

Post –War Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Reconstruction and Development of the Socio-Economic Sectors

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Abstract

Social and economic infrastructures need to be reconstructed and developed in the war affected areas of Sri Lanka since they had been grievously affected by the 26 years of civil war. The Sri Lankan government has paid a great attention to fulfil this task in the Northern and Eastern provinces with the help of foreign governments and institutions. Many of the projects were connected to the overall national development programme as well. The aim of this paper is to explore how long these programmes have benefitted the people of the war affected areas as well as those in the rest of the country who have links with economic affairs in the former war torn regions. The research was based on primary as well as the secondary data. Although there is a progress in socio-economic development in the former war affected areas, a number of shortages are appeared which should be given attention by the authorities.

Key Words: Post –war reconstruction, Development, Peacebuilding, The United Nations, The World Bank, Resettlement, Infrastructure, Displaced persons.

1. Introduction

The protracted civil war in 26 years in Sri Lanka ended in May 2009, the army finally overran the forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE). For the first time in many years this freed the Northern and Eastern part of the country from the grip of the LTTE. In the context of negative peace in the country the issue of post war reconstruction and peacebuilding came to the fore since then.

The literature on post war peace building and reconstruction have emphasised peace building and post war reconstruction as important and urgent for countries which faced long term civil war (United Nations ,2009). It has also been seen that the first few post war years are of critical importance in terms of establishment of long term peace. How the political or other agencies which included the government itself, initiate, implement and bring a perceptible change in the post war societies is an immensely significant issue. In the case of Sri Lanka the issue cannot be overemphasised given the long years of the conflict and the intensity with which the two sides fought their causes. However the complete victory of the military forces in 2009, left the field open for the government, its leaders and agencies to implement long term

peacebuilding. This research paper is undertaken to critically locate the efforts of the government in Sri Lanka in the context of socio-economic reconstruction works on post conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction and see the efficacy of the Sri Lankan case.

2. Post-war reconstruction on humanitarian relief and physical recovery

Since the peace negotiations have continuously failed, the government went in for a military solution against the expanding terror activities of the LTTE. After the eviction of the LTTE from the North and the East, the government faced some immediate challenges such as the following:

- (i) The resettlement of more than 500,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) back to their places of origin.
- (ii) The removal of land mines and the clearing of land area of an extent of 2,065,962,916 sq.m.
- (iii) The restoration of livelihoods of people who have resettled in the former war zones.
- (iv) The renovation of damaged schools, hospitals and other public amenities.
- (v) The cleaning of agricultural lands and water resources that were suspected as being contaminated (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2013, p.549).

It is worthy of mention, that after the post war context the government implemented a two-pronged regional development strategy targeting both short and medium term objectives, to address certain controversial issues in the North and the East of Sri Lanka. First, the regional development project – *Re-awakening of the East* (Nagenahira Navodaya) was carried out to restore and enhance the life of the people in the Eastern Province in July 2007. This regional development programme intended for humanitarian relief and physical reconstruction was implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development with the assistance of the international community, UN agencies as well as international and local NGOs. The early recovery areas of humanitarian relief focused on de-mining, resettlement of IDPs, restarting of agriculture and renovation of irrigation facilities; further work involved restoration/ renovation of roads, power and energy, providing livelihood support, fisheries and livestock development, education, civil administration and health and sanitation.¹

Compared to the East, the situation in the Northern Province was worse, because it had been under the control of the LTTE for more than two decades. Most of the infrastructure, public facilities and factories in the North were totally destroyed because the war had inflicted heavy damages to the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu.² Due to this heavy destruction of the physical infrastructure and the way it affected human lives, the government had to be more concerned about recovering the North than the East. Understanding the immediate challenge, President Rajapaksa appointed a *Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security- Northern Province (PTF)* with the objective of formulating the strategic framework for rehabilitation of the Northern Province. The PTF was given the mandate for all policy making and coordination in connection with implementation, resettlement and recovery programmes in the North (Presidential Task Force, 2013). Based on its mandate the PTF launched a master plan called *Northern Spring (Uthuru Wasanthaya)* embodying the priority tasks required to be implemented in the war affected areas of the North. These involved provision of relief, humanitarian assistance, resettlement, rehabilitation of infrastructural facilities and security (Presidential Task Force, 2013). The plan was formulated through a consultative process, enlisting the cooperation of line ministries, the provincial councils, Sri Lankan security forces, UN agencies, INGOs and local NGOs.³ Generally, the INGOs and the NGOs assisted with humanitarian relief activities at the beginning of the resettlement period. For instance, such activities as de-mining projects, housing projects, provision of drinking water, etc. The government's

¹ "The Nagenahira Navodaya is in full swing" *Newsline* <<http://www.priu.gov.lk>> [Accessed 20 December 2013]

² The final battle with the LTTE was in Mullaithivu area where the LTTE was defeated.

