

FOUNDATION FOR COEXISTENCE

**ETHNIC RELATIONS AND HUMAN
SECURITY IN EASTERN SRI LANKA**

A REPORT BASED ON INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

THE ASIA FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflict in the Sri Lanka's Eastern Province continues to threaten the stability and development both of that region and the entire country. As a result, the Asia Foundation, the Foundation for Co-existence, and others are involved in efforts to develop a framework for early warning and response to potential conflicts in the east. A necessary step in this process is research that offers an accurate assessment of public attitudes concerning this situation, a better understanding of the initial signs of conflict, and ways that conflict can be prevented. The purpose of this survey, based on individual interviews, was to systematically gauge ordinary citizens' perceptions of conflict in the East, and to move beyond reliance on the "usual (key informant) suspects." A secondary aim was to identify pressing issues that could be explored through a follow-up quantitative survey designed to measure changes in public perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the level of human security in the East.

While significant effort has been devoted to studying public attitudes toward ethnic conflict and the peace process in the country as a whole, relatively little has been done to gauge sentiments in this volatile area. Given this fundamental lack of information, the Asia Foundation commissioned Social Indicator (Colombo) and Charney Research (New York) to conduct in-depth interviews with citizens in the Eastern Province. These interviews were designed to gain insights into:

- Public perceptions of life since the commencement of the ceasefire;
- Key problems facing citizens in the Eastern Province;
- Assessments of human security;
- Current attitudes, perceptions and prejudices that form the basis of social tensions;
- Early warning signs and triggers of violent conflict; and
- The institutions and actors that can help prevent or alleviate conflict.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The discussion guide was developed by Social Indicator, Charney Research and The Asia Foundation based on the terms of reference for the survey and after consultations with the Foundation for Coexistence, Sri Lankan and international NGOs, the government Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP), and other stakeholders involved in peace-building and conflict prevention in Sri Lanka. The Asia Foundation also invited input on the discussion guide from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission. The questions in the discussion guide were designed to gain insights into the topics listed in the section above. The audiences for the survey are people in government, non-governmental organizations, and donors who are involved in coordinating, funding, and implementing conflict prevention programs in the East.

Social Indicator conducted 102 individual interviews as part of the survey. Interviews were used rather than focus group discussions because of the sensitivity of some of the topics and questions we were investigating. Given the level of suspicion and distrust prevalent in the East, we felt that people were more likely to be candid in their responses if they were interviewed alone rather than in groups.

This survey was meant to understand the views and perceptions of ordinary citizens rather than the key informants that donors and NGOs usually rely on for their information and analysis of political and social tensions in the East.

A team of interviewers from Social Indicator conducted the interviews. Steve Hopkins of Charney Research assisted in training these interviewers in qualitative research techniques, and consulted on the research design and discussion guide/questionnaire.

Design

This report is an analysis of responses from 102 in-depth interviews conducted in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The interviews were conducted from September 24 to October 15, 2003 among members from the Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities. Participants were recruited to reflect a cross-section of average citizens from a variety of gender, age, and occupation groups. The exact distribution of interviews is listed in the table below.

Because these are qualitative, not quantitative, findings, our results cannot be projected numerically to the population at large, but we believe the findings illuminate some important patterns of public opinion in Eastern Sri Lanka. The report uses terms to provide some suggestion of the frequency of specific responses (e.g., “many,” “some,” “few”) but, given the nature and design of the study, the findings are based on sub-population samples that are too small to establish patterns that are

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statistically significant. These patterns, however, can be highly informative as long as they are read with proper caution.

The individuals selected for the study had the following profiles:

Region / District	B = Batticaloa	31
	A = Ampara	35
	T = Trincomalee	36
Ethnic Group	S= Sinhala	24
	T = Tamil	38
	M = Muslim	40
	O = Other	0
Religion	B= Buddhist	23
	C = Christian	0
	H = Hindu	34
	M = Muslim	39
Gender	M = Male	79
	F = Female	23
Occupation	T – Teacher	14
	B – Businessman	14
	F – Fishermen	8
	A – Agriculture	8
	R – Religious leader	1
	G – Government Servant	8
	S – Student	10
	U – Unemployed	8
	H – Homemaker	6
	M – Mechanical	3
	L – Laborer	1
	O – Other	10
	0 – unknown	7

Sampling Frame :

Sampling was purposive to ensure that there was a mix of Muslim, Tamil, and Sinhalese respondents roughly corresponding to the ethnic profile of each district. Social Indicator conducted more than 30 interviews in each district, for a total of 102, a manageable number given budget and time constraints. SI deployed 10 enumerators in total. Each was given a grid with instructions to select a set quota of respondents based on gender, age, religion and occupation, in each area to be covered (“sampling points”). There were 30 sampling points in the 3 districts. The 30 included some “hot spots” that have experienced communal disturbances since the Ceasefire Agreement between the government and LTTE was signed. To select respondents in the sampling spot that matched the criteria in the grid, SI interviewers followed the right hand rule, and went from house to house. Households that were not interested in participating in the interviews were passed over. Each interview took approximately one hour.

Analysis Plan

Findings are presented at an overall level and, when differences were observed across geographical and ethnicity divisions, the relevant areas of concern have been highlighted. Quotes were collated

and sorted from the interview transcripts and a content analysis of the verbatim quotes was carried out based on the structure of the questionnaire and the key categories for analysis identified in the terms of reference. Special attention was paid to differences in results based on geography and ethnic identity.

Reading Verbatim Quotes in Appendix

Throughout the main body of this report there are verbatim quotes from those we interviewed. Each quote is preceded by a series of letters that indicate the demographic profile of the individual making that statement. The order of the letters and the codes for each are listed below. **Most readers will probably find the first two letters – region and ethnic group – most helpful in determining the profile of the person making the statement.**

Examples

- 1) Batticaloa resident Muslim Male of 34 employed as Manual laborer: **BMMM34M**
- 2) Ampara resident Sinhala Buddhist Female of 47 and Homemaker: **ASBF47H**
- 3) Trincomalee resident Tamil Christian Female, unknown age and unemployed: **TTCF0U**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peace Process/Dividends

- Many we spoke with report life in the Eastern Province has improved since the implementation of the ceasefire and the engagement of the peace process. This is mainly an enhanced sense of personal security, although a small minority report that their standard of living is showing signs of improvement.
- Still, for most, there are as of yet few other tangible peace dividends. The general sense is that the fighting and killing have stopped, but that the general social problems facing the Eastern Province have as of yet to be adequately addressed. Indeed, many feel that until the future of the region is decided, these issues cannot be fully addressed.
- To many in the East, the peace process feels very fragile. They are skeptical that the peace process is actually advancing, and they report that they have a nagging feeling that the situation could change at any moment. Generally, people seem to acknowledge that a ceasefire is not synonymous with lasting peace, and in the absence of concrete improvements, they tend to fear the worst.

Problems Facing The Eastern Province

- While we made a concerted effort to not frame the questions in terms of “ethnic conflict,” those we interviewed clearly see a fundamental link between ethnic tensions/conflict and the major social and economic problems in the East, including freedom of movement, land rights, fishing, illegal taxation, unemployment, and education.
- Easterners clearly see **freedom of movement** as critical part of their ability to live and work. Many report that they are unable to access markets, farm land in other areas, or fish where they want because they fear for their safety.
- As noted in *Human Security In The East*,¹ **land rights** are a key issue in the instability of the Eastern Province. To one degree or another, members from all three ethnic groups say they are not able to access or farm their land, or that if they are, they are potentially risking their lives.
- While there appear to be some improvements in **fishing** since the ceasefire, many report that there are still significant restrictions on when and where they can fish. Some fisherman say they are told not to work in certain areas, while others curb their activities out of fear.

¹ Rupesinghe, Kumar. Enhancing Human Security in the Eastern Province. Centre for Policy Alternatives/Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies.

- Reports of **illegal taxation** continue to be widespread. Some of these reports are based on firsthand experience, but many say that this is common knowledge (i.e., “everyone knows this is happening”). These reports are most common among Muslim traders and fisherman, but are also present among Sinhalese and Tamils.

Human Security

- Many of the Easterners we interviewed say they feel more secure on a day-to-day basis since the ceasefire started. In particular, many report that they have fewer restrictions on their movements, and feel safer when traveling to and through other ethnic communities.
- However, many – particularly those in trade, agriculture, and fishing – report there are still significant threats to their personal security when they attempt to travel and work outside their immediate area. Additionally, there is a feeling among many Easterners that their current sense of security is far from permanent, and could quickly take a turn for the worse if conflicts escalate into violence.
- By and large, those we interviewed express very little confidence that the government and its official institutions can provide for their personal security. In particular, while most say they do or would take complaints to the police because it is the logical place to turn, the overwhelming sense is that this usually has little effect. Reports of police corruption and bribery are common, while some say that the police in their area are biased against members of their ethnic group. And, many see the legal system as weak, slow, and unlikely to lead to a just resolution.

Representation/Expression

- Within their immediate community ethnic, many report feeling free to express their political opinions, and the general sense is that this feeling has increased since the ceasefire began.
- However, many also report that they feel limited in expressing their opinions outside of their own ethnic community. Some express concern about the immediate implications of expressing opinions that might offend members of other ethnic groups, while others are concerned that expressing their opinions now could lead to retaliation if a riot or other conflict takes place.
- Political alienation is fairly common among Easterners, as is the sense that elected and appointed officials are not responsive to the needs and concerns of average citizens. These attitudes appear to cut across ethnic groups, and are no doubt related to a general feeling of instability in the region.

Ethnic Relations

- Most interviewed report that there are fewer tensions between the ethnic groups than in the

past, but it is clear that there still are deep rifts between the communities. For many, the events of the past two decades – including abductions and murders of family members – have seriously eroded their ability and willingness to trust members of other ethnic groups.

- It is important to note, however, that many we spoke with say they have frequent interactions with members of other ethnic groups, and that these are largely positive experiences. Business/trade interactions are commonplace, and many frequently participate in social interactions (weddings, birthdays, sporting events, etc.) with members from other communities. For the most part, those we spoke with say that more interaction between members of different ethnic groups would be a positive development.
- Nevertheless, the events of the past are hard to forget for some, and the result is a lingering mistrust between the ethnic groups. In some cases, the animosity toward individuals from other ethnic groups is an extension of their animosity toward the ethnic group in general and based on events occurring over the past two decades. For others, this animosity is based on personal experiences with members of other groups who at one time were cordial with them, but subsequently committed acts of aggression against them, their family members, or their property.

Ethnic Group Impressions

Sinhalese

- In general, the Sinhalese we spoke with are very apprehensive about their future in the region. On the one hand, most feel relatively secure because of the presence of the army and STF. On the other hand, many feel that without these forces in place, they are dubious that they could continue to live in the East. Viewed in this light, it is perhaps not surprising that even though most welcome the end to violence that the cease-fire has brought, they are unlikely to report that their situation has improved over the past year.
- A large factor in the trepidation that many Sinhalese we interviewed feel is due to what they perceive as a very clear transfer of power to the Tamils. These Sinhalese, particularly in Trincomalee, report that they have little political representation, and that the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) has become the ruling authority.

Tamils

- Most of the Tamils we spoke with tend to report that life has improved since the cease-fire, and perhaps not surprisingly, they tend to be the most optimistic about the future of the Eastern Province.
- Still, despite recent improvements, many Tamils interviewed continue to feel a deep sense of discrimination. Some of the most common complaints are related to a lack of economic opportunities and no official recognition of the Tamil language.

- Many Tamils see the LTTE as their primary source of security, and they are most likely to turn to the LTTE with problems. Quite a few interviewees expressed a sense of deep gratitude toward the LTTE, saying that they likely would not be alive if the Tigers had not intervened on their behalf.
- Several of the Tamils we interviewed report a deep mistrust of Muslims based on past experiences. These feelings are based not only on past conflict and personal loss at the hands of Muslims, but also on the current economic and political situation. Other Tamils interviewed have less strident views of Muslims, and tend to see the differences between the groups occurring more at the political level. And, some say they want Muslims to be given fair treatment in Tamil controlled areas in the future.

Muslims

- Many Muslims are concerned that they do not have a place in determining the future of the Eastern province. They see the government representing the Sinhalese and the LTTE representing the Tamils in peace talks, but do not see any corresponding entity representing their needs. Some also express deep concern that the LTTE can or will represent them now or in the case of an Interim Administration.
- While Muslims generally feel the government is providing them with security now, they are skeptical that this will continue in the future. Many are fearful about their future in a “Tamil” state.
- Some Muslims wish security came from within their own community. While most express this as a general concept, there are some who say that unless an acceptable compromise can be attained, Muslims should form armed groups. It is important to note that while a few Sinhalese and Tamils interviewed speculated about the existence of armed Muslim groups, none of the Muslims we spoke with reported experience with groups of this sort.

Conflict Escalation/Triggers

- Rumors and a lack of credible information are often cited as key factors in the escalation of conflict. Relatively few of those we interviewed feel that the news media (or any other organization, for that matter) provides enough unfiltered and timely information about local conflicts. This information vacuum appears to enhance the importance of word-of-mouth sources, which are more likely to spawn rumors.
- There is also a fairly widespread perception that “ethnic conflicts” often begin as personal grievances or other suspicious activities, and then evolve or are manipulated into conflict between ethnic groups. In particular, many think politicians use these situations to advance their own political agenda.

- Some of those we interviewed also point to third party actors (spoilers) as a source of ethnic conflict. While these claims tend to be fairly general, the perception is that the actions of these individuals are motivated by selfishness and a desire for personal gain.
- There is a fairly common perception among respondents that politicians often play a role in the escalation of conflict. According to many in this study, there are some politicians bent on keeping their position of authority who maintain a constant stream of negativity toward the other ethnic groups, and thereby help set the stage for conflict. Many believe that when specific situations arise, there are politicians who irresponsibly point the finger at opposition groups in order to incite violence, which will prolong the *status quo* and keep them in power.

