due to displacement and the cost of health care for those injured.*



Look at the Government's spending on the war and the incurred loss of income and investment:

### **Government Spending, Loss of Income & Output**

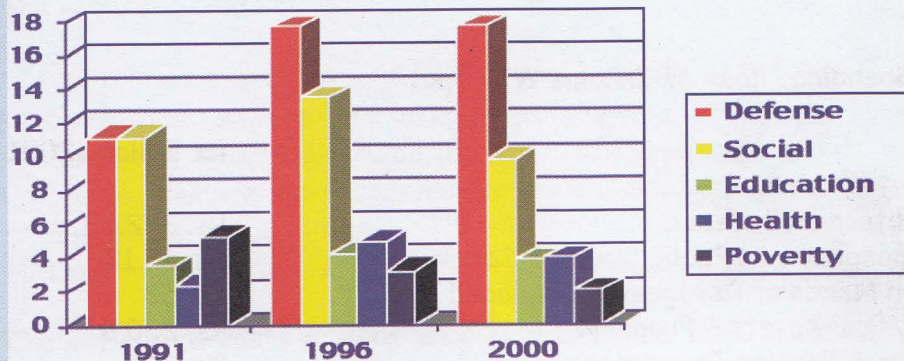
	<b>Rs Billion (2001 prices)</b>
Direct Expenditure on Defence	Rs. 372.78
Additional Expenditure on Public Order & Safety	Rs. 63.12
Expenditure on Needs of Refugees & Displaced	Rs. 53
Damage to Physical Assets & Property	Rs. 230.9
Loss of Tourism & Foreign Investment	Rs. 366
Loss of output in North & East (the reduction of 1982 output)	Rs. 413
Loss of income due to migration of professionals	Rs. 191.37

It is believed that the LTTE spent the equivalent of at least 20% of what the Government spent on the war - at least Rs 74.55 billion (based on 2001 prices).

Therefore the direct military expenditure by the Government and the LTTE amounts to Rs 510.45 billion!



## Proportional Defense & Social Expenses



### 10-year Expenditure Graph (percentage)

	1991	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	2000
Defense	11.2	12.0	10.9	12.9	14.3	17.7	16.8	16.9	16.4	17.7
Social	11.2	13.0	9.9	12.8	12.7	13.5	12.6	12.0	12.7	9.8
- Educ.	3.5	5.4	4.3	4.5	3.5	4.2	4.2	4.7	5.0	3.8
- Health	2.4	3.1	1.9	2.6	5.2	5.0	4.7	4.0	4.8	3.9
- Poverty	5.3	4.5	3.7	5.7	2.0	3.2	3.0	2.5	2.6	2.0
- R&R					2.0	1.1	0.69	0.80	0.27	0.14

Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report, quoted by: Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, Pravada, Vol.7 No.7



The effects of the war on the economy are complex:

- The concentration of direct expenditure on the war diverted resources away from productive areas.
- The massive spending on arms depleted foreign exchange reserves.
- Foreign investment and tourism declined.
- The productivity and markets of the North and East were devastated.
- The prices of basic services and essential items were forced up by security and distribution problems.

The war extensively damaged housing, roads, bridges, commercial and state property, irrigation systems, machinery, communications systems, plantations and fisheries. The total cost of replacement of assets and houses, cost of damages and property in the North and East amounts to Rs 296.5 billion (based on 1998 and 2001 prices). The total cost of property damaged outside the North and East amounts to Rs 32.7 billion (based on 2001 prices).



Photo courtesy of Lanka Monthly Digest



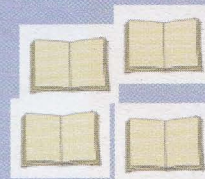
# The War and the Economy



1 Helicopter =  
RS 583,140,000  
= 20 hospitals



1 Automatic Pistol  
= Rs 10,000 =  
20 school books



Dvora Fast Attack  
Craft = Rs500 billion  
= 8,333 1 bedroom  
houses





### Increased Taxes and Economic Deprivation

The war increased the taxes paid by citizens and businesses. The 2001 budget blamed the large increase in taxes and National Security Levy directly on the cost of the war. The budget introduced a 20% surcharge on corporate tax, doubled airport departure tax and increased the tax on export garments.

War increases the prices of most goods. The only items that become cheaper are weapons!