³ It includes the activities of FAO, ILO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP and WHO. Further, there were about 205 INGO's engaged district wise in the North and the East.

reconstruction work in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces involved several activities required to fulfil the objectives of early recovery, humanitarian assistance and other medium term objectives like development in post-conflict peacebuilding.

3. Theoretical back ground of post war peacebuilding and reconstruction.

The theories of post war peacebuilding have paid attention to reconstruct and develop of war torn countries as a basic need for building long lasting peace. In other words socio- economic development is one aspect of building reconciliation of war torn societies. In one hand War can be made a huge physical damage as well as damage to the economy in several ways. On the other hand it will caused a number of social damages to the victim society where the war is protracted for a long time. Although the physical as well as social reconstruction are compulsory to implement in post war locations in order to build long lasting peace, this paper will consider on socio-economic well- being as a part of reconstruction of socio-economic development sectors.

3.1. Post War Reconstruction

Post conflict peacebuilding and post war reconstruction have close relationship to each other. They are both aimed at creating sustainable peace in a war torn country. Successful post war reconstruction, it has been seen, is the backbone of post conflict peacebuilding. This also ensures that the society would not relapse into conflict

From Earlier time in the context of post war societies, the term reconstruction often meant physical reconstructions in war affected areas. ‘Reconstruction’, for example, was defined in these terms in the journal *Scientific Monthly* in 1919:

“reconstruction, in its most limited sense, applies to the reparation of actual damage done by war. This includes the rebuilding of houses, villages and towns which have been destroyed; the replacement of industrial plants and machinery which have been destroyed or carried off; the restoration of mines, railways, canals, roads, woods, orchards and so forth and of the surface of the soil.” (Smith,1919, p.298).

This definition, as one could see, focuses quite exclusively on rebuilding of the physical assets damaged by the war. At the end of World War II, the occupying forces carried out post war reconstruction over Axis powers – installed new governments with democratic constitutions, supported physical and economic reconstruction (Ramsbotham et al.,2011). The *Marshall plan* at the same time was served to recover the war torn economies in the Western alliance by the USA (Kunze, 1997). Post war reconstruction was on its way to change its definitional and programmatic content.

With the attention of post conflict peacebuilding in 1990’s, the concept no longer referred merely to physical reconstruction. Barakat, for example, indicated three major post conflict activities in his idea of post war reconstruction. They are

1. Physical /socio-economic and political – rebuilding infrastructure and essential Government functions
2. Capacity building and institutional strengthening – improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing institutions
3. Structural - reforming the political, economic, social and security sectors (Barakat, 2005).

This goes to suggest that the idea of post conflict reconstruction has been widened by incorporating non physical dimensions of institutional and capacity building into its ambit.

However, the definitions of post war reconstruction and peacebuilding is most often what the scholars have given. They are in the contemporary times quite often been defined by the two most important organisations which also are the most active in the field of post war reconstruction. UN, which has been the most active world agency to engage with post war reconstruction, has been very active through the 1990s. It is at this time its secretary General Boutros-Ghali tried to underline the activities and the sectors which might be involved by the UN in post conflict reconstruction. They were disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring of elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation (Ghali, 1995).

“Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict” in 2009 identified several tasks that must be accomplished during the course of peacebuilding in such areas in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. According to the report,

1. Support for basic safety and security, including mine action, protection of civilians, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), strengthening of the rule of law and initiation of security sector reform.
2. Support for political processes, including electoral processes, promoting inclusive dialogue and reconciliation, and developing conflict management capacity at national and sub-national levels.
3. Support for the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health and primary education, and support for the safe return and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees.
4. Support for restoring core government functions, in particular basic public administration and public finance, at the national and sub-national levels.
5. Support for economic revitalization, including employment generation and livelihood issues (in agriculture and public works) particularly for youth and demobilized former combatants, as well as restoration of basic infrastructure (United Nations, 2009).