Conflict Prevention/Alleviation

- Many of those we interviewed, particularly those involved with business/civic/religious organizations, report that both formal and informal dispute mechanisms have helped and continue to help prevent conflict escalation. This typically involves taking grievances to community representatives who in turn address these issues with Peace Committees or other organizations comprised of representatives from the different ethnic group.
- For the most part, those interviewed appear receptive to the idea of Peace Committees, and many have heard of them or had some experience with them. There is also a general sense that, if these committees are to be successful, they need to be an active part of the community.
- Muslims religious leaders, typically associated with Mosques, are credited for often helping to keep simmering tensions from boiling over. These leaders are often involved with peace committees that not only counsel their followers to exercise restraint in tense situations, but also help negotiate solutions with the LTTE. Religious leaders appear to play a less prominent role in keeping the peace within the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. But the exact reason for this is not apparent from these interviews.
- According to many, the police are not always effective in responding to or preventing conflict. Some say this is because they can only do so much in certain situations and are concerned about their own security. Others are more skeptical in general about the resolve of the police in these situations, pointing to the problems of corruption. Indeed, some report that the lack of faith in the responsiveness of the police drives people to take matters into their own hands.
- Impressions of NGOs are generally favorable, although there are some who feel they have demonstrated favoritism. The positive associations appear to be based on both humanitarian activities and the work NGOs have done on behalf of peace in the region. While criticisms of NGOs are relatively rare, some Sinhalese and Muslims claim that they have demonstrated favoritism toward or are lenient with the LTTE.

- Those we interviewed tend to have mixed to negative impressions about the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM). Some feel the SLMM is having a positive impact in their area, but it is more common to here criticisms of their efforts. The most common complaints are that the SLMM is not effective and is unlikely to be so in the future. Some are skeptical that foreigners are able to adequately understand the situation, while others say that the organization's mandate is unclear, and that they are unable to enforce their recommendations. A significant number also perceive the SLMM to be biased, usually in favor of the LTTE.

Information Sources

- The general sense among those we interviewed is that there is a lack of reliable and complete information about the peace process and ethnic relations in the Eastern Province. While most report that they regularly get the news from television, radio and newspapers, there is a common perception that the information is often biased and incomplete.
- Word-of-mouth is a major source of information for those living in the East. Indeed, it is viewed by many as more reliable/complete than the media. However, there is also a fairly common recognition that too great a reliance on word-of-mouth information can lead to rumors (which is widely seen as a major contributor to ethnic conflict).
- One common complaint about the mass media information typically available is that it fails to properly educate and update citizens about the peace process. A sizeable share of those we spoke with feel that they do not have adequate information about the specifics of the peace process, and that what does get through often seems to be through the lens of a particular media organization's political leanings.

Conclusions/Implications

The opinions and attitudes revealed by the participants in this study offer some insights into particular areas that most need attention in the Eastern Province.

- **Media capacity building.** The perception that the news and information that Sri Lankans have access to is limited in its scope or biased needs to be addressed. Specifically, independent and credible news reporting agencies need to be developed and encouraged in the East.
- **Increased Peace Process information.** There is a need for more information about the Peace Process and developments on the future of the region. Without this information, people tend to assume that nothing is happening, and this can and does fuel their anxiety about the future.
- **Early response information systems.** A lack of reliable, timely information at the beginning of crises creates a vacuum that can lead to a reliance on rumors and/or exploitation by third parties. In addition to media development programs, early response information networks need to be developed and enhanced in the region.
- **Enhanced mechanisms to resolve land disputes.** Land issues surfaced repeatedly over the course of these interviews. Many reported that they are unable to access or farm their land, causing economic hardship, and often leading to increased ethnic tensions. In addition, the current system of settling land disputes is not adequate. Clearly, land resettlement in the East needs to be a priority, not only from an economic perspective, but also from a political and social perspective.
- **Trust building between members of ethnic groups.** These interviews verified that relations between members of different ethnic groups, while improving somewhat since the ceasefire, continue to be strained. Programs and methods in trust building at the grassroots level need to be fully explored.

PEACE PROCESS/DIVIDENDS

Peace Dividends

Many we spoke with report life in the Eastern Province has improved since the implementation of the ceasefire and the engagement of the peace process. This is mainly an enhanced sense of personal security, although a small minority report that their standard of living is showing signs of improvement.

An enhanced sense of personal security is far and away the most commonly cited peace dividend realized thus far. Most of those we spoke with say they feel more secure on a day-to-day basis since the ceasefire started. In particular, many report that they are significantly less fearful of night-time raids or traveling during the evening.

Still, for most, there are as of yet few other tangible peace dividends. The general sense is that the fighting and killing have stopped, but that the general social problems facing the Eastern Province have as of yet to be adequately addressed. Indeed, many feel that until the future of the region is decided, these issues cannot be fully addressed.

Peace Process

To many, the peace process feels very fragile. Many in the East are doubtful that the peace process is actually advancing, and they report that they have a nagging feeling that the situation could change at any moment. Generally, people seem to acknowledge that a ceasefire is not synonymous with lasting peace, and in the absence of concrete improvements, they tend to fear the worst.

Many feel that the Government & the LTTE are not following through on their commitments to the peace process. While most of these criticisms tend to be aimed at the “other” side (i.e., [should this be e.g.,?] Tamils blaming the government or Sinhalese blaming the LTTE), there is also a strong undercurrent of dissatisfaction with politicians and leaders on all sides of the political process.

And, some are concerned about what they perceive to be peace process spoilers. These concerns appear to be primarily directed toward the hardline parties representing each of the ethnic groups.

PROBLEMS FACING THE EASTERN PROVINCE

The major social and economic problems in the East are clearly linked to ethnic tensions and conflict. While many of the issues facing the region are no doubt reflective of the general problem of underdevelopment, it is apparent from these interviews that many are greatly exacerbated by the ethnic tensions/conflicts and a lack of human security in the area. Examples include the inability to access and farm one's land, travel restrictions due to fear of abduction and ransom, job discrimination based on ethnicity or language, and a lack of business development due to instability in the region.

Economy & Unemployment

Most of those we spoke with cite unemployment and a weak economy as major problems facing the Eastern Province. This cuts across socioeconomic groups, with many of the more highly-educated unable to find jobs or reporting they are underemployed. There is disagreement, however, as to whether the current lack of stability in the region is a contributing factor to the lack of jobs, or if the lack of jobs contributes to the instability in the region.

Land Issues

Land issues appear to be among the most pressing problems in the East. Many report their land ownership is disputed and/or they are unable to access their land. In Ampara, Sinhalese and Tamils typically report that Muslims have made unfair claims to their land, whereas in Trincomalee, it is more common for Sinhalese and Muslims to say that their land has been unfairly taken by the Tamils.

Some Muslims we spoke with express frustration that Tamils and the LTTE are making claims to land that they feel was purchased at fair market prices. While these individuals admit that some Muslims may have acquired land unfairly, they reject the notion that all Muslim landowners should be penalized for these abuses. Rather, they would prefer these disputes to be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

Quite a few of the Sinhalese we interviewed express anger that the land that once was theirs has now been claimed by Muslims (in Ampara) or Tamils (in Trincomalee). Moreover, these individuals say that the situation is compounded by local government officials who are biased against the Sinhalese.

According to many, the formal mechanisms for resolving land disputes are not functioning especially well. Some report that they have repeatedly taken their concerns to the authorities, but that their problems go unaddressed because of bureaucratic red tape or because the government officials they contact say their hands are tied due to the political situation. Others report that it is often necessary for those involved in land disputes to bribe local officials or police to get titles to their land.

Farming

Many report that farming is negatively impacted by a lack of security, as well as other economic and market forces. While some we interviewed (mainly Tamils) report that they are now able to farm land more freely, ongoing land disputes and fears for one's safety are clearly making it difficult for most farmers to make a living. In particular, many report that their land is in a disputed area and that they fear that any attempts to farm the land could be life-threatening. Even where farmers have access to their land, the lack of security affects their livelihoods by driving up the cost of inputs, by lowering demand in the local markets and by reducing access to external markets.”

Fishing

There are some improvements in fishing, but human security and government restrictions are still a hindrance to making a living. Respondents did not give a definitive source of who exactly is behind the restrictions. Rather, there is speculation among some (especially Muslims) that the Tigers are behind it. Still others point to restrictions (usually enforced by the Navy) on when, where and how they can fish.

Education

There are isolated accounts of improvements in the education arena, but most have fairly negative impressions of the current situation. Those who see improvements in education tend to be Tamils, some of whom report that facilities have improved and the environment generally is now more conducive to learning. The Sinhalese we interviewed tend to view the situation as dramatically worse than in the past, with a lack of teachers and facilities that appears commensurate with their general sense of decline relative to the Tamils.

Illegal Taxation

Easterners are clearly feeling the burden of taxation, much of which they perceive to be illegal. These reports are especially common among Muslims, but also are present among Sinhalese and Tamils. While some acknowledge that they cannot always be certain who is behind illegal taxation, most report that the LTTE is levying taxes on merchants or those who travel through LTTE-controlled areas.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the perceived legitimacy of LTTE taxation depends to a large degree on one's ethnic identification. While one or two Muslims we spoke with said they felt it appropriate to pay these taxes because they are in Tamil-dominated areas, the vast majority of Muslims and Sinhalese view these taxes as onerous and unfair. Among Tamils, a few expressed resentment about LTTE taxation, but most said that they pay these taxes willingly.

HUMAN SECURITY

Freedom of Movement

Improvements in human security are mainly related to freedom of movement. Many report that they have fewer restrictions on their movements, and feel safer when traveling to and through other ethnic communities. Reports of increased freedom of movement are present in all ethnic groups, but are most common among Tamils and Muslims.

Still, freedom of movement is far from complete, with many reporting they do not feel safe in all locations or at all times of the day. And, many of those in trade, agriculture, and fishing report there are still significant threats to their personal security when they attempt to travel and work outside their immediate area.

Kidnapping/Ransom/Murder

Although some report that kidnapping, ransom and murder are still happening in the East, the general perception is that these have abated since the ceasefire.

Human Security: Far From Guaranteed

There is a feeling among many of the Easterners we interviewed that their current sense of security is far from permanent, and could quickly take a turn for the worse if conflicts escalate into violence. The perceived lack of progress in the peace process, as well as incidents like those in Muttur, tends to reinforce these fears.

Little Security from the Government

The Easterners we interviewed generally feel that the government should provide for their security, but they have virtually no confidence the government can deliver on this front. This sentiment is often tied to events of the past, but is also related to a more general sense that the political situation in the East is unstable.

Police Corruption/Bias

There were many reports that those charged with providing security and representing their interests are in fact corrupt. In particular, reports of police corruption and bribery are common, while some say that the police in their area are biased against members of their ethnic group. Given these perceptions, it is perhaps not surprising that many in the East are loath to turn to the police when it comes to personal matters, let alone in ethnically charged situations.

REPRESENTATION/EXPRESSION

Political Alienation

Political alienation is common in the Eastern Province. There is a pervasive sense among those we interviewed that elected officials, especially those at the national level, are only interested in their votes, and do very little or nothing in return. This lack of faith in elected officials is reflected in a fairly common reluctance to take problems to representatives.

Expression

Many report that they feel free to express their political opinions within their immediate community, and the general sense is that this has improved since the ceasefire began. However, many also report that they feel limited in expressing their opinions outside of their own ethnic community. There is concern about the immediate implications of expressing opinions that might offend members of other ethnic groups, as well as concern that expressing opinions now could lead to retaliation if a riot or other conflict takes place.

ETHNIC RELATIONS / INTERACTIONS

Cordial/Improved Relations

Not all Eastern Province residents are pessimistic about ethnic relations. In fact, some report that ethnic relations have improved since the ceasefire, and others report that in their area there never have been problems with members of other ethnic groups. These individuals, who come from all three ethnic groups, say they have longstanding, cordial relations with those from other groups, and that it is typically political groups that have driven a wedge between them and members of other ethnic groups.

A Lingering Mistrust

For some, however, the events of the past are hard to forget, and the result is a lingering mistrust between the ethnic groups. For some of these, the animosity toward individuals from other ethnic groups is an extension of their animosity toward the ethnic group in general and based on events occurring over the past two decades. For others in this group, this animosity is based on personal experiences with members of other groups who at one time were cordial with them, but subsequently committed acts of aggression against them, their family members, or their property.

Business & Commerce Interactions

Business and commercial interactions between members of the different ethnic groups are very common. The most common of these are buying and selling in shops and between vendors, typically for food products. Other typical interactions include trade, fishing, farming, and lending relationships.

Social Interactions

Reports of social interactions between members of the various ethnic communities are also fairly common. The most common of these interactions are weddings, although some report that they attend the funerals and religious events of those from other ethnic groups.

There are a fair number of accounts of marriages between members of different ethnic groups, although the extent of these is difficult to ascertain. While there are reports of marriages between members of all the ethnic groups, these mixed marriages appear to be more common between Tamils and Sinhalese. Interestingly, some we spoke with assert that intermarriage is partly responsible for smooth relations between the various ethnic groups in their area.

Future Interactions

Nevertheless, while day-to-day interactions between members of the different ethnic groups are common, many admit the interactions are cautious and often strained. And, others say that these relationships can change quickly if ethnic tensions arise or intrude from other areas.

Many of those we interviewed say that increased interactions between members of the different ethnic communities would be a positive development. These people acknowledge that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country, and feel that increased interaction between groups will help bring tolerance and shared values.

SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUP IMPRESSIONS

Sinhalese

In general, the Sinhalese we spoke with are very apprehensive about their future in the region. On the one hand, most feel relatively secure because of the presence of the army and STF. On the other hand, many feel that without these forces in place, they are dubious that they could continue to live in the East. Viewed in this light, it is perhaps not surprising that even though most Sinhalese welcome the end to violence that the cease-fire has brought, they are unlikely to report that their situation has improved significantly over the past year.

A large factor in the trepidation that many Sinhalese we interviewed feel is due to what they perceive as a very clear transfer of power to the Tamils. These Sinhalese, particularly in Trincomalee, report that they have little political representation, and that the LTTE has become the ruling authority.

Many of the Sinhalese in Trincomalee we spoke with feel they are treated unfairly by the Tamil-dominated government, and some say they feel like they are being pushed out of the area. This is most commonly expressed as concerns about land encroachment, job loss, and political favoritism for Tamils.

Some of the Sinhalese interviewed in Ampara feel discriminated against by the Muslim-dominated government. These individuals point to lost land and police favoritism toward Muslims.

Tamils

Most of the Tamils we spoke with tend to report that life has improved since the cease-fire, and perhaps not surprisingly, they tend to be the most optimistic about the future of the Eastern Province. Still, despite recent improvements, many Tamils interviewed continue to feel a deep sense of discrimination. Some of the most common complaints are related to a lack of economic opportunities and no official recognition of the Tamil language.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many Tamils see the LTTE as their primary source of security, and they are most likely to turn to the LTTE with problems. Quite a few we spoke with expressed a sense of deep gratitude toward the LTTE, saying that they likely would not be alive if the Tigers had not intervened on their behalf.