It is estimated that the average household income in the North and the East dropped during the war to half of what it was in 1982. There have been severe shortages of essential goods such as fuel and medicine. Neither the Government nor the LTTE have provided adequate basic needs for the population, such as food, education, health care, water and sanitation. In some areas malnutrition and infant mortality have increased.



## **Foreign Investment & Tourism**

The war caused economic insecurity and instability that contributed to a lack of foreign investment and tourism. The decline in investor confidence greatly affected the long-term development and growth of the economy. The loss of direct foreign investment is estimated at US \$1,610 million. It is estimated that the economy lost US \$4.4 billion from the decline in tourism.

## **Loss of Output in the North and East**

The economy of the North and East is based on agriculture, fisheries and a small but important industrial sector. These industries were devastated and declined by an estimated 40%. The loss of output for the region during the war is estimated at Rs 686 billion (based on 2001 prices). Over this period income per person dropped by around 40% (assuming an even population).

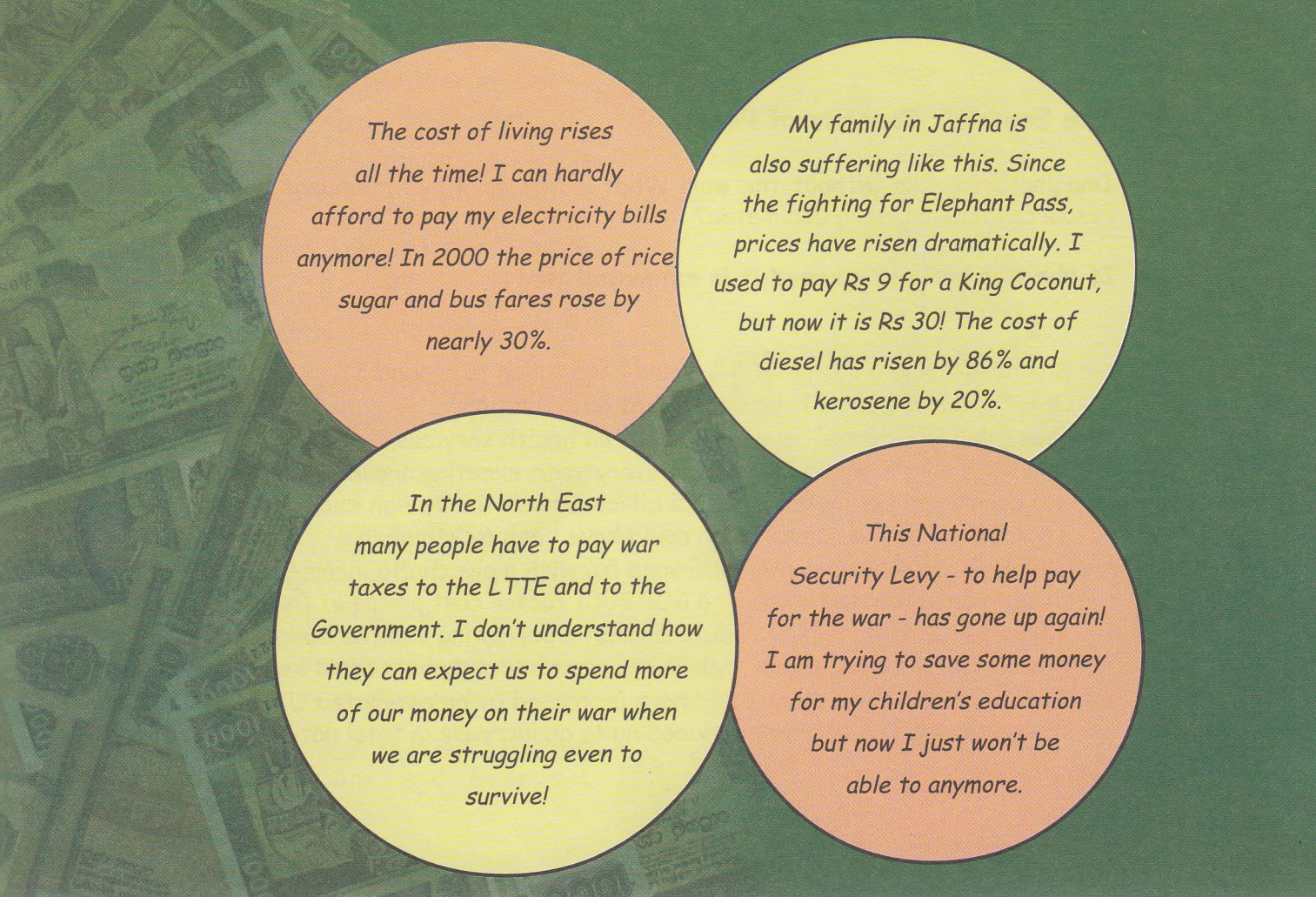
## **Economic Loss from Migration**

Thousands of people left Sri Lanka due to the war. Many of those who migrated were professionals - doctors, engineers etc. who would have contributed significantly to the national economy had they stayed. An estimate for the loss of human capital due to migration is Rs 15 billion for every year of the conflict.

*Remember some people also benefited from the conflict!*

- *Profits were made from providing goods and services to the armed forces.*
- *Additional employment was created in the defence and public order sectors.*
- *Huge profits were made by international and national arms dealers.*





*The cost of living rises all the time! I can hardly afford to pay my electricity bills anymore! In 2000 the price of rice, sugar and bus fares rose by nearly 30%.*

*My family in Jaffna is also suffering like this. Since the fighting for Elephant Pass, prices have risen dramatically. I used to pay Rs 9 for a King Coconut, but now it is Rs 30! The cost of diesel has risen by 86% and kerosene by 20%.*