The expansion in the scope of the UN post war reconstruction programmes received further expansion when the post 9/11 war on Terror was entrusted to it by the US decision to invade Iraq and Afghanistan, of course with the UN security council’s approval. The state building on ‘failed states’ or ‘fragile states’ too seemed to be included in the agenda of post war reconstruction (Ramsbotham, 2011, p.201). This model of post war reconstruction intervention is introduced as “intervention – reconstruction- withdrawal” (IRW) operations. “In each instance,” according to Ramsbotham et al.,

“the declared aim was to intervene, in most cases in order to aid indigenous efforts to build an enduring post war peace, to assist (re)construction efforts, and then to withdraw” (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 201).

The World Bank, which too is one of the biggest agency in post war reconstruction, has been playing quite an active role in advocating that the post war reconstruction be aim to not only physical infrastructure but also socio-economic frame work that existed in a country prior to the onset of conflict (World Bank, 1998). The World Bank post conflict reconstruction has been based on two objectives:(1) To facilitate the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have ceased (2) To support economic and social development.

It is in accordance to achieve these objectives, the Bank required a successful reconstruction strategy which needed to focus on investments in key productive sectors, good governance, repairing physical infrastructure, rebuilding key social frameworks and normalising financial borrowing arrangements (Ozerdam,2007). In contrast to the UN objectives, the WB post war reconstruction, seems, is more concerned with economic recovery of the war torn countries.

However, post-conflict peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction have a close relationship, so sometimes it is difficult to understand the difference between the two concepts (Ramsbotham, 2011). In other words, the concepts of post-conflict peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction are interdependent due to their close linkage, since the reconstruction activities are directly supporting the accomplishment of the peacebuilding objectives. It is worth mentioning again, that in earlier days post-war reconstruction meant only physical reconstruction and economic reconstruction, which involved the rebuilding of housing and infrastructures, and reconstruction of the economy shattered by the war. But, the concept has undergone several modifications during the last two decades in quality and quantity. Ozerdam has pointed out,

“The concept of post-conflict reconstruction no longer refers just to physical reconstruction. It now also includes other dimensions, including social, political and economic reconstruction (Ozerdam, 2007, p.17).”

Ozerdam argued that the post-war reconstruction should encompass socio-economic and political activities too, which can be identified as development oriented processes. Therefore, several development organizations have insisted on re-defining the term ‘post-conflict reconstruction’ by re-shaping its theory and practice (Ozerdam, 2007). The World Bank, the pioneer organization that was involved in post-conflict reconstruction defined that term as,

“Post-conflict reconstruction supports the transition from conflict to peace in an affected country through the rebuilding of the socio-economic framework of the society.....Reconstruction does not refer only to the reconstruction of physical infrastructure. Nor does it necessarily signify a rebuilding of the socio-economic framework that existed in a country prior to the onset of conflict (World Bank, 1998, p.14).

The definition of the World Bank pointed out that post-conflict reconstruction was aimed at supporting the rebuilding of the socio-economic frameworks of the societies of war torn countries. The World Bank stressed the necessity of rebuilding the socio-economic foundations of war torn societies in parallel with physical reconstructions. The World Bank’s assistance aimed at recovering from war disaster and restoring a normal society has two overall objectives:(1) to facilitate the transition from war to sustainable peace and to support the resumption of economic and social development; (2) to provide assistance to displaced persons and vulnerable groups in the war affected regions (World Bank, 1997). To fulfil the above objectives, the World Bank usually proposes several works, such as reconstructing physical infrastructure, rebuilding institutions, reconstructing frameworks for governance, rebuilding and maintaining key social infrastructures, planning for financial normalization, de-mining, and demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants (World Bank, 1997). Therefore, the Bank provides its assistance for normalization of the war affected areas by funding projects and works in the social, financial and governance sectors during the transitional period.⁴

To sum up, though the concept of peacebuilding emerged in the 1960s with the work of Johan Galtung, it is the decades of 1990s and 2000 that came to popularise it. Defined by various scholars, the concept of post conflict peacebuilding has seen refinements as well as expansion. The concept of post conflict reconstruction too has undergone tremendous changes. Many non physical activities have been included as

⁴These reconstruction works are implemented in five stages of framework. (1) A watching brief in conflict countries in which there is no active portfolio. (2) Preparation of a transitional support strategy as soon as resolution is in sight. (3) Transitional early reconstruction activities, proceeding as soon as field condition allow.(4) Post conflict reconstruction (under emergency procedures) (5) Return to normal lending operations.

part of its expanded but genuine activities in war torn societies. Therefore, there has been a search for comprehensive definition in tune with the comprehensively expanding horizon of post war reconstruction.