Several of the Tamils we interviewed report a deep mistrust of Muslims based on past experiences. These feelings are based not only on past conflict and personal loss at the hands of Muslims, but also on the current economic and political situation. These feelings tend to be strongest in Ampara and Batticaloa, where many Tamils say Muslims have most of the economic and political clout.

Other Tamils interviewed have less strident views of Muslims, and tend to see the differences between the groups occurring more at the political level. And, some say they want Muslims to be given fair treatment in Tamil controlled areas in the future.

Muslims

Many Muslims are concerned that they do not have a place in determining the future of the Eastern province. They see the government representing the Sinhalese and the LTTE representing the Tamils in peace talks, but do not see any corresponding entity representing their needs. Some also express deep concern that the LTTE can or will represent them now or in the case of an Interim Administration.

While Muslims generally feel the government is providing them security now, they are skeptical that this will continue in the future. Many are fearful about their future in a “Tamil” state.

Some Muslims say security needs to come from within their own community. While most express this as a general concept, there are some who say, that unless an acceptable compromise can be attained, Muslims should form armed groups. However, it is important to note that while a few Sinhalese and Tamils interviewed speculated about the existence of armed Muslim groups, none of the Muslims we spoke with reported experience with groups of this sort.

Some of the Muslims we spoke with expressed frustration and anger that they are perceived as “foreign traders” or are treated as second-class citizens.

A few of the Muslims interviewed say they are leery of expressing dissent within their own community. This appears to be primarily in Ampara, where the concern is that if someone speaks out they potentially could face reprisals from the Muslim political establishment.

CONFLICT ESCALATION/TRIGGERS

Personal Incidents Turning Into Ethnic Conflict

Many we spoke with report that personal or criminal incidents often get blown up into “ethnic conflict.” In some cases, violence involving two individuals or groups within the same ethnic community is perceived to be the fault of another group, and this is sometimes exploited by those who want to encourage conflict. In other cases, the violence involves members from different ethnic groups, and although this is not ethnically oriented to start, it turns into an ethnic conflict. This is also exacerbated by third party actors who jump to conclusions before getting complete information about the situation.

Rumors

Many we interviewed acknowledge that rumors often play a role in triggering outbreaks of violence. They say these rumors, which often are associated with personal incidents and sometimes concern events in distant areas, become exaggerated and fuel existing tensions.

Political Exploitation

There is a fairly common perception that politicians often play a role in the escalation of conflict. According to many, there are some politicians bent on keeping their position of authority who maintain a constant stream of negativity toward the other ethnic groups, and thereby help set the stage for conflict. Additionally, many also report that when specific situations arise, there are often politicians who irresponsibly point the finger at opposition groups in order to incite violence that will prolong the *status quo* and keep them in power.

Third Party Spoilers

Another perception expressed by some of those we interviewed is that there are third party spoilers willing to exploit incidents for personal benefit or profit. While it is difficult for most to make a clear logical connection about how these individuals actually benefit from this violence, the general sense is that these spoilers rely on the public’s past experiences to assert that, for example, the LTTE is behind an incident when the truth is that the situation was fabricated or non-political.

Hartals (Strikes)

Some we spoke with say hartals can incite problems during tense times. These hartals can make travel difficult and are often viewed as inflammatory by those from the other ethnic groups.

Muttur & Valechenai

While many we interviewed were unable to offer specific explanations for the incidents at Muttur and Valechenai, those that did tend to point to some or all of the above-mentioned factors. These include rash actions by the public based on rumors, as well exploitation by politicians and third party spoilers.

CONFLICT PREVENTION/ALLEVIATION

Peace Committees

Many we spoke with are aware of Peace Committees in their community, and they tend to give these committees considerable credit for helping to settle disputes and advocate peaceful resolutions. These committees appear to be helping not only by responding to disturbances, but also in proactively setting disputes before they escalate into conflict.

Those we spoke with generally express support for Peace Committees, and some say that these types of groups could have helped prevent conflicts like those in Muttur and Valaichenai. Others want to see these committees taking a more active and everyday role in their communities.

The Easterners interviewed have varying opinions of the types of individuals who should participate in Peace Committees, and their suggestions tend to be more general than specific. Those interviewed are most likely to point to personality types, saying members should be “educated,” “open-minded,” and “peace-loving.” Many think religious leaders should be involved in Peace Committees, although some are concerned that religious leaders may be too inflexible.

Perhaps more than anything else, [many of? All of? The implication is that all] those we interviewed said that Peace Committee members need to be active members of the community and those who are intimately familiar with their particular area.

Religious Leaders

Muslims leaders, typically associated with Mosques, are credited for often helping to keep simmering tensions from boiling over. These leaders are often involved with peace committees that not only counsel their followers to exercise restraint in tense situations, but also help negotiate solutions with the LTTE.

Within the Tamil and Sinhalese communities, religious leaders appear to play a less prominent role in keeping the peace.

Police

According to many, the police are not always effective in responding to or preventing conflict. Some say this is because they can only do so much in certain situations and are concerned about their own security. Others are more skeptical in general about the resolve of the police in these situations, pointing to the problems of corruption mentioned earlier. Indeed, some report that the lack of faith in the responsiveness of the police drives people to take matters into their own hands.

Legal System

There is quite a bit of skepticism among those interviewed that the legal system offers a viable option for settling disputes. Many we spoke with feel this should be the case, but report that the legal system offers little or no real recourse. Reasons cited range from favoritism for the wealthy, fear among the judiciary, and lengthy delays in the legal process.

NGOs

Impressions of NGOs are generally favorable, although some Sinhalese and Muslims feel they have demonstrated favoritism toward or are lenient with the LTTE. The positive associations appear to be based on both humanitarian activities and the work NGOs have done on behalf of peace in the region. Overall, criticisms of NGOs are relatively rare.

Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission

Those we interviewed tend to have mixed to negative impressions about the SLMM. Some feel the SLMM is having a positive impact in their area, but it is more common to here criticisms of their efforts. The most common complaint is that the SLMM is not effective and is unlikely to be so in the future. Some are skeptical that foreigners are able to adequately understand the situation, while others say that the organization's mandate is unclear, and that they are unable to enforce their recommendations. A significant number also perceive the SLMM to be biased, usually in favor of the LTTE.

INFORMATION SOURCES

News Media

Many we interviewed report that the media are not providing enough unbiased information about the political situation in the Eastern Province. While it is not always clear if this perceived lack of information drives mistrust in the media, or vice versa, many clearly do not think the media conveys complete or unbiased information. The perception tends to be that the media outlets, often associated with a political party or certain agenda, either exaggerate news or (more often) fail to tell the full story in a factual manner. Notably, this mistrust in media sources leads some to fall back on word-of-mouth information sources.

The perceived lack of information extends to coverage about the peace process. Some say they have heard about the concept of an Interim Administration, but that the media offer little in the way of actually defining what this means, or in providing coverage of dialogue about this issue. This lack of information leads some to suspect that much of what is happening is censored.

Word-of-Mouth

When it comes to breaking situations, especially ethnic disturbances, there clearly are many who get information via word-of-mouth well before coverage by the television or radio.

A number of respondents acknowledge that word of mouth information is not always reliable, and can lead to rumors that do more harm than good. Indeed, some say that when they compare initial word-of-mouth reports to what ultimately is revealed in the news, the initial reports are often inaccurate.

Political Leaders

Given the political alienation and mistrust of politicians expressed by many in the East, it is perhaps not surprising that many are skeptical of political leaders as information sources. According to some, political and/or ethnic bias, as well as a desire to retain power or personally benefit, makes political leaders less than reliable sources of information about events in the area, especially ethnic disputes.

CONCLUSIONS

The opinions and attitudes revealed by the participants in this study offer deep insight into particular areas that most need attention in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province.

Media capacity building: Many of those interviewed expressed the perception that the news and information they have access to is limited in its scope or biased. It appears that the development of independent and credible news agencies could play an important role in dissipating tension, or something like that.

Increased Peace Process information: Many we spoke with clearly feel they need more information about the Peace Process and developments on the future of the region. Without this information, people tend to assume that nothing is happening, and this can fuel their anxiety about the future.

Early response information systems: A lack of reliable, timely information at the beginning of crises creates a vacuum that can lead to a reliance on rumors and/or exploitation by third parties. In addition to media development programs, it appears that early response information networks should be developed and enhanced in the region.

Enhanced mechanisms to resolve land disputes: Land issues surfaced repeatedly over the course of these interviews, with many reporting that they are unable to access or farm their land, and that the current system of settling disputes is not adequate. Clearly, land resettlement in the East needs to be a priority.

Trust building between members of ethnic groups. It is clear from these interviews that relations between members of different ethnic groups continue to be strained. Programs and methods to trust at the grassroots level need to be fully explored.

APPENDIX 1
EXCERPTS FROM TRANSCRIPTS

PEACE PROCESS/DIVIDENDS

Peace Dividends

ASBM58F: Now we are happier and more peaceful than ever. This is just the way we want to live our lives. People are content and they are capable of taking care of their welfare.

TTHM27F: As a result of peace it is really good and we have benefited by peace. [Mod: Is this in all aspects?] It has been good for us economically, employment-wise too. Our job is fishing in the sea and we are able to do it without fear now. Whereas, those days we were afraid to pass through 'Naduventhay' because of attacks by the Navy or Army, or wondering what the Terrorists would do.

ASBM47F: After the peace process, this area has flourished. [Mod: What areas have flourished?] Mostly the tourism industry. Earlier it was deteriorating. Actually it had hit rock bottom before the peace process. If the peace lasts, this area will flourish further.

BTHM55O: Earlier when we hear a vehicle racing outside our houses, we feared it might be an Army vehicle. We didn't know what time the Army will barge in to our houses. When dogs bark all are in fear thinking the Army is coming. Now that trend is not found. People are experiencing a sense of security.

ASBM47F: In my family there are five members; wife, two sons, a daughter and myself. Earlier we were always anxious around nighttime. During daytime we were ok. Now we are not worried anymore.

TTHM27F: Prior to peace, we were caged in, but now we are released and know of great freedom. If a group is striking in the town, our boys are able to go see it and return safely on their bicycles, even at 2 or 1 in the night. Those days, they would sleep in the town due to fear and return only the next morning.

AMMM36T: There is definitely some improvement. The reason being that, during the peace agreement people are able to carry on their work without interruptions. They can work for about 10 or 16 hours a day. When there is an emergency, we can go out. Earlier it was not possible. I think this is a good reason for improvement.

BTHF26G: Now there are no explosions and the fear psychosis is gone.

TSBM39B: We haven't really benefited or lost as a result of the peace process. The only thing that happened was that the killing and the fighting stopped.

ASBM40T: We have no regular source of income. Our livelihoods are threatened. Even the educated are unemployed. Before the war, our education levels were high. With the war, the education levels deteriorated. Now things are better again. We have a few graduates here too. As for the economy, people are still poor. Authorities aren't bothered about improving our economy. There's no regular irrigation system in Panama. The roads are deplorable. People still can't cultivate their lands and even if they do, they can't sell their harvest at reasonable prices. There is unemployment too. Once the unemployed youth begin to protest, the Govt has to stop renovating the war torn infrastructure and spend that money on employing the youth. Govt has to spend a lot of money on war compensation claimed by both public and private establishments too. Ultimately, the renovation of the tanks that provide water for cultivation is overlooked. As for the personal security, we are happy with the current situation.

AMMM35O: There is an improvement in economy but it is not visible outside. We don't know the reason for that. Sometimes it could be that the Government is saving money for the future war expenses.

TMMM21U: There is not much change. Our education expenses are going up. There is no increase in income. So our family is as it was.

Peace Process

BTHM23S: How long this peace process will continue -we do not know! Both parties should understand each other and without being adamant they must take good decisions on the future of the nation. I don't know whether this peace process will continue or it may break at any moment.

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ASBM35A: We are all very happy about peace. But we have our doubts whether it will last.

ASBM40F: We aren't sure. We have this nagging fear that things are not going smooth and that the situation is going to blast at any moment. Ceasefire doesn't mean peace. What we hear and see on the media unsettles us.

TMMM27T: This is welcomed by all the people. Every leader during his time does something towards this. There is a little bit of satisfaction in this, but that is all. And, I don't think that it will last for long.

BTHM24S: The public is losing faith in the peace process. There were now six rounds of talks have taken place. Now for some time there are no negotiations. We don't know when it will collapse. Will the army would accept the Interim Admin. If they don't, will there be a war? So, there is an unrest. Due to not continuing the negotiations, the fear is there among the public.

ASBM40A: My feeling is, I don't feel like they do anything. It seems like they don't have meetings or they don't proceed on. What they do is talk about themselves. That's the only peace process continuing now.

TSBM39B: There is no point. Everything is a lie. All are just discussions, be it on TV or radio, but no work is done. Those people go on air and discuss the very things that we already know. Nothing new. They sit around and when one person finishes talking the next one starts.

TMMM25U: Although the peace process is happening, the Tigers have not implemented it as the Government forces. For example, the tigers asked to remove a Muslims shop in front of Hindu Temple. But none of the Muslims did any harm to that Temple which is in our area. Elsewhere, the Tigers are using part of our mosque close to their camp as washing and changing area. We don't have faith in the peace accord. Although the Government enforces it, the Tigers are not doing so.

TTHM27F: With the present Government, yes, it is possible. However, there are many parties anxious to stop the prevailing peace and once again, cause the problems. It is apparent to us that the SLFP, JVP and EPDP of the Tamil Party, all these groups are together to destroy the peace. A month ago, the SLFP and JVP had a joint discussion for alliance, but when they were asked of a way to settle the Tamil crisis, they had refused. We are able to understand this as we hear the news, directly over the radio. Therefore, they want to disrupt peace.

BTHM57G: From what I read in the newspapers and to my personal conclusion, I tell that the Muslim Congress political background is the main cause for it. They did this murder and the abduction to disturb the peace process. [Mod: Just to disturb the peace?] Just for that. They are doing this so the LTTE would start the war again.

 PROBLEMS FACING THE EASTERN PROVINCE

ATHM34F: Economic problems. We are unable to do farming. There are many problems. This area is backward in transport and communications. There are problems and hindrances for the boats to go into the sea. The land transport is difficult because of the long distances, other hindrances and sometimes the vehicles are stopped by some people, and ransom is taken by some parties. This is preventing any improvement in the economic status of the area. Sometimes one's belongings are destroyed.