*In the North East many people have to pay war taxes to the LTTE and to the Government. I don't understand how they can expect us to spend more of our money on their war when we are struggling even to survive!*

*This National Security Levy - to help pay for the war - has gone up again! I am trying to save some money for my children's education but now I just won't be able to anymore.*



## The Economic Benefits of Peace

Imagine Sri Lanka without the war! What if the country's abundant human and natural resources had not been decimated?

**If the war had not occurred it is estimated that:**

- An unemployment rate of 7.8% would have fallen to around 3%
- One-third more could have been spent on education.
- One-third more could have been spent on health services.
- 1 million tourists would be arriving every year, creating around 141,000 jobs and earning an estimated US \$7.5 billion annually in foreign exchange.
- Average household consumption could have been 62% higher.
- Economic growth, currently at around 5% with a per capita income of \$850 could have risen to an estimated 7% with a GDP 2001 factor cost prices of Rs. Bn. 1252.8
- A balance could be left to reduce domestic borrowing and the budget deficit.
- Investment in roads, power, telecommunications and ports could have risen by 30%.
- Direct foreign investment could have increased by an estimated US \$1,610.1 million strengthening the economy and leading to an increase in total national investment.



## **The Impact of the War on the Environment**

The war severely effected the environment and natural habitats of Sri Lanka, especially in the North and East. In what way has your environment been affected? Below is an overview of some of the main causes and consequences of environmental destruction:

### **Causes of Environmental Destruction:**

- Use of Heavy Explosives and Ammunition - bombs, shells, landmines, grenades, bullets
- Direct Military Operations - construction of bunkers, camps, fences, perimeters
- Military Manoeuvres - transportation of large numbers of vehicles, tanks, boats and planes
- Displacement of People, Military Restrictions and Economic Embargoes