4.1. Enhancing social and economic infrastructures

The government of Sri Lanka initiated a number of projects in the war affected zones since basic necessities such as social and economic infrastructures are needed to resettle families and to enable them to follow their daily routines. The study is concerned with the social and economic infrastructures required in the areas of health and education sectors, roads and bridges, railway networks, and other economic development projects.

4.2. Health and Education sectors

The government of Sri Lanka allocated a significant amount of funds to reconstruct and develop the district general hospitals in Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kilinochchi and other base hospitals and divisional hospitals in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The people of the area are satisfied with the health facilities in the post-war period. For instance, a mother of five children in Nedunkerny commented:

“We have no hospital in our village but there is one in Nedunkerny, 5 km from here that has been renovated after the war. It offers only primary health care, so for serious illnesses we go to the district hospital in Vavuniya, which has all the facilities such as clinics and operation theatres.”⁵

A father of four children in Jaffna commented that he was happy about the development of the health facilities in the Jaffna hospital. He said that people were satisfied with the treatment and people of the Jaffna district were used to going to the hospital as and when needed.⁶ The Jaffna hospital treats more than 1000 patients in its OPD unit daily. The Jaffna hospital is catering to the entire population of the Northern Province, and it has a tertiary care facility too (Presidential Task Force, 2012). The Batticaloa district also has well developed hospitals, because this district received considerable Tsunami donations from foreign governments and organizations in addition to the post-war financial allocations. Mr. Ravi commented:

“Very good and advanced health facilities are available in the Eastern province. The patients can get treatment for their illnesses easily. I can see some hospitals as the places where the reconciliation is created for the war affected society. For instance, in Karadiyanaru hospital the Muslim and Tamil patients meet together, and they are treated equally.”⁷

A mother of Nedunkerny pointed out that there was a Sinhalese doctor in their hospital in recent times and how the language barrier affected the medical treatment.

“The Sinhalese doctor who works at the Nedunkerny hospital cannot speak or understand Tamil. That is a big issue for us as we don't know Sinhalese. This frequently causes problems in diagnosing illnesses due to the difficulty in explaining the patient's symptoms in the Sinhalese language.”

She further mentioned that on one occasion a baby died, due to the doctor's wrong diagnosis. She pointed out that the government should recruit Tamil speaking doctors for the Tamil speaking areas. Her argument is very important because blurred communication has the potential to cause various harmful misunderstandings in the field of medical treatment. However, according to a voluntary worker, the healthcare facilities of the Nedunkerny area are of a satisfactory standard. She stated that a public health inspector and a midwife

⁵Field interview (FI-01) on 05 December 2013 at Nedunkerny.

⁶Field interview (FI-07) on 29 December 2013 in Jaffna.

⁷Interview with Mr. M. Ravi, Senior Lecturer in the Eastern University, Batticaloa, on 17 January 2014 at Batticaloa.

served in the area and conducted monthly clinics for the children and pregnant mothers.⁸ Although the divisional hospitals are not equipped with novel medical facilities, they have basic medical facilities for standard treatments. However, for a serious case the patients should visit the district general hospitals, which have all the health care facilities.⁹ According to government reports they have appointed medical officers and other health care workers to the Northern and the Eastern regions on a high priority basis (Presidential Task Force, 2013).

The education sector in the Northern and the Eastern provinces is developing gradually. The government had to build the destroyed school buildings and appoint school teachers in the schools. It was the key challenge in the post war era. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the government could provide those necessities to a certain extent. A father of three children in Point Pedro, Jaffna stated that he was satisfied with the educational facilities in his area.