TMMM27T: Even though the education in this area is not up to the standard of those in developed area, the Muslims here are unable to show any improvement. The reason being that the schools are converted to refugee camps, power failures, lack of teachers, students do not have the stable state of mind to study. They are unable to even study from their homes due to the racial conflicts.

TSBM39B: You can't put up fences and keep the people within it in order to protect them. People are mobile. They have to make a living. If you keep them in one place in order to protect them, then the government will have to provide them with food too. But 1000 or 3000 rupees is not going to be enough for a family!

Economy & Unemployment

ASBM40A: The main problem is not enough jobs. If you don't have enough job opportunities you can't expect a better economic situation.

TMMM25U: Unemployment is the main problem. There are so many educated youths without employment. Even if they want to go and do fishing or agriculture, the situation is not good and profitable. Our youths don't know Sinhalese, the second language. So it is difficult for them to get jobs elsewhere.

TMMM32B: Job opportunities are bleak. The government sector has not to-date given any permanent positions. [Mod: What about individual jobs?] A lack of income, insecurity for business and fear due to sudden clashes are obstruction for private jobs. The consequence is unemployment.

BTCM22O: Here there are few factories and few working places. So it is not possible to get good jobs for the educated people.

BMMM58O: It is the biggest problem. In Eravur, nobody gets employment through the government. There are no big establishments or factories are here in Eravur. They tell, 'either work or go to hell.' Either we have to go fishing in the barren sea nor work in a hardware shop or have to run an auto. Therefore, Eravur has a lot of unemployment. There are a lot of educated men and women here. OL qualified, AL qualified people who are unable to show their abilities and they are suffering. Every house has at least two AL or OL qualified youths without jobs. I don't want to blame anybody, but ever since this Government came to power, not 5% of people in Eravur have gotten jobs. Only by employment, we can see development in a place. With such a high level of unemployment in our society, the village loses its peace and gets into some problems.

BMMM44U: Unemployment is there. It has not been solved. Ever since this Government came to power, they have discontinued work for many people. Even 32 people who got jobs in the electricity board, have lost their jobs, since this Government came to power. There are 2500 youths who has passed GCE AL in 2001 are still there without jobs.

ASBM47F: The economic conditions are very poor. (Mod: Why is that?) That is because the fishermen earn only for six months and they spend what they earned in the other six months. Unlike the Muslim people, they don't have paddy fields and all so it's difficult for them. The government has also not done any proper planning to provide the Sinhala and Tamil people with land or anything.

Land Issues

BTHM57G: Tamils don't have much land. But our Hindu Burial Mortuary has been abducted. They have taken our Mortuary land for playground. We have reported to Handiawatta, who is in charge of LTTE land problems. He came here and had a look. [Mod: They did not take any action?] Still they did not take any action. The playground is close by. From our burial place they had taken nearly about half an acre land. Also another Muslim has taken our burial land.

TSBF55O: Tamils acquire lands saying that these lands rightfully belong to their kovils. We have no way to verify the truth of what they are telling us. We have no access to the files that are concerned with these matters. We have no Sinhala authority to help us in these matters. Tamils could even have hidden them by now.

BMMM58O: In Eravur Muslims were already doing trade, agriculture and tobacco production. In Mannambapptty, Verikandha, Mahaveli Oya areas our people used to go and do tobacco trade. From which they earn Lacks of Rupees. Our traders were doing business there. All our farmers land is close to Tamil areas. For the last ten years, ever since our land went temporarily to the opponent's hands, the farmers couldn't do any farming or any other job. Those farmers have become beggars. Their children are working in Colombo, Kandy shops due to the communal disturbances. They don't have job opportunities. Due to the communal disturbances all their opportunities have gone.

ASBM45F: The Muslim people have claimed the land and licenses. The Tamil and Sinhala people have nothing.

TMMF35T: Usually, there is the fence problem, in the fields. In Kurngupatchan, there were about 3000 acres of land belonged by Muslims. But the Tigers have confiscated their land and refusing to give. So, there is a communal hatred in-between.

TSBM39B: They say it belongs to the kovil (Hindu Temple). Even if we are given the land rights they might say that it belongs to the kovil and ask us to leave.

AMMM36T: There are many problems with regard to this. The Muslims own lands in Tamil areas and the Tamils own lands in Muslim areas. There is a market price that exists for the land. The Muslims have bought these lands out of hard work for a cheap price. But now the Tamils are claiming that these lands were bought at an unreasonable price and the Tamils have been treated unfairly. Buying and selling is a sales contract. Each person sells it out of his own will. So it is not fair for them to claim this way. Of course there were some people who have acted fraudulently. But that is not the reason for them to say that everything was like that. So sometimes they come with persons from the terrorist groups or with political leaders and they are asking for compensation for this. They must identify the people who have acted unlawfully and then take action rather than penalize all who have bought the land.

AMMM19S: During this time the Muslims have many threats. Now the LTTE are openly doing things to disturb the Muslims. Earlier it was to the Tamils they posed a problem. The EPRLF were responsible for the causing trouble earlier but now it is the LTTE who are doing it in a harsh way. They are asking for ransom and they are interfering in the farming activities. They are claiming unreasonably lands owned by Muslims who have bought these lands from the generation of their grandparents.

ASBM58F: We haven't heard of anything of the displaced or them resettling. People who deserted their lands and properties for the fear of Tiger attacks are yet to come. Nobody has grabbed those lands and nobody has resettled in a land that belongs to someone else.

TSBM40O: The Sinhala people have still not been given the deeds to their lands, but the Tamil people have. There was this area near the bay of Trincomalee, which the Sinhalese people tried to acquire. But they were not allowed to do so, saying that the land belonged to the RDA and the UDA. Now however, the LTTE has acquired the land and is selling a perch at about Rs. 35,000. This is also being sold to the relatives of the LTTE members who died in the war, not to a single Sinhala person. Nobody says anything, as there is no point in complaining because all the authorities are Tamil.

ASBM45F: You go and build a hut on your land and come home, those people will destroy the hut before you go back the next day. That's the situation. Even the fences are taken off by the Muslim people.

TTHF23S: Well from both sides there is unfairness. For example, we have a land matter that needs to be resolved. Many people have lost their title deeds and documents. So to get the documents we need to pay. First we go to the LTTE and then to the police to resolve these matters So sometimes they take gifts in kind either by performing some work or by giving some thing to the person they get things changed in their favor.

TSBM39B: We have written to the authorities to get a land and for seven years now nothing has happened... They tell us to come next week, the week after and so on and keep on postponing our work. The Ombudsman has approved our application and told to pass on the land to us but still it has not been given. When we complain to the Government agent he says that he doesn't have the authority over land matters. He says it's the responsibility of the provincial council. We have complained to all parties concerned and nothing has happened. We don't know what else to do.

Farming

TSBF55O: Farmers are still afraid to cultivate the whole of their lands. They don't cultivate more than one acre, provided that one acre lies closely to the road. The security situation is not stable yet.

AMMM36T: Farming is done here. Even though there was improvement during the peace process, now it has been affected. There is no demand in the market.

ASBM35A: The main income is agriculture/farming. Now it is also very difficult. All the materials what we need are very expensive, and if we hire a tractor we pay a high rate. Other things are so expensive we earn less income from farming.

TMMM25U: Those who have land in this area, it is not a problem. They can do farming. Some people here have properties in Tiger's area. For them it is a problem. Even if they do farming and at the time of harvesting Tigers would come and give problem.

ASBM40A: We are farmers. Our fields aren't situated here; they are in the jungle areas where we were prohibited to go before the cease-fire. If we dared go to those areas and cultivate our fields, we would have been forced to pay tribute money to the Tamil Tigers. The fields of the moneyed are within the village as the authorities favored them when they distributed lands.

TTHF23S: As far as economic difficulties are concerned the people could not do their work properly. Because the economy was suffering a set back. But now everyone is able to do farming and farming is the main source of labour. Within 10 KM there are fields. They can work even in the nights. So there was a good harvest. Because of this people are economically better off.

Fishing

TTHM36F: Unlike before now we can go to the sea for fishing. Earlier if we hear gun shots we are very scared. Now as we don't hear that noise anymore we are able to work peacefully.

TTHF35T: Last week they had a meeting and were asked not to use certain methods of fishing. It is difficult for those have only that kind of nets. Also is difficult to go deep-sea fishing. [Mod: Why?] They say that they are being murdered or abducted like that. Those days, when my father and all went for fishing for a month, they brought a lot of fish and they got income like monthly salaries. Nowadays it is very difficult. They cannot go and stay in one place and fish.

TMMM27T: The fisher folk are unable to go out fishing due to restrictions by the navy. They lack the freedom to do their work. They are generally poor people, so when they cannot carry out their work properly they are pushed further into poverty.

TMMM32B: When people go fishing, they do so with their lives at stake. They go to sea with the notion that they could die and fearing that they may be shot down or even abducted.

TSBM39F: Fishing is the area where there are the most problems. We are told not to go here or not to go there. [Mod: Who gives you these orders?] I don't know. Some people just come by the coastline and order us to stay away. [Mod: You don't know who this is?] No, we don't know. They come armed so nobody goes to the forbidden areas.

BMMM58O: When you think of fishing, all the fishing tanks are in their area. Varanpottamadu Kulam, Umbittchi Kulam, Uruha Kulam, Kadandhanai Aaru Kulam and all these sort of fishing tanks are in the Tiger controlled areas. In Chinnakuda there were a lot of Sinhalese were there. After the problems they have left. Earlier when they were here they went boat fishing and did trade with Muslims. After these problems even that opportunity has gone. None of us are able to go in boats and do fishing, as that area also in the Tiger's controlled area. We have a river to do fishing. Even in that river, we can go only half way through for fishing. That is the fishermen's problem. All fishing tanks are that side, the sea is this side and in the river they can go half way through and cannot catch freely. When they come for their fishing in half way, how can we do fishing?

Education

AMMM36T: Education level has fallen down in the area and the reason for this is the political situation of this country.

ASBM47F: Education is of no value anymore. [Mod: Why do you say that?] There is a shortage of teachers. The children don't have any facilities. There is only one building. There are about nine classes, but some of the classes are conducted under trees. That is why the education is not worth mentioning.

TMMM27T: They have not gotten what they looked forward to in the education field. The Muslims rely very much on education in order to have a good standing in life. This area is suffering from poverty. Most of the educated are without jobs. And due to the frequent violent incidents the children's education is greatly affected. They cannot study due to the disturbed mental state.

ASBM40A: There is only one Sinhalese medium school in this area and it has only classes up to OL's. [Mod: If they want to continue their studies?] Then they should go to Ampara. It is very difficult to reach Ampara because there are not enough transportation facilities. Sometimes the children return home at this time from Ampara. Also sometimes it gets dark by they return home. In the mornings to go to schools they don't have buses or any other vehicles. Sometimes they have to travel by a private vehicle.

TTHF23S: After the peace agreement, in a survey we did in schools we find that the school children have improved very much. There have been good results in the scholarship exams and A/levels.

Illegal Taxation

TMMM35B: I have seen the envelopes in which letters come demanding taxes from my friends but I have not received anything of that nature up to now. I have a businessman friend he says he pays taxes due to fear. [Mod: What is the group that is demanding tax from your friends? Do you have any idea?] From the description my friends gave me I think it must be LTTE. He didn't tell that. But we feel so.

TMMM25U: If you have land you have to pay tax. For houses also you have to pay tax. For a thatch different rate, and for a house different rate. [Mod: To whom you have to pay the taxes?] To the Tigers.

TMMM32B: All these would be LTTE. 'Jungles' mean LTTE controlled areas. For instance, if you go to 'Kurangupachan' you have to give Rs 1,000 and further, another Rs 1,000. This is how it goes on, when you pass through the 'jungles' or LTTE controlled areas... The LTTE says they are protecting the area, and they tell that some areas are under their purview. If not complied with, we would be threatened or tortured.

TMMM25T: Yes, if we do not pay (taxes to the LTTE), then there will be a problem.

AMMM36T: They had asked the Muslim fisherman not to go fishing in the sea. I don't know what mistakes they would have made. I say what some people who are in this trade have told me. But later I found that there was no such thing but only the people selling in the Tamils areas had to pay tax on a pro rata basis. Even if it is the Tamils they had to pay this tax. [Mod: Who is levying the taxes?] The Tigers.

BMMF22U: They don't come into our area to ask tax from our people. When our people go to Tamil area to do their business, they have asked to pay the tax to do the business. I heard that our people went to do their business some day back. People have asked to pay 1000/= per day as a tax to do the business if not people have sent back. They earn nearly 500/=. It is unbearable. They have not allowed to their business. This is unfair.

BTHM24S: On taxing, all groups have abandoned on taxing. Before, other all groups levied tax by force. Now the Tigers have come and the taxation is reduced a lot. But still some village area, there are tensions on taxing.

BMMM58O: They pay 50 Rupees to the Tigers. Then they pay 25 Rupees for the province. There is another tax of Rupees 5/-. Total it comes around 80 Rupees. On 2^d of this month they raised the 80 Rupees by another 29 Rupees and asked the traders not to come. After our talks, we solved it back the same 80 Rupees. For some 100 Rupees, for some 60Rupees, like this they are obtaining according to their business. For Tamils this tax is compulsory.

TSBM40O: Recently the LTTE came and collected information about all the Tamil and Muslim people doing business in the town, to collect taxes from them. So far they haven't collected information about the Sinhalese businessmen. The LTTE charges a compulsory tax from all the people engaging in business. They haven't collected from Sinhala so far but have collected taxes from the Tamil people.

TSBM39B Yes. They say that if you want to go to a certain area to fish, each boat owner has to pay Rs.1000

BTHM55O: Not us, but we have seen tax been imposed on businessmen. For example, they are imposing a tax on the price of the goods that people buy. Like a rupee or two extra they are charging as taxes.

BTHM45R: For an example Sand need for building construction. People have to pay tax to get the sand from beach or pond. We didn't face this situation some times back. Now we have to pay. I think people feel uncomfortable due to this. [Mod: You are speaking about tax. To whom do you pay this tax?] We are paying to LTTE. For example we pay fifty rupees for one load of sand.

BTHM24S: There are taxation by the Tigers but it is reduced than before. Because of heavy taxation by the government the Tigers reduced collecting taxes to ease the burden of the public

Mod: What is the reason for people are paying taxes to the Tigers?