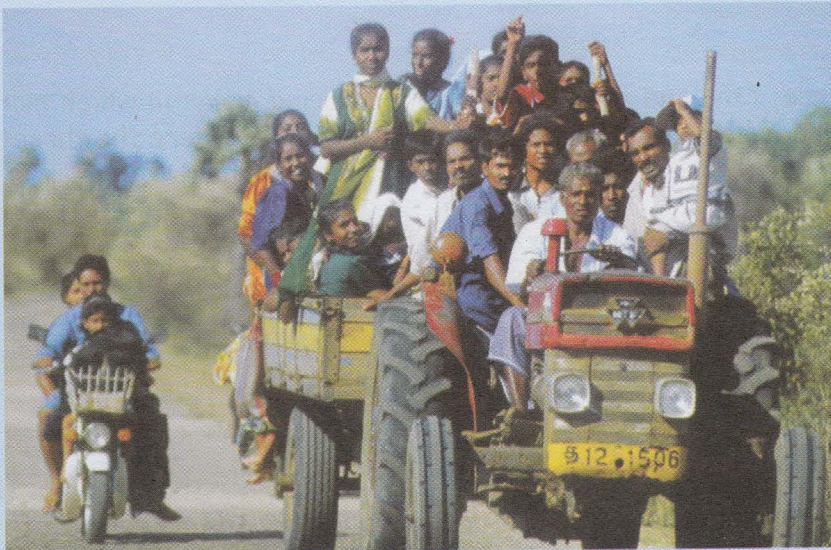


## Consequences of Environmental Destruction:

- Destruction of eco-systems, natural vegetation, wells and agricultural land. *Bombing and systematic shelling caused localised but intensive damage.*
- Deforestation - Around 5 million trees were used for military fences and between 2 and 3 million Palmyrah palms were cut down in the Jaffna Peninsula - halving their population.
- The clearance of Mangroves to deny shelter for opposing forces and for firewood, affecting fish, prawns and birds.
- Displacement, electrocution and death of domestic and wild animals and birds,
- Land, sea, air and noise pollution.
- Soil compaction and removal of top soil. Creation of rubble, craters, erosion and dust storms.
- Sound and shock waves.
- Damage to the coastline and marine life.
- Abandoning land led to the degeneration and decline of agricultural land and gardens. The uncontrolled growth of weedy vegetation combined with the presence of craters led to an increase in malaria.
- A sudden increase in population and the growth of camps and temporary shelters in some areas put intense strain on environmental resources and caused land degradation. Problems included deforestation and land clearance, inadequate sanitation and the improper disposal of animal carcasses causing water pollution and the spread of disease.

*Summarised from Jayasingam T. War and Environment: Sri Lankan Perspective and Ecological Consequences of the War in the Tamil Homeland in Sri Lanka by T Saverimuttu, N Sriskandarajah, VIS Jayapalan, 1999.*





## Section 2

### What are the Continuing Costs of the War?

*The ceasefire didn't resolve the causes of the conflict. What we have now is a new set of problems, the consequences of the conflict.*

Young women from Colombo 2002

As we have seen, the war had many costs. What are the costs we no longer pay? Some of the costs that we continue to pay are explored in this section.



## **Culture of Violence**

**A culture of violence**, fear and mistrust developed during a war in which more than a million people were made homeless, thousands killed every year, where the threat of bomb attacks was constant and where citizens could be detained without reason.

The effects of such a violent culture are subtle, far reaching and take a long time to be reversed. The impact of these socially destructive processes include:

- Apathy with or acceptance that violence is a normal way of solving disputes.
- Rising violent crime and corruption.
- Easier access to weapons.
- Continued human rights violations such as torture.
- Loss of faith in the police and law enforcement officials - the attitude that they repress and abuse the rights of citizens rather than protect and safeguard them.
- An increase in domestic violence, rape and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- Lack of faith and interest in the political process and in the right to vote.
- Election violence, assassination and intimidation of political leaders, weakening democratic structures and the performance of politicians.
- A sense of insecurity and mistrust within and between all sectors of society.
- Powerlessness and anxiety expressed in growing intolerance with persons who are different, (whether religion, language, class, caste etc)
- Ongoing militarisation of society.



Most **restrictions on movement** have been lifted but there is still a strong military presence in some areas of the country.

**Thousands are still displaced** living in temporary shelters, waiting or unable to return home. Even those who have returned face many problems such as the loss of contact with relatives, the loss of property, savings and livelihoods.

*We still live in a neighbourhood where we do not speak their language and they don't speak ours. We cannot contact our relations easily, it takes months before we receive any news of a marriage or death of any of our relations.*

Displaced Muslim - Puttalam 2002

**Landmines** continue to cause permanent disability and death. Several hundred casualties are reported each year. Demining is an expensive and dangerous process and large areas of fertile land continue to be affected. It is estimated that the de-mining of just Chavakachcheri and its surroundings will cost Rs 300 million.

**Economic** resources are still being spent on the costs of war - repair of buildings and infrastructure, health care for those injured, support and basic needs of displaced people etc. Funds continue to be channelled to maintain the military - away from public services such as schools, hospitals and transport!

Many people are still living with the **fear and uncertainty** that war will return.





### **Section 3**

## **Addressing the Legacy of War**

Peace is not just the absence of war! It is a society without violence where the causes of future conflict are removed. Basic characteristics of a society that enjoys sustainable peace include:

- An active civil society
- Inclusive democratic political structures and processes
- Open and accountable government
- Security and equality for all ethnic minorities, and between men and women
- Full social, economic, civil and political human rights for all



The task of reconciliation and rehabilitation to end the culture of violence and to restore peace in Sri Lanka will be a long one. It will require vast human, technical and financial resources, and political and popular will. If the current peace process is to be effective it must be inclusive, based on principles of justice, equality and accountability.