“All my children study in the schools of Point Pedro, which have all the facilities. My children like to study here.”¹⁰

A father of three children stated that his eldest daughter had studied in Jaffna and she had been selected to the University in 2014.¹¹ Generally the education level in Jaffna had been of a high standard since earlier times; in fact, even during the war period the students would achieve very good examination results. In the more remote areas of the Northern Province the educational facilities are still in a poor condition compared with the town areas. According to an officer in a NGO who is involved with the child care field, the students of some areas in Vavuniya and Mullaithivu have fewer facilities in their schools. Even though several school buildings were renovated, they suffer from a lack of facilities like libraries, furniture, water and sanitation and there is also a shortage of teachers in those schools.¹² She further explained that many of children did not attend their schools but engaged as labourers in agricultural fields and other work. During the war period some of those children had been displaced multiple times and so dropped their education prematurely. Further, those children were compelled to work as daily wage earners for their families. In connection with this, a UNICEF report stated as follows:

“The trauma of war, together with the limited livelihood opportunities among resettled families has made children more vulnerable. Teachers and Principals have reported an increase in violent behaviour against children as families struggle to cope with their sufferings, stress of multiple displacements, lack of employment and limited income generating opportunities in the resettled areas” (UNICEF, 2012, p.3).

This situation will influence the quality of the education that children in the resettled areas of the North will receive. Especially, she pointed out that the government should give their attention to re-integrating those students into educational activities in their post-war reconstruction framework rather than developing only the physical infrastructures in the field of education. The government pointed out that the peaceful environment in the North and the East enabled the students to realize their full potential in studies, highlighting the results of the 2014 examination, when the largest number of students ever qualified for university entrance in the history of the Northern Province.¹³ Although government reports point out the

⁸Field interview (FI-03) on 05 December 2013 at Nedunkerny.

⁹Field interview (FI-07) on 29 December 2013 in Jaffna.

¹⁰Field interview (FI-05) on 28 December 2013 in Jaffna.

¹¹Field interview (FI-07) on 29 December 2013 in Jaffna.

¹²Field interview with a Child protection Project Manager of a leading NGO in Sri Lanka, held on 5 February 2014 at Moratuwa.

¹³“Northern Students Top peace results” *Daily News*, 29 July 2014.

high rate of teacher appointments to the Northern region,¹⁴ it was observed that teachers are not available for certain subjects in some schools. For instance, the parents complain that there are no teachers for Maths, English and Science in their village schools for a long time.¹⁵ This situation can be clearly seen in the rural schools.

4.3 Reconstruction of Roads and Bridges

As observed in the study earlier, there has been massive progress in the reconstruction of roads and bridges in the Northern and Eastern provinces in the country. The several financial institutions lent support to construct these roads and bridges. The construction did not only promote the building of relationships between the North and the South physically, but also between humanity and the economy, and between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Thousands of people pass through the Vavuniya city to enter the North from the South as well as from the North to the South daily without obstacles. A writer of a national newspaper presented the experiences he gained while travelling from Colombo to Jaffna during the war period. He explained his pathetic and unpleasant experiences thus,

“I paid 12,000 rupees and got into a bus from Colombo at about 8 p.m. The bus reached the final checkpoint of the Sri Lanka Army at Omanthai at about 1.30 a.m. I had to produce my national identity card and after that walked over to the LTTE checkpoint crossing the no man’s land that extended 600 meters. Then, I could reach the LTTE checkpoint where all my luggage was thoroughly checked, and I paid the customs duty eventhough it had more than three pieces of goods that belonged to myself. Eventhough it was a good transport lorry, the lorry driver was asked to unload all the goods and charged the custom duty according to the load. I handed over my identity card to the LTTE checkpoint and received their own identity card. Then only I was permitted to come out from the Omanthai LTTE checkpoint, carrying my luggage. I was then changed over to another bus. After travelling past the ruined hulks of houses, on roads with potholes and craters and several check points, I finally reached Jaffna after 14 hours of hazardous travelling.” (Wickramarachchi, 2013).

How does the renovated road network benefit the people? Firstly, the roads freely connect the Northern and the Eastern provinces with the rest of the country after 26 years. The war affected areas were isolated from the South during the last three decades. It was observed that now people could travel from the South and the West to Jaffna and Batticaloa by road very comfortably without any checkpoints, barriers or other hassles. The roads are straight and in a much better condition. A resident of Jaffna stated,

“Those days if someone reached us from Colombo, it was definitely through the vehicles that brought necessary supplies or a vehicle of the ICRC. But now, the situation has changed completely. Hundreds of vehicles reach Jaffna from Colombo daily. Thousands of people come to visit Jaffna and other areas of the region. We can easily travel to Colombo. There are buses from Jaffna not only to Colombo but even to towns in the deep South like Matara, Kataragama and Hambantota.”¹⁶

As observed, there is a good passenger bus service between Jaffna and Colombo.¹⁷ The newly renovated highway network facilitates the conduct of passenger services well. Secondly, visits of the local tourists from the South have renewed the relationships between both races, which augurs well for reconciliation in

¹⁴It reported 14,578 teachers for 255,136 students in the Northern Province.