BTHM24S: To improve their economy.

Mod: The people are giving by their own wish to them or by request?

BTHM24S: Some gave without any request some gave by the request.

Mod: Why they gave with out the request?

BTHM24S: That is because they are fond of them.

Mod: When they are giving on request, is it by force?

BTHM24S: Not by force

Mod: Whom they are giving?

BTHM24S: There is a Treasurer.

Mod: Is there is receipt?

BTHM24S: No. Some people pay monthly and some pay yearly. They do not issue receipt due to Army.

ATHM65A: If they ask (for taxes) we will give. We don't have such a problem. People who are against LTTE fabricate a story like this.

BMMM58O: When Muslims go to do business in the Tiger controlled area, Tigers asked them to pay tax as they are making profit in their area. They say that only with the tax money, they are able to do their work. We also want them and us to live. Therefore, they are asking for a small amount and we are giving tax, and not because we are slaves to pay tax and live. If our people keep on live like this here without doing anything they would die in hunger. Because of this we have promised to pay tax to them.

HUMAN SECURITY

Freedom of Movement

AMMM36T: The peace has made the people more actively do their work and engage in farming activities. The transport has improved has become easier. It is not a huge improvement but it certainly is welcome. I have never been to Jaffna in my life but recently we went to Jaffna, Killinochi, Vauniya and Mannar to look around the places.

TSBF55O: [Mod: Have you had any personal benefit from the peace process?] No, but the traveling is easier now. Those days, there were no buses after 2pm and the Kanthale road closed at 6pm everyday. But now we have buses even at 12 midnight and the Kanthale road is open 24 hours.

TTHM27F: Now we can go and return fearlessly, at any time, without any problem.

BTHF37T: Although we don't believe that the security is for sure, we are at least able to move around and do our daily work.

BTCM22O: We are able to go from one place to another to work. Earlier due to security reasons we were unable to go out after 10 pm. Now, it is not a problem.

BTHM23S: Safety in traveling is improved. We feel security in our life. We could move around it is not improved to a total 100% but improved more than earlier.

TTHM36F: After the peace we are able to go out even in the night to the sea. We also go for other farming activities such as harvesting etc.

ATHF50H: Now the situation has been established where people can freely move about at any time. Tamils need not fear for anything as the situation has changed.

TTHF23S: Earlier we could not go out in the nights. But now we can go about doing our work at anytime of the day. This is one big relief.

BMMF22U: We have lot of changes. Transport has improved. We are satisfied with transport. We can travel anywhere without fear.

BTHM57G: We are happy now. We don't have the army's constant checking, and if we want to go Kalmunai, then we have to get down at Karaitheevu checkpoint to show our identity cards. Nothing now, we are free.

TTHM27F: As for me, there is no necessity to get an elderly neighbour to accompany, in event of illness to my wife or child. I can take her myself, to a hospital, even dead of night. During the problems, a certain age group, be it Sinhalese, Muslim or Tamil after 6 at dusk, we would not be on the road. We feared, as to whether the soldiers, the movement, or the army would capture us and our fate thereafter. Now for my family problems, I could go to the hospital at any time of the night. Those days, I would get 4 or 5 elderly people to take my wife to the hospital and would sit at home in anxiety, as to whether they have gone safely to the hospital or not.

TMMM27T: Sometimes there are certain restrictions. It is not advisable to go on the streets after 6 or 7 pm. Sometimes everything is quite normal on the streets. Sometimes there will be some kind of fear to go to the streets.

BMMM58O: We have freedom only within this three miles range. Even to pass the police station, which is hundred meters away from the border, we have no freedom. Here in the east we cannot go freely to the colony, which is a mile away. We are allowed to go, but when there is a tension we cannot go freely.

TMMM25U: In the town area there is no problem, but in villages there is fear.

ATHM65A: If one goes out alone, the person might go missing. Therefore we think twice before going out.

TMMM25T: To improve your economic situation you have to do business, to do business you have to travel, we can't travel... We can't go to any place alone. We have to go with 2 or 3 persons. In Muthur we can't go alone in night. According to our prophet's view, being accompanied is better than being alone. The wounds of the past incidents are still in our minds. That gives us fear to move alone.

BMMM58O: Eravur's problem is- they should be allowed to move about freely. They should be allowed to do their duties with freedom. If they get back their land and they can do their work properly they will be free. Farmers couldn't do their jobs. Fisher folks couldn't do their work. The situation should come back for farmers to work in their land, and the fishermen to fish in the Tiger dominated water areas. Also Muslims should be allowed to do business. We should be allowed to do at our neighboring Tamil area. For years we were doing business there. As we are not allowed there, we couldn't do anything else within these three miles range of Muslims.

TMMM25U: Here people live on agriculture and fishing. You cannot go do fishing using certain kinds of nets and you cannot go after certain hours. Also if you go to the Tigers area you might be attacked. If you take agriculture, though we have land, it is not safe to do it. In those areas men are abducted, cows get lost and so insecurities. Still our situations are same as we were earlier.

ATHM65A: To go out of the village itself is problem. To go to the fields or to go 2 to 3 miles outside the village, we have no confidence.

ASBM40A: It's very sad to say about. There is no such personal security. We are free to wander in a limited area. Beyond the limited area we never go anywhere.

Kidnapping/Ransom/Murder

TMMM25U: The government has to make an effort to stop this. If we don't pay the kappam we would be abducted or murdered. If there was proper security this would not happen.

AMMM36T: Yes there are organizations that ask for this. Now it is very much less. Earlier they would come to the shops or by telephone they ask or they ask a person to come and ask him for it. Now they do it indirectly. They ask the big shop owners for ransom and the owners pay it in order to protect themselves and the owners pay it without the knowledge of the others.

Mod: So what happens if you go into those restricted areas?

TSBM39B: They'll just shoot us, that's all.

Mod: Have they shot anyone so far?

TSBM39B: Absolutely. They have killed about 5 or 6.

Mod: After the ceasefire?

TSBM39B: Yes, after the ceasefire. They have killed both Sinhala and Tamil people. The LTTE had asked these people not to go there, but these people had gone fishing and had been shot at. Later their bodies were found floating!

BTHM55O: I won't say now there is no kidnapping now. It has lessened from a year ago, so definitely there is improvement in this issue.

Human Security: Far From Guaranteed

ATHF50O: So far, all the MP's who come we tell them that we seek peace, permanent peace. We tell them it is important for us. For everything we have to act to the order of someone. Every moment, we must be alert to runaway with our important belongings. We cannot sleep peacefully. When we heave a noise we feel that we must get up and run.

TMMM27T: Now we think that [the peace process] is favorable. But as time goes by we will know if it is favorable or not.

TTHM36F: It was impossible to go anywhere. It was after the clashes between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. There is still fear in our hearts. [Mod: What is the reason?] We are afraid because what if suddenly the fighting starts again. So, peace is what we need.

Little Security from the Government

TTHF23S: It is the Government that should protect our rights.

BMMF22U: As far as my concern if the peace enforce in the country, the government should provide security to their people. In present situation, the government has not provided complete security for us.

TMMM35B: We were told once by the JR government that we have to look after our own selves. The government can't protect each and every one in the society. Therefore, we have not trust in the government.

TTHM55A: Currently the government is split and there is discord because of the opposition party. Therefore, there is a possibility of the peace-talks being stalled. We have not been able to even with the previous regime and now as well, believe that Tamils would get their rights. What assurance have we, that we will be given in the future. Therefore, as for me, I cannot fully trust the government for protection.

ATHF50O: Up to this point, we have received no protection when the two boys were killed, and then the other day also some unknown persons had shot at someone in and the place. So who do we trust. How can we expect some protection? We don't know when something will happen to us.

BTCM22O: Whoever is there would do. We cannot trust the Government. We can trust according to the situation.

BTHM55O: We have little trust that the government will provide the security for its citizens

TSBM39B: I don't think that if something starts now, they will protect us. They will have to protect themselves first!

ATHM65A: They come running, and they come only when the matter is over. [Mod:] Do you have confidence that they will protect you?] No, we don't have confidence in them.

BMMM44U: We have no faith in the Sri Lankan Government. It is because; in 1985 during troubles Muslims were with the Government forces. It occurred because of the politicians. Saying that they are giving security to Muslims, they were very partial. In each village they gave security to Muslims. Now when the peace talks started they immediately dropped our security and joined hands with the LTTE. So what guarantee do we have that they will give security? Government used Muslims and Muslim Congress for their purpose and never wanted to give them security. If any problem arises now, there is no security for Muslims in this agreement. MP's security is not allowed to shoot at the LTTE, according to the agreement. When you see what is happening here now, it is clear that the Government has given up on the Muslims.

Police Corruption/Bias

ASBM45F: There is no one here. Those days the OIC (Soysa sir) was there. He didn't tolerate any disruptions. If something was done, he made sure that they were disciplined immediately. The OIC at present works for money. [Mod: You mean bribery?] Yes.

BTHM23S: In police we see lot of corruption and bribery. Police station itself means bribery. If we go with a bottle of liquor, then 'it's ok' - even a killer or a drug addict can be saved! They are not capable of taking a decision to prevent clashes.

TMMM27T: As far as peace is concerned they are not suitable because of the way they have acted in the past. They have acted partially. There are many instances where they have acted this way. When complains are made they take the majority races side.

AMMM36T: People have no confidence in them because they act unfairly. They always favor the influential people or people with money. Sometimes even if they don't take bribes they do something for another favor. If you take the Akkaraipattu area, the IGP is very friendly with the big businessmen and they are given drinks and well taken care of. So eventually it is the poor who get punished and treated unfairly.

TMMM32B: Although they (police) are appropriate peacekeepers, generally they show partiality. [Mod: Why do you say the police are partial?] These officers are prone to accept bribes.

AMMM41B: That poses a question. When some one is afflicted by some problem he cannot go and lodge an entry in the police station. The police does not do their work properly because of bribery and corruption.

ASBM45F: But there is no police that does justice. If a Muslim person is caught they won't do anything, as the officials are Muslim. If he is rich then still he gets to go off free. If there is an official who doesn't take bribes then the situation will be better.

BTHM57G: The police too do these with them. Once in every two months the police would put case on these illegal liquor sellers. There, in the court they pay the penalty of 1000 or 2000 Rupees and come and do their sales again. [Mod: They are playing an act?] Yes. Police come and consume liquor free of charge. [Mod: The police?] Yes, so even if anybody reports, they won't take action. Now the business is in high swing. In nights people are not able to walk on the roads. Till 10 to 12 in nights the Muslims are in the Tamil area. We won't be able to go to their area at 12 in the night.

 REPRESENTATION/EXPRESSION

Political Alienation

TTHM36F: Why should we talk about politics, we have our own personal matters to talk about. When they ask for elections they come and talk only. They ask us to vote for different symbols. But nothing is delivered as promised. If we are to meet them we have to travel to Colombo. Some people do not even permit us to go meet them.

TMMF35T: People are angry with politicians for taking their votes and doing nothing for them.

BMMF22U: People can discuss within themselves. They is not much freedom to express their opinion to the politicians. If done so they won't listen. Politicians are thinking they are in position of power and they are correct whatever they do.

ASBM47F: We don't go to the politicians for help. If we want to vote, we vote, and that is it.

TSBM39B: Who is there? That is what we are also asking. No one! [Mod: No one?] They are there in name only. They come during election time and are not to be seen after they win the election.

AMMM24O: [Politicians] are selfish people. They get the money from abroad to develop the country but they develop their own comfort and increase the standard of living of their relatives. They don't think about the people. They are doing their own work. For example we select an MP for our Kalmunai area. We selected him, with much difficulty. He didn't do anything to the Kalmunai people. All are working as selfishly.

BTHM55O: Politicians, once they win the elections, they go to Colombo. Only if they live in our region will they know the happenings here. If any politician is able to mix with the people well it is good. We can avoid tensed situations. In Batticaloa there are about 6 MPs. Most of the time they are in Colombo. So for an emergency we can't meet the MPs. We can only meet their secretaries. They will say 'OK, we will inform the boss.'

Expression

TMMM27T: No, it is restricted sometimes. The reason for this is fear. People can only discuss with the people of the same race about this due to fear.

AMMM36T: As far as the politics of this area is concerned I am not in a position to express my views on political matters freely. But I am able to express my views on behalf of the Muslim community.

ASBM40A: Discussions about the development of our village too. When I participate in such meetings, I'm a little nervous whether people will do something to me after listening to me talk. [Mod: So what type of pressure can you exert?] What can I do if they behead me! [Mod: Why do you say that?] Because that has been done in the past.

BTHM57G: There are only 169 families here. To the Muslims we won't speak openly. We won't tell the truth to them. We talk to our own Tamil people. [Mod: Why?] If we speak out openly, then we would be identified. They, in fear would show us that we are LTTE supporters, like that. [Mod: What is wrong in telling that you are supporters?] Then if a riot takes place, we would be their first targets. [Mod: They would attack you?] Yes, they will attack.

BTHF26G: We can't talk as and when we want. Muslims talk about Tamils, but we Tamils are not in a position to talk freely about Muslims.

TMMM32B: A person belonging to the Muslim community is able to express political views only within his clan and not to other communities.

 ETHNIC RELATIONS / INTERACTIONS

Cordial/Improved Relations

TTHF23S: There is peace among all three races. There are personal conflicts. I did not hear of any racial conflicts after the peace agreement.

BTCM22O: [Mod: You are a youth. How are the relationships between the Tamils youths and Muslim youths?] We are very close like, rope. Good relationships are growing... We find more interracial harmony among communities than we found a year ago.

TTHM27F: From our childhood the Muslims, Tamils, and Sinhalese of this village have been living together as a family. Little problems may arise among us, but they are resolved promptly.

ASBM58F: No special efforts are needed to bring about any peacefulness into our relations; we've always been peaceful with one another.

TMMM25T: As far as I am concerned, I never look upon other community people with hatred. This is because of our tradition. Since our child hood we have been brought up like that. Even we do not hate Tamils. When we do not hate Tamils, how can we hate Muslims, they are our brothers.

TMMM25U: No. Actually through out history we Muslims and Tamils were friendly here. It is because of the Tigers, not Tamils, that we get agitated.

Mod: The three communities are united in your area?

TSBM39B: Yes, they are united.

BMMM44U: It is in smooth now. There are no problems between the communities. Although, time to time some problem arises by provocation, it will die off. From the beginning everybody is in harmony.