Think about what must happen in your own family, community, village or town to end the fear, address the legacy and pain of war and remove the threat of future violence? Some priorities include:

- Those responsible must ensure that all information is revealed to families of those who have disappeared as healing and forgiveness is impossible if they do not know the truth.
- The political culture must be transformed from one of violence to one of engagement and participation. Efforts must focus on the re-imposition of human rights protection together with the reform of institutions in order to achieve transparency, structural equality and democracy. Free and fair elections need to be held without the threat of election-related violence.
- Financial and technical resources, support and safety must be ensured for displaced persons who are returning home.
- While popular opinion and optimism increases towards peace and the peace process, the vast majority of people in Sri Lanka have not been able to become actively involved or 'to own' the process. The peace process and its importance must be understood by the general population. What is being agreed, why, when and by whom must be communicated to dispel people's legitimate fears.



- Resources and support must be provided for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, (and acknowledgement that men and women combatants have different needs).
- Peace, civil society and community organisations must be provided with the resources they need to build peace.
- Government budgets must be diverted from military spending to processes of reconstruction and rehabilitation.
- Effective programmes must be designed and implemented for the collection and destruction of small arms.
- International aid should be monitored closely to ensure that it is reaching those most in need.

What Will  
Keep Him  
Smiling ?





## Truth and Reconciliation for War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses

*The assumption that individuals or groups that have been victims of hideous atrocities will simply forget about them...without some form of accounting, some semblance of justice, is to leave in place the seeds of future conflict.*

Kritz 1996

Layers of grievance on all sides have built up over the years of violent conflict, which must be addressed in some form to avoid future conflicts. It is very difficult for the thousands severely traumatised and bereaved to simply forget the past without some public recognition and official acknowledgement of their suffering and public disclosure of wrongdoings by those responsible.

The consequences of an amnesty for the war crimes and serious human rights abuses committed may result in the culture of violence within institutions remaining unchanged.

*We are talking about words 'accountability' and 'forgiveness', but there is a need to air things that have happened. People need to say why things happened, how they happened and then ask for forgiveness. If people have not done this, how can we move forward? The truth must be faced to release people from the past.*

Woman from Killinochchi - 2003

The decisions regarding what truth and justice mechanisms should be implemented, what should be addressed and what should be forgotten, is one which should be discussed in-depth throughout Sri Lanka from a local to national level.

Addressing war crimes is an effective means of creating a national account or memory of the realities of the past in which the validity of all communities involved are recognised and respected. Upon this basis we can come to terms with the past, and achieve institutional reform so that equality for all can be realised.



The war has been fought in our name. We are the ones who are still paying the price. It is up to each and every one of us to stand up and say,

**STOP - we demand permanent peace and justice for all!**

What can YOU do? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Show this booklet to friends, family, neighbours and colleagues.
- Join a peace organisation or network in your local community.
- Start a peace forum to discuss what can be done to promote peace in your area.
- Write to your local Member of Parliament, to the President and to the Prime Minister with your views and concerns.
- Lobby local political candidates to commit themselves to a redirection of funds away from military spending towards education, health care and the rehabilitation of those traumatised by war and poverty
- Take part in meetings, discussions, workshops and other forums on peace.
- Encourage your local church, temple, mosque or kovil to hold a vigil for peace or special prayers for the victims of the war and need for peace.
- Take part in marches, demonstrations and peaceful protests to encourage and support the move towards sustainable peace.
- Write, phone or email local/national newspapers and radio stations with your views about the need for peace or challenge the misinformation and anti-peace views of others.
- Organise competitions (art, poetry, drama or essay reading) or events (street theatre, concerts, photo/art exhibitions) with the 'search for peace' as the theme and invite local politicians
- Respond to and challenge anti-peace messages and misinformation about the peace process by informing friends and colleagues and collectively demanding a statement of commitment from your local MP.

*For a copy of the Ceasefire Agreement and information on the current peace process contact:  
Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process, West Tower, Level 10, World Trade  
Centre Building, Colombo, Tel - 075 554471/2, 388709 Fax - 075 554473  
info@peaceinsrilanka.org and www.peaceinsrilanka.org*









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