¹⁵Field interviews (FI-01,FI-02) in Nedunkerny.

¹⁶Field interview (FI-07) on 29 December 2013 in Jaffna.

¹⁷Likewise, there are buses from the central bus stand of Colombo once every 20 minutes departing to a destination in the North as well as the East.

the country. A shop owner of Jaffna town stated that the people who visit the town and the religious places in Jaffna, also visited their shops, and they had a lucrative business.¹⁸ The study observed that if it happens to be a long weekend there will be more than 200 buses from the South bringing in local tourists. Therefore, the visits of the local tourists have created a good income for the people in the Northern Province who are engaged in the fields of tourism, trade and food. The study observed that some people rent out their houses to the local tourists for something like Rupees 5000 to Rupees 10,000 per day. Thirdly, it can be seen that the volume of goods transportation between the North, the East and the rest of the country has grown several fold after the development of the road network. Especially, produce such as onions, red chillies, vegetables, rice and fish are transported to the South from the conflict affected areas without obstacles now. On the other hand, building construction materials, petroleum, fertilizer and other essential items are transported to the North through the A-9 route.¹⁹ In spite of this, Dr. Jehan Perera pointed out the situation of the rural road network that is still in a poor condition. He stated,

“On one occasion a meeting was held by the government and the Eastern Provincial council with the representatives of the World Bank relating to development assistance. Both the government and provincial council members were asked by the World Bank what kind of road construction was needed in the Eastern Province. The government pointed out that they wanted to reconstruct the highways from Colombo to the East. But, the Chief Minister of the Eastern Provincial Council wanted to construct the roads in the villages, from the fields to the village, from the village to the market. Here, the government attitude was different from that of the provincial Council.”²⁰

It was observed that the roads in the rural areas are in a poor condition or were still under construction. For instance, the byroads of Vavunia, Kilinochchi and Jaffna area are still in a poor condition and the villagers complain that they could hardly use them during the monsoon seasons. Therefore, the government should pay more attention to building the roads in rural areas where the farm products are transported from the villages to towns.

4.4 The Railway Network in the Northern Province

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the government has already taken action to build and restore the rail network in the Northern Province with the assistance of the Government of India. It has already constructed the Northern railway lines from Vavuniya to Kankesanthurai and Medawachchiya to Thalaimannar. The Mannar railway line was completed and the train service commenced in 2015. Since then, passenger and goods transportation have been greatly improved in the Northern Province. The train service has traditionally been the most popular means of transportation between the South and the North since earlier times and it has held a fascination for thousands of people, tourists and pilgrims over the years. Therefore, after the reconstruction of the Northern railway line and restoration of the service, people bound for Jaffna are now able to travel much more easily, comfortably and safely. The railway department is running its Jaffna bound service daily from Colombo providing all facilities for the commuters and in November, 2014 the department introduced a special weekend service due to the high demand by passengers.²¹ Now it is easy to transport goods, mail and petroleum to the Northern Province without obstacles because of the reconstruction and development of the Northern railway line.

¹⁸Field interview (FI-09) on 29 December 2013 in Jaffna.

¹⁹ The main supply route from the South to Jaffna is coded as the A-09 route. It runs from Kandy to Jaffna.

²⁰Interview with Dr. Jehan Perera.

²¹The Railway department pointed out that they earned Rs. 6 million income in the first month of beginning railway service from Colombo to Jaffna., *Rupavahini News Bulletin*, 22 November 2014

4.5 Implementing New Economic Development Projects

The government established several development projects in the Northern and Eastern provinces in the post-war era in order to recover the war torn economy. These development projects aimed to create more job opportunities and to promote the industrialization of the area. Further, the development projects were expected to increase production and people's income in these regions, and so help to reduce poverty and income disparities.

It was observed that several development projects were still under construction because most of them are mega projects with lead times of 2-5 years. However, on the whole, development indicators for the country show a gradual growth of the economy of the Northern and the Eastern provinces since the war ended. For instance, the Eastern province contributed around 14% to the national GDP in the early 1980s before the war began; later it had decreased to 8% because of the conflict situation in the province.²² Likewise, the lowest national GDP reached in the Northern Province was around 2.5%, which increased to 2.9% during the ceasefire agreement period in 2002-2004.²³ Ironically, the economy of the Northern Province was kept separate from the national economy during that period for the benefit of the LTTE, who did this to enhance their position and as a war strategy.²⁴ The contribution to the national economy from both provinces has been increasing since 2009 (see table 1). The Secretary to the PTF pointed out that the former war affected areas are developing rapidly after the government economic policy was implemented.