BMMM44U: There are no problems between the people, Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims. Only the Government, politicians, political parties and the liberation groups have the problems.

A Lingering Mistrust

Mod: Have you been mentally agonized by the Muslims of Sammanthurai?

ATHM65A: Very severely, I have lost 3 young sons. My ancestral inheritance is all lost. I can never forget that.

BTHM57G: Sometimes they talk with something in their minds. Yesterday one person said that a war is going to come. He was the one who looted our things last time. Immediately I thought, 'well now he wants war to loot all the balance things.' I couldn't talk to him openly. This is the present situation.

TMMM27T: I feel that it has not improved. This is due to fear, the change in psychology. [Mod: What is the reason?] It is because of the incidents of racial disputes that happen in the area.

TMMM32B: I have not good impressions of them (Tamils). [Mod: Your reasons for such?] When we recall past experiences, they are not amiable. They associated with us cordially and later on engaged in assaults, atrocities, violence and such deeds in our area.

AMMM36T: Community wise there is no trust among the races. Each race looks at the other with enmity. They act like as though that they are superior. Even the Tigers say that they are carrying on the negotiations but they have not shown it in action. They have not acted in a manner to build the confidence. Their actions do not show that they have forgotten their bitterness. Practically, they have not built our confidence even though the newspapers and their discussions show on the contrary.

Business & Commerce Interactions

TSBF55O: We have good relations. We go to Sinhala shops as well as Tamil shops.

BTCM22O: We don't have any misunderstanding here. We buy things from them and they from us. We have even chit funds between us.

BMMM58O: We purchase and sell paddy and money in between them. All get along well... It is according to the business. They borrow and we give loans and it takes place often. There is no problem in that.

ASBM40A: Mostly the Muslims are involved in business in this area. From them the Sinhalese take something, and they sell and they earn money.

TSBM39B: Here all three communities engage in trade, fishing and farming.

TTHF23S: Daily the vegetables needed for people's consumption and other things are brought in. And the lorries from Sinhala people come to take the paddy.

BTHM36G: Trade and business have no problem. All live in a same area. Although we are Muslims and Tamils we speak Tamil language.... You have to go through their areas and they have to travel through our areas. These are common things and such dealings should take place.

ATHM65A: The Muslims work in their fields and we work in ours. During the harvest, Muslims hire the Tamils to work in their fields. After the work is over, each one goes his own way.

TMMM25U: Here mostly all are Muslims and very few Tamils. Only Muslims have the shops. If Tamils want to buy anything they will come to our shops. We don't have to go to them, except for haircuts.

ASBM47F: That's also the same. If for example think that someone meets with an accident when at sea. No one will leave him and come because he is a Muslim. If a Muslim person is in trouble the Sinhala people will help and if a Sinhala person is in trouble the Muslim people will help.

Social Interactions

TTHF23S: There are Sinhala villages and Muslim villages on the other side. Our people are united with them. When there is some event they invite everyone from those places also and conduct them without any problems.

ASBM40A: We live together as if we have any functions we invite each other and they too do so and we participate in their functions and they too.

AMMM36T: Yes. A lot of that takes place. They invite us for their weddings and we go for theirs. Usually this is between colleagues in an office, or families that have developed good friendships.

ASBM47F: They are all happy together. There are many Muslims in this area. If they have some function they invite us and we invite them. The Tamil people are also like that. We all live like one family.

BMMF22U: We have business, transport and education connection. Also we have friendship. They invite us for their functions and we invite them to our functions.

BMMM58O: Here majority community is Tamils. For hundreds of years we had good relationships with them. I already told you, that we go to their weddings, functions and Temples. They come to our weddings, functions and Mosque. In their Veerapathirar Temple, there is a hall named, Sonaha (Muslim) Madai.

ATHF50H: Muslims attend Tamil weddings and vice versa.

TSBM40O: All three groups attend each other's functions. The Tamil people especially like to attend the Sinhala functions. They like the food too. They attend all alms giving's, other functions and even funerals.

BTHM57G: Yes, it is true. I work in a hospital. For my daughter's wedding I invited Muslims. I know they won't eat chicken if we cut. So I asked one of them to do such work with their prayers and cooked them. All of them came and had nice time.

BTCM22O: Earlier it was very good it seems. Then in between it was not much. Now, it is growing again. As we are friends, they come and take us to their Meelath festivals, like that.

TSBM39B All three communities attend ceremonies together.

ASBM47F: All three groups attend each other's functions. As Muslims are buried within 24 hours some people may not even find out until they have been buried. But with Sinhala and Tamil people its different. If a funeral happens all people work together.

TSBM39B Yes. About 1 in 100 are mixed marriages.

TTHM27F: In our village Sinhalese boys have married Tamil girls. Therefore, there are no conflicts. All live as kith and kin.

ASBM45F: The Sinhala and Tamil have mixed marriages. But Muslim and Sinhala people don't have mixed marriages. It has happened at times. But it's mostly Sinhala and Tamil.

TTHF23S: Yes. There is a Tamil girl who is married to a Muslim and there are some who have married the Sinhalese. Mixed marriages have taken place.

BTHF37T: But Tamils have married Sinhalese in their work places. Our girls marry those boys, and those girls marry our boys. But never they marry Muslims. [Mod: Why?] Because there is a big cultural gap in between both of us. [Mod: Cultural differences?] Yes, we don't have any cultural similarities with Muslims. But, with Sinhalese we have only one or two cultural differences. So it is possible for a Tamil to marry a Sinhalese and live happily. So, never any situations arise for a Tamil to marry a Muslim. They don't get any opportunity to fall in love.

ASBM50T: Though intermarrying, almost all of us are related and that's why we have no interracial clashes among the civilians in these areas.

BTHM36G: There are [some inter-marriages] between Muslims and Hindus. As far as I am concerned, this inter-marriage poses a difficult situation. The religious rites of Muslims and Hindus are different. The pattern of living is not suited for Hindus. A man known to me in Kattankudi married a Muslim, but when he had gone with her he almost lost his identity. He cannot act in his own way. Therefore, Hindus who married Muslims advise other Hindus not to marry Muslims. There were some in Trinco. There are few in this area too. It is better to avoid such marriages.

TMMM25T: Very few. Our religion is important to us.

ATHM65A: No mixed marriages. Sometimes when they socialize together, they fall in love and they convert them to their religion (Islam). You cannot call it mixed marriages.

BTHF26G: Isolated incidents. Some poor Tamils due to poverty have taken this path. It is because the Muslims have promised them land, etc.

Future Interactions

ATHM65A: [Mod: When you are socializing with the Muslims, are you wholeheartedly mixing with them?] No, in a very careful manner. [Mod: How do you socialize with the Sinhalese?] If we fight only on that day, the next day they are normal. Whatever a Sinhalese does, it is only on that day. The next day he behaves as though nothing happened.

TMMM32B: I do not think that now the Tamils and Muslims would associate happily. The relationship is estranged, even with those we affiliated before.

TSBF55O: We have no problems among us. We attend their social and cultural gatherings and they, ours. War or no war, we have always been amicable to one another. But whenever there's an ethnic complication, our relations seem to get tensed. It isn't the villagers, but the outsiders who are responsible for these happenings. We grew up and schooled together. It's the people who have been resettled here recently, that are behind these incidents.

BTHF37T: We had good relationships in 70s and early 80s. But now only for the sake of politeness, there are relationships. Just like in working places, or in neighborhood. In our minds, we have the hatred, but we move with courtesy. We don't have the sincere, earlier relationships.

TSBM40O: Now there is a better relationship. But I think there is a feeling of disgust or anger in the minds. When you come face to face you get the feeling "Oh, he's a Tamil."

AMMM24O: Although they interact with each other, true unity doesn't exist. They are moving like this due to the peace only. [Mod: What is the reason for not uniting psychologically?] They have to do what the movements ask them to do. Since the movements are talking peace, they are also behaving like this. But, they haven't realized it yet.

TSBM40O: [Mod: Do you think it's a good idea to be interrelated or is it bad?] I think it's a good idea. [Mod: Why is it good?] Then there are fewer problems.

ASBM40A: Keeping relationships between each is good. We can't see it as bad.

BTHF37T: Yes, it is important. This is a multiracial country. This is a multiracial area. If you live among your self, you will be isolated. Here we live depending with each other. So it is very, very important to maintain good relationships.

BTHM23S: Yes, if you are mixed with the other communities -- Muslim, Sinhala and Tamil -- you will come to know different culture and how to respect them -and so on. Social values are given through mixing with all the people.

SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUP IMPRESSIONS

Sinhalese

ASBF45A: Yes. There is the army and the police. We are sure that they would take care of us... Before the cease-fire we weren't supposed to go beyond Pothuvil, because if you do you are killed. But now that there is security we aren't afraid to go wherever we want to. The Army and the police protect us.

ASBM47F: Security wise there are no problems. [Mod: What is the reason for that?] The STF and the Police are here... The STF don't allow the Muslim people to do anything against the law.

ASBF45A: I can't predict anything. We don't know. What if the Government asks the Army and the police to clear off, then we won't have anybody to take care of us.

TSBM39B It has not got better; it's the same as it was... We lead the same life that we lead before the peace process. People say that you will get this and that because of peace but we have gained nothing.

TSBF55O: I can't say that it has not improved. But there is no dramatic change. The only positive thing about the cease-fire is that the relatives that haven't visited us for ages can visit us now. But, we are worried more than ever. What would be the outcome of the peace process? What if they get the proposed Interim Administration? What if we are forced to leave? That keeps worrying us.

TSBF55O: Politically we are helpless. We have no voice. There is no political representation of Sinhalese. Muslims have the same problems that we have, but they have 3 representatives at the council.

ASBM50T: There is a lot of distrust and suspicion involved. Nobody tells us the truth. If the LTTE proclaims that the North –East is theirs and that now on they would take care of us, then we know what to expect for. But they don't say anything for sure. The government too is bluffing and deceiving us. If only we can know what happens, if only we are told what to expect! We are sick with this sense of uncertainty. In any case, we can't give up on these lands. There's no turning back for us.

TSBM39B I feel it's worse than before now because the LTTE now openly and publicly carries out their work. They even ask the business people to make payments for them. (The respondent is heard pointing towards various directions and then states that they are not allowed to go into those areas).

TSBM40O: Economic conditions have sort of remained the same, but I'm very dissatisfied with our security. I work here and my children go to school out of the fort and should some violence erupt, the situation is such that we can't come back inside the fort. We don't know what will happen to us if that happens.

TSBM40O: No representation of the Sinhalese. The balance of power is with the Tamil people in this area and there are three Muslim MP's but no Sinhala representatives.

TSBF55O: There are a lot of unemployed people here. There are a lot of widows of those who were killed at the front. According to the ethnic ratio, 50% of jobs go to Tamils and only 10% go to Sinhalese. Even in the Civil Service exams, Tamils are favored. Less qualified Tamils are employed whereas more qualified Sinhalese remain unemployed. Even if there are more qualified Sinhalese, they won't take more than what the ratio allows. They fill the 50% of the vacancies with Tamils whether they are qualified or not even when there are plenty of qualified Sinhalese left unemployed. It is true that they are the majority, but I don't feel that the ratio is fair by us. They bring Tamils to Trinco out of nowhere and settle them in these areas. The LTTE too distribute land among the Tamils. That's how they have come to be the majority. They are the rulers as well as the administrators here. We are helpless.

TSBM40O: The government servants should be an equal representation of all three communities. That should be done first and foremost. Then the Sinhala people wouldn't complain that their work was not done and only the Tamil persons work got done. Recently there was a mobile service in Trincomalee for which the Land minister was supposed to come. But the minister and all the other high officials failed to show up and the Sinhala people didn't have anyone to speak to about their problems.

TSBM40O: All this time not a single political party was allowed to hold meetings within our office premises. But the LTTE had a meeting inside the office with the participation of the Tamil employees lately.

TSBF55O: Yes. We do have fears. They want this to be their capital. This town has always been our stronghold. This is one of the very few places that they haven't been able to attack so far. There are rumors to the effect that they are planning to move the town to the 4th and 5th Mileposts in order to convert this area to a place of worship of the Hindus. If that plan is going to be carried out, we won't be able to go on living here.

TSBM39B What if they tell the Sinhala people not to fish in a particular area? When there are no fish in the area that you have been restricted to, how will you eat? From Where will you get money? So people will automatically leave the place. It's as simple as that, getting rid of us. What they want is only the land rights, money and the right to establish their police services. When they get that we will have to automatically leave. Everyone is ready to leave any moment a conflict erupts.

ASBF45A: We have no political opinions as such and even if we had we won't be free to do so as this is an area that is dominated by Muslims. The Muslim authorities let the Muslims clear the jungles and claim the land their own and to make fake deeds to those lands so that most of the land belong to them and we can't raise a voice against it.

ASBM45F: We can't tell any of the authorities. When the people at higher authorities are all their people (Muslim), whom can we tell? It's like asking the thief's mother who stole it. We can't tell the police too. The police chief is also a Muslim. Even the Chief secretary is a Muslim. The only support is when we go to Ampara. When the Sinhala and Tamil authorities were there, they never favored their own people. They treated everyone fairly according to the law. This area in Raddila, was all owned by Sinhala people. Now not a single Sinhala person owns any paddy land. All the paddy fields belong to Muslims. Some days ago, the army people came and spent about 9 million rupees and reconstructed the tanks and made it easier for the Muslim people to engage in their agricultural work. Sinhala people have nothing.

Tamils

BTHF37T: Our people are facing two types of problems. We have to face the problem with the Sinhalese Government's war against Tamils, as we are Tamils. Our near by villages, the Muslims are living in majority. As the Government is secluding the Tamils, the Muslims have developed themselves in Economy and Education. As they are powerful now, they are controlling us and ridiculing us. For each action, we do we are being ridiculed and controlled. This is more painful than the pain we get from the Sinhalese Government. Whether we are applying for a job or we are buying a medicine or in education, we are treated partially. Outwardly everything looks nice, but we are suffering inside because of this partiality treatment on Tamils. I am born, bread, working and living with this society. Also I am in a position to relate with them everyday, feel this injustice day after day.

TMMF35T: Every human has his own rights. The Government has lost to give them in time. There was a need to have Tamil as one of the official languages. But the Government never considered that. All Government letters are sent only in Sinhalese. That day the OL question paper came to us only in Sinhalese. To a Tamil school it was sent in Sinhalese. Without grammatical mistakes, to translate it there was nobody here. We have our rights. Everything sent to Tamils should be in Tamil. To Sinhalese it should be in Sinhalese. If these rights and speech rights are given, there will be no problem.