“In the post-war period, the government aimed to develop the Northern as well as the Eastern Province by initiating various development projects and investments. You can see a number of constructions that have been implemented in both regions that have contributed to create an economic resurgence in the past four years. These projects will contribute toward decrease in unemployment, and reduce the incidence of poverty in future. We hope a number of BOI projects will also be initiated in the near future, creating more employment opportunities.”²⁵

The senior deputy director of the Jaffna regional office of the Board of Investment (BOI) pointed out that they have taken steps to establish garment factories to solve the high rate of unemployment (Imtiaz, 2014). According to that, the BOI has approved the establishment of six garment factories in the Northern Province to provide 6000 job opportunities to the people in the area.²⁶ Further, the BOI has identified ten areas for development/investment and they have started 572 small and medium projects in the Northern Province.²⁷

Tourism in the Eastern Province makes a significant contribution to the economy of the region (Ministry of finance and Planning, 2012). Mr. Ravi pointed out that new hotel projects funded by the government in the coastal areas of Passikudah, Nilaveli and ArugamBay have contributed to create new jobs and significant revenue to the province.²⁸ According to a local tour guide, who was very pleased with the new situation prevailing in the Eastern Province, there has been an appreciable rise in the number of foreign and local tourists visiting these areas in the post-war period.²⁹ A Manager of a tourist hotel stressed that it is

²²“Bigger Contribution from North-East for National Development”, *The Sunday Observer*, 28 November, 2010.

²³Ibid.

²⁴During that period the Northern Province was under the control of the LTTE. Further, the Asian tsunami also contributed to the decline of the economy of the North and the East in 2004.

²⁵Interviewed with the Secretary to the PTF.

²⁶*Ibid.*, MAS has started 2 garment factories providing 1750 jobs in Kilinochchi, Omega line factory providing 1200 jobs in Vavuniya, Hidrami group providing 1000 jobs in Vavuniya and 1000 jobs in Mullaittivu, Timex and Ferguson started two factories providing 1000 job opportunities. Further, BOI approved another five mega investment in Jaffna.

²⁷“BOI Regional Office in Jaffna” <<http://www.slideshare.net/navmbi/boi-regional-office-jaffna-investment-northern-of-srilanka>> [Accessed 21 October 2014]

²⁸ Field interviewed with Mr. M. Ravi on 17 January 2014 in Batticaloa

²⁹Field interview with Tourist Guide (FI-10) on 29 December, 2014 in Jaffna.

hard to reserve a room in Passikudah and Kalkudah areas in the weekends, since all the hotels are booked heavily.³⁰

Even though new avenues of income generation have been opened in the North and the East, it can be seen that the majority of the people who resettled in the Northern provinces are still facing several difficulties since they are unable to obtain employment in the newly developed industrial sector as a result of inadequate skills. A resettled farmer in Olumadu village pointed out,

“My 20 year old daughter supports my farming, since she doesn’t have any vocational training or other qualifications to work in a place outside or even to find a job in a factory.”³¹

This situation has arisen largely as a result of multiple displacements. Also, the victims of the protracted war were not able to follow a proper education or skill acquisition nor vocational training.³² On the other hand, the senior deputy director of the BOI in Jaffna pointed out that even though they established the garment factories people do not work in those zones because educated young people and others who have got some vocational training are struggling to leave Jaffna (Zahrah Imtiaz, 2014). Therefore, it will be hard to find and hire skilled labour in the Northern Province due to this reason. However, Mr. Harumi Ao, former Chief Representative of the JICA office in Sri Lanka, pointed out that skills relevant to the agricultural sector can be applied to certain other sectors too.³³

The economic boom in the area has not benefitted all the resettled families, since they do not have the required vocational skills to work in the new industries established in the Northern zones. On the other hand, the government has not revealed its policy on abandoned industries that were in operation for a long time before the war. They had benefitted a number of skilled workers in the conflict affected areas at an earlier period. Eight macro level factories were not being operated in the Northern and the Eastern provinces; employment in these factories had supported a number of families in the past. The Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in Jaffna pointed out that there was no need to build new factories in Jaffna if the government could restore the old factories which had benefitted a number of families (Zahrahtz, 2014). He posed the following questioned:

“Why cannot the government simply restart the old factories? We had salterns, chemical, paper, tile and cement factories. Why are they still shut down?” (Zahrahtz,2014).