ATHM44T: There are a lot of people who were affected by the war. They didn't get their compensations properly. They have lost big amounts. What they got was only fifteen thousand. With their own effort, they are building their houses. They have to be given more compensation. During the North Eastern war, Tamils are the people who fully got affected. There may be one or two Muslims. The Rehabilitation Minister here is a Muslim, who was selected by the Muslim Party. So he did all the help to the Muslims and nothing much to Tamils. This also affects me. My two lacks worth of house was affected in 1990. I applied for the compensation in 1991 and I got one lack instead of one and a half lacks I applied in 1997. Tamils should have been paid hundred percent of loss.

ATHM55B: In 1990, we all fled this area with only our dresses [clothes] leaving everything behind. When we came back to see, even our burial place they [Muslims] had fixed a football goal and they were playing. They planned to take Tamil people's burial place where we bury our corpses. Still they are trying to take over it.

ATHF50H: We never get anything, only the housing money. They said that they would give that money for resettlement. Now see we are back here for nearly five years, and still we did not get them. Even to those who they gave they didn't give properly- to some ten thousand and to some five thousand, like that. Most of us did not get that money still?

BTHM24S: The Tigers can give us full security. [Mod: If a problem arise for you, whom you will go and complain?] As far as I am concerned, I will complain to the Tigers.

ATHM65A: No matter whether they (SLMM) come or not, it is the LTTE boys who come forward to help us. We are living without fear because of that.

BTHM57G: They would definitely guard us, whether they are here or in the jungle, they some how other get to know and would come.

TTHM27F: We did give the Tigers also a letter [in regard to missing deeds for land]. When we asked the LTTE regarding this, the answered that when Interim Administration is granted to them, they would attend to this problem.

BTHF26G: We don't advocate the policy of Tamil groups. Had they got together by this time we would have achieved peace. We are alive because of those fighters. Otherwise by this time we would have been killed by the Muslims.

BTHM24S: There are several reasons to say that we cannot get along with each other. For example, now the peace process is going on and the Muslims wants a separate participation. [Mod: Is that the thinking wrong?] During the struggle it was the two national ethnic groups ie. Tamils and Sinhalese were fighting among themselves and the Muslims were just an audience and making money out of that. When PA govt. was in power they got together with them and looked after their own economic welfare. They are racist. They only think that they are Muslims. These are the reasons we are not able to unite.

ATHM65A: Our houses were destroyed by them. We ran to Paranthan out of fear. In 1990, the roof of my house was removed and my 3 sons were taken away. They were 25, 29, 23 years old. Now we are undergoing difficulties. We have lost the breadwinners of the family. They are the same as the government. Government means the police forces, and 90% of the police force comprises Muslims.

BTHF37T: Everywhere, there is indifference. Tamils are unable to open their mouths, as they are suppressed in economical condition. They are bearing all difficulties, as they don't have freedom to speak. The indifference in farming is like this- the one who works hard in the field is a Tamil. But the one who enjoys the harvest is Muslim. Muslims yield high profit within hours. Tamils suffer in poverty as Muslims pay their wages.

TTHM27F: Frankly, I would say that the Muslim people as such, are good. They do not magnify the issue, it is only the various parties and politicians who make these problems large. They are only responsible to incite such violence.

BTHM24S: We shouldn't treat Muslims the way the Sinhalese treated the Tamils. We suffered at the hands of Sinhalese. But in the future within the Tamil region, we should give a proper place to the Muslims. They shouldn't suffer as we suffered.

ATHF50H: Better understanding should occur among people and a permanent peace should return to Tamil areas. Muslims peoples' problems should be addressed then and there. Then there is no question of differences cropping up.

Muslims

BMMM58O: Tamils and Muslims are friendly here. There are some misunderstandings. It is mainly due to the communal problems. If they give the Tamils their rights, it will be gone. But at the same time they should take Muslims in the Tamil-speaking bracket and be ready to give their rights, then there would be no problem. Here the problems are starting. They are saying that they will talk for us with the Government in the talks. What we are saying is that if they give them, then they have to us too. Rather than they getting their rights and giving us our share, why can't Muslims participate in the talks and get their own share? When their rights are given then all the Muslims living in this country would know which is their land and which are their rights and where he stands, like that. Tamils and Muslims should understand this. Tamils should understand that giving Muslims their rights would not affect them. The same way Muslims too should understand that by giving Tamils their rights wouldn't affect them. If they give in for each other there wouldn't be any problem. But anyway the majority community specially the JVP would not give in. They don't want the peace to come. They don't care how bad the country goes, they don't want peace. We cannot count the number of the innocent people who have died. To safeguard others from dieing, we are welcoming the Ranil Wickramasinha's attempt. To make the talks into success it all depends how they are going to divide the rights equally to the two communities.

BMMM44U: Either the Government or the LTTE has to do it. Government is representing the Sinhalese. LTTE is representing the Tamils. They have to see the third party. What we say is that we have to get into one of these parties.

BMMM58O: They (the government) are giving us security now. But when a war breaks out, how far can they be with us, is the problem. There is no doubt that the Government is giving us security, now. But if the peace talks fail and if the Tigers take strength for their liberation, what we Muslims who are in between would do is the question. For this our Muslim leaders have to take the correct actions.

TMMM25T: We have a fear that once peace is restored Muslims would be neglected. The government thinks that peace is only for Tamils.

AMMM36T: It is impossible for the Government to provide us security. It is the people of the area who must unite together and create that safety. The government can provide safety in a crisis situation and it is not possible for it to provide permanent safety. The people should desire to live in safety and they should change their frame of mind. [Mod: Who do you think will provide the safety in general?] Each one is responsible for his or her own safety. The government cannot provide lasting security.

TMMM25U: The people give (lasting security). [Mod: Who safeguards your rights?] That is also people. We have to safeguard our rights.

AMMM41B: With the government we do not have confidence, because they will have their own way of administering. The best solution would be for the Muslims to unite and form a strong armed group. You cannot live in fear forever. Unless of course this issue is resolved during Chandrika's regime before a change occurs.

AMMM43T: The main cause for the racial conflict is the Government Army. The Muslim area should have army of their community. The Tamil area should have army of the Tamils. Only then can the conflict be resolved. If one comes with the thought of Ahimsa (Non Violence) and the other with the idea of Weapon there will not be a solution to the conflict. The Muslims desire Non-Violence but the other two groups have weapons, and the Muslims are attacked.

BMMM58O: For Muslims to be Muslims, their rights should to be given. They are not only in the east they are all over the island. To repeat the old history that they came for business and trade won't work. May be they come for trade, but they are citizen here for years, and centuries. They have rights and they have a culture of their own.

TMMM25U: There are a few Tamils who make us angry. The way they talk. They talk as if they have the right to rule us. When you hear this you feel hatred and anger.

AMMM43T: They [the Government] are mainly Sinhalese. They would only protect the Sinhalese community. When it is for the Muslims, they consider us as second-grade.

AMMM36T: [Mod: Can you say your views opposing the Muslim community?] If I do that I will be affected in some way. Either from the administration there will be revenge on a political way or promotions will not be given, or he will be transferred.

AMMM41B: No. The reason is there are different political wing leaders involved here, so you will not openly say what you want. This is oppression from the Muslims side itself. It is within the Muslim parties. Now in schools there is discipline. If some incident occurs in school, then they say that the A/L student of that school has connection with the "hit" group. There are many "hit" groups here and they have senior groups and junior groups. Within these groups there are sub groups.

 CONFLICT ESCALATION/TRIGGERS

Personal Incidents Turning Into Ethnic Conflict

BTHM45R: When some incident happens, the youth start the violence without finding the root cause properly. For example, if some other Muslims attack a Muslim person when he was traveling through a Tamil area, then the Muslims riot against the Tamils assuming that they attacked that Muslim person. If the people find out the real reasons of an incident, then we can reduce the violence largely. Army and Police should act immediately when some incident takes place in the Government controlled areas. The LTTE also should come forward to stop violence of this nature.

Mod: What is the main cause to hinder the racial peace efforts by various groups, in your area ?

AMMM42B: Only a criminal could avert these conflicts. If a Muslim is killed in a Tamil area and the Muslims hear of it, there is turmoil and retaliation; it is construed that Muslims have been killed in their own territory by Tamils.

MOD: To resolve the conflicting situation among these people and to build up a good relations, what do you think should be done?

ATHF50O: Without jumping to conclusions, when something happens they must find out clearly what really happened. Instead of that, they come running to stab and kill before finding out. First they must find out who did it, what really happened and how to resolve the matter and after that to come to a conclusion. The higher people send their people and the prominent people from both sides must find the people who did a bad thing and punish the people who actually committed that crime. Here it does not happen that way. Only innocent people are killed and due to this again and again the problems arise.

TTHF23S: It happened recently. It is a personal conflict that was made into a racial conflict like in Muttur. A Tamil boy had hit a Muslim boy. The Muslim boy had brought in a group of people to hit him. Later the whole village had come to fight. This way the fight got worse. So it a personal conflict that developed into something like this. In the same manner it happened in Batticaloa.

BTHM57G: Here in Sammandurai we live close to the Police. We are minority here. We always are in tension of what would take place between Muslims and Tamils.

Mod: What is the reason for Muslims and Tamils get into a tension?

BTHM57G: Who ever do any murders it would be blamed on the movements and Tamils.

Rumors

TMMM25G: Rumors are the main course of problems. Exaggerating trivial matters. When there is a personal problem or attack it is illustrated as an attack against the community.

BTHM36G: Another problem is that if something happened in other area, Kattankudi will start to have disturbances. Say for instance if there was a rumor of ten persons murdered then it will create a lot of troubles and disturbances. Rumors also caused disturbances.

Mod: Mudur, Akkaripattu, Valaichenai areas are affected by violence. What is the cause for this?

TMMM25U: All because of misunderstandings and rumors.

Political Exploitation

BTHM36G: The tension among the politicians is that whether they would lose their security or would they lose their authority. That is his fear. We fear about stoning or attacking and as such the tension between the top and the bottom is different.

BTHF26G: It's the politicians who instigate violence.

ASBM50A: As I said earlier they all lived together. The politicians are the ones who make all these matters worse. They want to blame someone or something and retain their powers. This greed for power has brought about conflict between the communities.

BTHM24S: Education or business wise there is no bad relationship here. But if you take Sinhala areas people like Wimal Weerawansa is trying to overthrow the government by inducing the graduates. Like wise some politicians are here. Politicians are the reason for spoiling the relationship.

AMMM41B: The Movement causes the panic among the common people.

BTHF37T: Yes, as the news spread of a Muslim abduction, a tension was mounting up. Tamils, who work for Muslims had to run for their lives. The Tamil families who were living close to Muslim area were chased off. A Muslim politician created this incident. Then only we learned that a son, to get ransom from his father, along with his friends has played a game. He has hidden somewhere, to get money from his father. Meanwhile, using the media the Muslims had gotten publicity saying that the LTTE has abducted the young man. As the boy came back, everything ended quietly.

ASBM30T: People are all right with one another. It's the venomous politicians who create divisions among them. When the Tamils claim a separate land, the Muslim leaders too want one. Where are we supposed to go? Politicians breed venom and the war serves as a means for them to stay in power.

AMMM36T: What really happens in these situations is that there are groups on either side who are acting towards this. They have some sort of strength, for example some strong political support. Using the common people they act as though there are a lot of people in their group. This is what happens with the unpleasant incidents. Actually there are very few people involved, but they exaggerate everything.

Third Party Spoilers

ATHM65A: There was no kidnapping. They had hid a person in the house, said there was a kidnapping and created an unpleasant atmosphere.

AMMM36T: You cannot confirm 100% that it is the Tigers. Because there is selfishness is also involved. From the past actions, when something happens in a village, the learned people and the ignorant ones will immediately say that it is the Tigers who would have done it. Their past activities had been like that. We use our past experience and think deeply before deciding on something. We are aware that there are other armed persons and all kind of groups involved. And we also know that sometimes people say even family problems are caused by Tigers for a certain motive. The fight between the Muslims in Ampara ended up as a huge fight among the communities. The reason being for their own personal benefit and for profit making

Hartals

TMMM25U: You have to pass through Alamadi, Tamil area to go to Muslim areas like Vannala.

When Tamils have Hardal, definitely the Muslims wont participate in it. But we won't able to pass through Alamadi, as the Tigers would have put roadblocks. But when Muslims have Hardal in Kinniya, we are not supposed to block Tamils. Tigers can control Muslims in the areas where Muslims live majority. In these circumstances we get provoked.

TSBF55O: Yes. The situation is worse now. Whenever they have a hartal, the whole town is supposed to stop functioning. But when it's our turn to have a hartal, we are not allowed to stop working. Thus they prevent us from joining the hartal. There are a lot of Tamils working at my office. Sinhalese have to put up with the step- motherly treatment of the Tamil authorities. They do this in a very subtle manner. But the co-workers are alright with one another. When the LTTE orders them to stop work, they obey them willingly whereas we don't. But it hasn't been an issue so far, we are free to choose to go to work or stay at home on leave. On Tamil harthal days, there is no transport to come to work places.

BTCM22O: In these quiet days there are no misunderstandings. When a hartal comes, then they burn tires in their area. Tamils burn tires in our area.

Muttur & Valechenai

TMMM27T: Yes. Even though I am not aware of the full information, it will have been that a third party or force would have done this to cause enmity between the two races using the opportunity.

AMMM36T: It was through the papers that I came to know about it. What really happens is that when there are communal fights that take place action is taken without considering all the facts. This is not advantageous. They should quietly analyze the matter and carefully take action. Taking rash actions makes the problems worse. [Mod: What could be the reasons for these incidents?] Internal political situations, personal gains.

ATHF50H: According to the radio, some groups were involved in arms selling and that was the reason this violence would have occurred among Muslims. Armed groups were involved and Tamil shops were burned. Political parties too were behind this violence.

CONFLICT PREVENTION/ALLEVIATION

Peace Committees

BTHM45R: Yes. I was a member of this committee when we were in Valaichennai. During the ethnic riots we discussed with leader and got solution for some problems. We protected some people who were attacked by others. These are some of the committee activities. So peace committees can give their hand for problems.

TMMM25G: In Muthur we have a peace group. They have been doing their duty well amidst many difficulties.