This is an important issue of concern to the hundreds of people who are waiting to restart their jobs in the former factories, which had contributed to industrial production in the provinces. Although there are no reliable unemployment figures available for the Northern and the Eastern Provinces for the recent period,³⁴ the GDPs of both provinces have distinctly increased since the war ended (see Table 1) (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012). Likewise, the provincial GDPs relating to production in the agriculture, industry and service sectors have been increasing dramatically since 2009 (See Table 2).

³⁰Field interview with hotel manager (FI-46) on 25 August, 2014 in Kalkudah.

³¹Field interview (FI 38) in Olumadu, Vavuniya North.

³²The government has taken action to establish a Technical institution in Kilinochchi in the Northern Province in order to develop the vocational training of Northern youths. See “German Technical Institution in Kilinochchi”, *Sunday Observer*, 08 June 2014; “Vocational Training in the North of Sri Lanka” <<http://www.giz.de>> [Accessed 06 August 2014]

³³ See Harumi Ao, “Considering the Challenges for Sri Lanka Five years after the End of the Conflict”, <<http://www.jica.go.jp>> [Accessed 17 June 2014]

³⁴The official National accounts are not available for the war affected period of the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. However, unemployment rate of Sri Lanka as a percentage of the labor force has decreased from 5.8 in 2009 to 4.2 in 2011 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012).

The government initiatives on reconstruction and economic development have much potential for the rapid growth of the economy in both provinces as can be seen by the increase in GDP since 2009. These works on post-war economic development were highly commended by several international dignitaries who visited Sri Lanka in the post-war era (Dinkum, 2014). Human Rights Commissioner Mrs. Navaneedam Pillay, who visited Sri Lanka in September 2013 stated,

“The reconstruction achievements, made with the help of donor countries, UN agencies and NGOs are indeed impressive. In both the Eastern and Northern provinces, large numbers of new roads, bridges, houses, medical facilities and schools have been built or rebuilt; electricity and water supplies have been greatly improved; and most of the land mines have been removed.”³⁵

5. Conclusion

Seeking to restore peace in the country, the government works have achieved much with the reconstruction and development of the socio-economic sectors of the war affected areas. The government gave significant consideration to implement the physical reconstruction work during the past five years of the post-war period. Those physical reconstructions represented one aspect of the post-conflict peacebuilding process, which aimed to restore the material assets of the affected areas as that would help to rebuild the shattered economy (Smoljan, 2003). Although, there are some negative issues related to peace dividends, the study observed that the war affected provinces have achieved significant progress in the physical aspects of post-war reconstruction. The theory of post-conflict peacebuilding has recommended reconstruction and development as an important task to bring back the war affected community to their normal life in the social and economic fields. This does not mean physical reconstruction of the war devastated areas only, but also addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Table 1: Contribution to the GDP (%) from the Northern and the Eastern Provinces for the period 2009-2013.

(From ‘Provincial gross domestic product by industrial origin at current prices 2009/2013’, *Annual Report-2014 Central Bank of Sri Lanka*(Colombo:CBSL,2014) statistical appendix, Table 4

Year	Northern Province %	Eastern Province %	Total %
2009	3.2	5.8	9.0
2010	3.4	6.0	9.4
2011	3.7	5.8	9.5
2012	3.7	6.3	10.0
2013	3.6	6.3	9.9

³⁵“Statement by UN Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay”, *The Sunday Times*, 01 September 2013.

Table 2: Provincial GDP by Industrial Origin 2009-2013 (Rs. Mn)**(From: Annual Report-2014 Central Bank of Sri Lanka (Colombo:CBSL,2014) statistical appendix, Table 2**

Province - Year	Agriculture	Industry	Service
Northern			
2009	28,852	14,534	112,711
2010	30,970	28,836	129,933
2011	58,423	42,275	136,814
2012	59,911	49,667	168,450
2013	66,630	68,176	176,736
Eastern			
2009	63,879	93,667	121,817
2010	73,959	98,357	161,652
2011	61,056	109,115	209,113
2012	85,452	150,339	242,610
2013	92,840	181,383	268,676

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