ATHM50G: There are peace committees functioning. Disputes can be settled through these Committees which did not exist in the past. These committees are now functioning in all GS divisions and disputes can be settled.

ATHF50H: There are peace committees functioning. Disputes can be settled through these committees which did not exist in the past. SLMM was handling these disputes. These committees are now functioning in all GS divisions and disputes can be settled.

BTCM22O: We have the peace committee here. They are teaching the peace for children of both communities. It is a good service.

BTHM24S: In peace time there are functioning actively. Often, they are having meetings and solving the land disputes. They are solving the differences between the ethnic groups.

BTHM57G: Whenever a disturbance takes place they immediately call a peace committee, consist of all the leaders and elders of each community, religious leaders and the Police Inspector. To solve these problems amicably, usually this mediator groups form.

ASBM50A: Actually I did politics at the Pradeshiya Sabha level. I interacted with journalists and also participated in numerous discussions and meetings. [Mod: What discussions have you participated in?] Discussions on Peace, mostly. I have participated in the 'Eththa Neththa' program.

TSBM23L: The LTTE has formed some peace committees. Some problems what we couldn't get settled from the police we are able to get a solution by going to peace committees.

BTHM23S: At present you have to go through your group leader and discuss any problems you are facing then he will go to the other community group leader and discuss all these matters and come back with the results. Without going to solve the problems individually you always with a group and have leader to listen to you so the result is fruitful.

BTHF37T: When problem take place, rather than seeing on communal eyes, we must see the real source. The well-wisher form all communities, General Organizations and the leaders in high positions should work together. They should avoid seeing in communal way and find the truth with broad minds and should explain them properly to their people and prevent from making any disturbances. This way we can avoid misunderstanding.

TMMM25T: Between both ethnicities, if there were any peace groups we could have avoided this (Valaichenai). Understanding will come between people.

Mod: Whether the existing Peace Committees function effectively?

BTHM36G: We do not know from where it functions, but we would come to know only when some incidents occurred. Only them the people would reach them. What I say is this, that is they should meet frequently and hold discussions once in a week. They also should visit the villages and the communities and must be able to solve the conflicts. Especially, when we come home we do not go out. But, we should go out and meet them and tell the reason for the rise of conflicts at the lowest level and guide them, and make them to understand. Those are the people should be found in the Committee.

BTHF37T: The one who has no political contacts, has no racial thinking, who is a well-wisher to improve this area. We can accept him as our mediator.

ASBM40T: No. But if politicians come to these villages and talk with people, lot of things can be achieved. They should start talking about their lives, not dragging war in. Once people start talking, they can move to the topic of war. A Peace Council should have educated, mature and broad-minded people.

TMMM25U: Educated people and religious leaders should be there.

ASBM47F: Religious leaders and important people. [Mod: Important people? Whom?] Not people who are just sitting around. People in the village who are educated and who can do something using their brains.

BTHM36G: What I say is this: There will be both Tamil and Muslim villages and the Committee should consist representatives from both sides. There are Muslims who are religious wise flexible, they should represent in it. Apart from religious leaders, those who are involved in education should be there, because persons bent on religion would think in terms of their religion. In addition to that if experienced people, who know the areas fully well would be more suitable.

ASBM45F: No. There is no such a mission even to educate us. The villages should have elderly people of the village, heading a committee, and organize the people, telling them how to live harmoniously etc.

ASBM58F: The Govt says the well-educated people should be there. I don't agree with that. Those who are going to be at the PC should be educated, but above all they should know the village very well. If not, how are they going to solve issues such as issues on the agriculture, cattle, land and more serious issues like marriage problems. I recommend the elders in the village who can control the villagers with their experience and knowledge of the village to be at the PC.

ASBM40F: Yes, Peace Councils address minor problems that worry the village. It can't solve Prabakaran problem. If the people, who know the village well, are at the PC, it's much easier to sort out things.

Religious Leaders

TMMM25U: When we get agitated by Tigers behavior, and feel like attacking the Tamils, we control our selves. We know if we attack Tamils that eventually we will be loose. Usually the Ulamas control our anger.

BMMM58O: They asked our people not to come there for trade. When they increase the tax from 50 Rupees to 79 Rupees, our traders refused and they were asked not to come there for business. Due to that the tension mounted up. Eravur people said if they couldn't go there, how to allow the Tamils in. The Eravur Mosque Sammelanam consoled the Eravur Muslims and had talks with the Tigers and came to a solution.

BMMM44U: I never involve myself in those things, because there are 'Peace committees' here. There are heads in the Mosque. Religious committees, Sammadhanam group are there. So all matters are discussed through them. Sammadhanam group covers, all these area's committees. Any problem is given to them, and through them it will be solved.

BTHF37T: So far, I have not come across any of our religious leaders giving any messages or advice on communal news. But in the opposite race their religious heads and leaders always instruct them for whatever actions they take. Even in our work place, they get together and plan and lead them. But our people won't do this.

ASBM40T: Some monks refuse to get involved in our problems saying that it is outside their duties.

TMMM25U: You have to change their attitudes. Muslims are taught in Jummas on Fridays, to be in harmony. But Hindus or Christians have nothing to be guided. They should be taught of harmony by their leaders or by the media.

BTHM36G: Here it does not take place, we can say it is much less common. There are some places like the Muslim areas when Maulavi said the masses will listen. In Mannar and some areas where the people listen to priests of Christian denominations.

Police

MOD: Do you go to the police?

TMMM27T: Yes. They are responsible for maintaining law and order. Even though they cannot be fully relied upon, it is the duty to go to them.

ASBM47F: Because if any problem happens the civilians go to the police. We should get the police to resolve the dispute rather than trying to kill each other.

TMMM32B: No - I cannot trust them. For instance, if we say that the LTTE is taking 'Kappam', the Police will not go to the jungles where the LTTE are in order to resolve it.

TSBM39B: If you are a Tamil then you get a solution immediately. Our people don't go to them looking for solutions for trivial clashes and all, only the Tamil people do that. Our people complain only about people who have disappeared. For the scuffles and stuff you get immediate solutions. They just say, 'If you do anything to this man afterwards you will be....' After that the problems are solved. But if you complain to the police they just say, 'Ok now everything will be fine, try to avoid conflicts.' The moment those two parties go home they clash again over the very same matter.

TSBM40O: I haven't been to them (the police), but looking at the situation it is difficult to believe that they will provide you with a solution.

TMMM25U: They are afraid of their own security and would not give their proper opinions.

TTHM55A: Complaints are made to the Police, but the victim is in hospital and the remanded is released on a payment being made.

AMMM35O: The main problem in this area is people don't have knowledge about the law. If people report to the police about the problem, the police don't know how to handle the problem. People don't believe in the police for their security. People try to solve the problem themselves without going to the police.

Legal System

MOD: What do you think of the persons from the legal field?

ATHF50O: As long as the verdict is not biased. So far they have not been truthful. The law is towards those who have money. Only if we have money can we approach them.

Mod: What do you say about the administration of justice by the government?

BTHM36G: I do not accept the Courts. If a case is filed at the Courts it drags on for 10 to 15 years. Cases against the army are dragging on for years. The witness would forget everything by the time the Court hears the case. Therefore, the cases should be heard rapidly. If this process of delay continues, our life would be without justice.

BTHM24S: No, I do not think they can. They can't function without taking sides. They also have fear. They can't solve the problems.

BTHF26G: No, the judiciary is influenced by the politicians. So there is no point in looking up to it to solve problems among communities.

TMMM25T: They also don't care about the law problems.

NGOs

TMMM27T: They do not get involved in politics. Even though some say that they are biased towards one race, I think that they work for the common interest of the people. They have facilitated in making pace among the races. But at the same time there are instances that they can show partiality to one race.

TTHF23S: Yes for the peace development, the NGOs have such meetings. They have children from all three races and they are treated equally and they carry out their duties together peacefully. So all three parties do the programs together.

BTHM24S: I think they also can (a little). For instance, if there is a flood, they help the public. So, they have the respect of the public.

TSBM40O: [Mod: Do you think the NGOs are connected to the LTTE?] Yes definitely. If they are not connected why wait hours to complain that their vehicle was taken by the LTTE? They have given the vehicle and hours later only they complain.

ATHF50H: NGOs serve the people without taking sides. These NGOs do take reasonable steps to solve the problems faced by the people.

Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission

TTHF35T: They are doing as much as they can. They are inquiring both sides and doing work. They are meeting the LTTE members and political leaders to bring peace. But we don't know how much it will take place.

BTHM57G: The War Monitoring Commission came to investigate the murder here. It is good for everybody that they are here.

BTHM23S: Norway is not suitable. [Mod: Why?] The reason is that the problems of the society, the problems of the country are huge. These people know what is happening in the country everyday, who is LTTE, who is government, who are Sinhalese, who are Muslim, but when we take the problems of the society, a foreigner does not know how the problems of the society started. Surely they are not suitable to make a decision.

BTHM36G: As far as I am concerned, I think they have taken sides in certain areas. For instance, if a boat of the LTTE is attacked the reports by the LTTE and the government contradict each other. But, it seems to me that the SLMM does not show any analytical approach to the particular situation. In one attack, the SLMM 's statement alleged the government, but later it seemed the government's position was correct. I do not know, but I speak on the basis of newspaper reports.

AMMM36T: They don't bring out the truth. I recently read a headline that said "Norway-No Way" somewhere that we don't know what role they are playing; are they peacemakers or have they come to solve the racial conflict? If they are peace makers then they must act as judge for the two parties. But the Norwegians have acted partially towards the Tigers. Some say that they are partial.

AMMM41B: The Norwegians are partial towards the Tigers. I think that the Norwegians are not capable of functioning this way. In general the Muslims are known globally and classed as one cluster by the world. There are British and Americans also involved. So we cannot expect them to act fairly. As far as the Tigers are concerned, they are getting more support that they expected because they are getting some publicity too. So to do this work there should be a neutral country that should come forward.

ASBM40T: No Monitoring Mission here. If there were an effective Monitoring Mission, things could have been improved. If a Monitoring Mission is going to be set up, the well-educated people who can think above race, religion or caste should be there. Most importantly, it has to have a balanced representation of all three races.

TSBM40O: Yes. When they hear of an incident they come. They find out the true details but what comes out in the end is not the truth. [Mod: Do they visit all the places concerned when they come?] Yes they go all over. But still some of the people don't try to uncover the truth because they are afraid of the LTTE. [Mod: Do you mean the officials of the SLMM?] Yes. They don't dig deep to get the information, just collect some information here and there and then leave.

TMMM25U: It is no use. Though the Government accepts their proposals, the Tigers wouldn't accept. For example the SLMM has asked the Tigers not to put a camp in the Kurangupanjan, which is close to the Government area. But saying that that is their area the Tigers adamantly had put the camp there. The SLMM can do nothing here.

INFORMATION SOURCES

News Media

ASBM40A: If you consider the media all are the same. In every category of media you get the same news, which is found in newspapers, you get it on televisions and radio too. So, you cannot trust in the media.

BMMM44U: The medias are not good for information. Each gives different news, according to different people, by cutting or exaggerating. That is the main cause for the troubles.

TMMM25U: No, we cannot believe the TV news. They telecast only the news, which their reporters send, supporting the Tigers. We can trust the Government papers a little, but the other Tamil papers mostly support the Tigers.

AMMM36T: As far as Sri Lanka is concerned I don't trust any of these media. I believe in what I have seen and heard directly. I use the other media only to compare the information that I may already have received. [Mod: What is the reason for you not to believe in the media?] The reason is that these media have some motive behind the information they give. Either political motives or some other selfish motives are involved. Or sometimes to favor their community they function. So we cannot accept their information as very reliable.

BTHM24S: For example, if you take the newspaper, they don't give us the full picture. It seems that they take sides. They express symbolically.

TMMM27T: As I told you earlier, it is not fully satisfying. The truth should be told as it is and should not be distorted by the media.

TSBM39B Only about 20% of the information goes there as far as I know. The truth gets distorted and important parts are cut and that is what goes there. So why do we have to sit around to watch such information?

ASBM40T: That's all we can see. On the media, we see for ourselves. If the LTTE comes to us, talks with us and educates us on the current situation, that's great. All our fears will be allayed then. In the time of the former regime, we used to watch a TV program called 'Karaliya' where the people from war areas were interviewed and where we were educated and enlightened on the then political situation. People voiced their opinions freely on that program and it was such a relief for them.

BMMM58O: Each paper gives different view of the news. We have to assume what happened.

TTHF35T: They never give the news in details. There are a lot of opinion differences in peace process. One day the news give one story the other day a different story. It is like this they give news.

BTHM24S: Yes. It's as if they are censoring. For example, there is an Interim Administration concept. But we don't know what it is. It is like it is censored. We don't know anything about this. We want to know fully what it is.

BTCM22O: The news what they put is not full. They put what they get. So it is not enough.

BMMF22U: My opinion is they should publish the separate newspaper, which contain the information about the peace process. They should give at least half an hour radio program once a week or once in two weeks.

TSBM39B We don't get much information about the discussions that are held.

TSBM40O: The media and the newspapers don't report even ¼ of the happenings.

Word-of-Mouth

BMMM19S: In our area we have good relationship with the other community. If any incident happens we hear from our friends and relations before getting it through the media.

TTHF35T: When there is a disturbance in this area, we won't get immediate information from TV, or radio. We get this information from some people.

TMMM25U: There are a few people among us who get the update news and give us. At that time the media won't give the whole news properly.

TSBM39B Oh, we get news in a flash when we just go here and there, faster than the TV.

ASBF45A: We have no radio or TV; we aren't well to do. We get a lot of news through rumors.

TMMM27T: Family members usually give information that someone else has given them. I cannot completely rely on that information. The reason being that the information is not first hand. When certain incidents take place, information about this is conveyed from person to person. So it is not necessarily the true information.

TMMM25U: Family won't get much news. When your friends say you cannot believe everything. If they had been in the exact place where the incident took place, then we can believe.

BTCM22O: I mostly get information from rumors. [Mod: Do you believe what your friends say?] We can only listen to what they say. We cannot believe them. [Mod: When the actual news comes out, how would be the news what your friends say?] Mostly it will be wrong.

Political Leaders

TMMM27T: I don't think that we must trust the information that the political leaders give because the information they give can be to satisfy the people of their area or the people of their race. There can be a political motive as well as some selfishness involved in the information they give.

TMMM25U: They give only information that is good for them. So you cannot believe.

Mod: Do you believe your area political leaders information?

TMMF35T: Mostly we won't believe.