

## Case Study on Peace-building in Sri Lanka

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### Introduction

Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter, revised in August 2003, sets out "Human Security" as a basic principle and clearly stipulates that "peace-building" is a priority. However, definitions of "Human Security" and what activities are involved in "peace-building" are not necessarily stated clearly. The "Peace-building Study Society," which has received the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) since last year, not only works on theoretical aspects of peace-building but also on case studies concerning what is actually happening in the field of peace-building. The purpose of this article is to clarify the concepts of human security and peace building, and secondly to describe the outline of peace-building initiatives in Sri Lanka based on the findings of the one week field work that the Society conducted in June 2004.

### Concepts of "Human Security" and "Peace-building"

The concept "Human Security" is an attempt to see security issues as personal issues rather than as challenges between nations. As shown in Figure 1, "Human Security" can be understood as an overlapping part of "human development<sup>1</sup>" and "positive peace<sup>2</sup>." This is because the purpose of human security is to achieve both the "development of individual capabilities (Amartya Kumar Sen)" and the "absence of structural violence (such as poverty) within a society (Johan Galtung)."

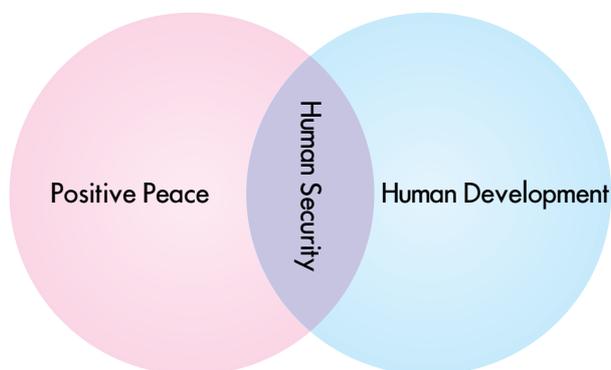


Figure 1 [developed by Yasunobu Sato]

The doctrine of "Human Security" is described by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a new development challenge. Behind this is an ongoing paradigm shift in development theories from economic development to social development to human-centric development; namely, the promotion of human rights (human development).

The Human Development Report 1994, issued by the UNDP, classifies "Human Security" into seven typical categories: employment and income; food; diseases; environment; physical violence; regions and ethnic groups; and political human rights. This means that "Human Security" and "development" have started to be considered as the two sides of the same coin. While there is increasing awareness that development is closely associated with the prevention of conflicts, the argument that more emphasis must be placed on the security of individuals to promote "development that integrates the perspectives of the weak," has often been ignored in the past. Meanwhile, we must now face the question of who can guarantee the security of people who are living in dysfunctional nations. These kinds of nations do not have the ability to ensure the security of their citizens. In addition, their regions as well are suffering civil wars or ethnic conflicts. There is also a question of who can protect individuals persecuted or threatened by their own governments. Another issue is ensuring security of the human race which is challenged by environmental and other problems not controlled by individual nations.

On the other hand, the concept of "peace-building" comes from the United Nations peace-keeping operations (PKO) developed through trial and error. In 1992, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, suggested in his *An Agenda for Peace* the need for the post-Cold War United Nations to strengthen itself through initiatives, such as, preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping, post-conflict peace-building and cooperation with regional organizations. In contrast to peacemaking, which is an action to bring hostile parties to settlement, and peace-keeping, which is about keeping the sides apart, peace-building, as referred to by Boutros Boutros-Ghali involves the steps from

post-conflict (or post-peace-keeping) reconstruction to the consolidation of peace. However, the main purpose of post-conflict peace-building activities is to prevent the recurrence of conflicts (conflict prevention). As such, once conflicts have flared up again, peace-building efforts can involve even the processes of mediating conflict, ending violence and maintaining a cease-fire. This is why the Canadian government has set forth a wider, inclusive concept of peace-building, encompassing the whole series of these activities. In addition, the “Guidelines on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation,” issued by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1997, confirms the significant roles that development aid plays at different stages of conflicts (before, in the middle of, and immediately after conflicts). It has also made specific suggestions for each stage, based on the concept that the principal purpose of development aid is to strengthen the rule of law and facilitate the participation of the general public in democratization processes. As exemplified by these two moves, “peace-building” is becoming an increasingly more inclusive concept, even covering the prevention of armed conflicts. In addition, an increasing emphasis is being placed on coordination with development aid activities (cf. Figure 2).



Figure 2 [developed by Yasunobu Sato]

Nonmilitary contributions to these broadly-defined peace-building processes can be explored in the following four research areas: conflict-resolution governance (democratic political processes for resolving conflicts by non-violent means, which, by rights, should exist in every society, and the rule of law, which allows justice to prevail); economic and social development (activities aimed at examining factors contributing to conflicts, such as, disparities between the rich and the poor and social discrimination, and thereby alleviating them); humanitarian/reconstruction assistance (humanitarian aid, including the provision of medical services, food, tents,

etc. to refugees in conflict-affected regions, as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction operations immediately after conflicts; and human development (preventive development aimed at promoting the consolidation of peace, sustainable reconciliation, and mutual understanding from a long-term point of view with a focus on the cultural and educational fields). In reality, as these four categories overlap and intertwine with each other, they are best studied in an integrated manner.

### What does “Human Security” mean in Sri Lanka?

In Sri Lanka, armed separatists of the minority Tamils rose up against the Sinhalese majority government and began organizing armed resistance in the 1970’s. The slaughter of Tamils in Colombo in 1983 then triggered the antagonism which exploded into an all-out armed conflict. Particularly, scores of civilians were killed in guerrilla attacks in the Northern and Eastern Province, which has a large population of Tamils and became the frontline of the civil war. It was not unusual for Tamil children to be kidnapped in the name of “conscription” by the Tamil political and guerrilla organization, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), better known as the Tamil Tigers. It is said that these child soldiers have been among the many suicide bombers in Colombo and other large cities. This war has killed more than 65,000 people in the Northern and Eastern Province alone. It has also caused several times more injuries and forced as many as 800,000 people to live in camps as internally displaced persons. People in Colombo and other large cities also spend everyday in fear of suicide bombings. In this way, this civil war, over the past 20 years, has deprived Sri Lankan people of their right to live humanely, free from threat. Particularly, internally displaced persons, even those who are lucky enough to have reached one of those camps set by the government, are forced to lead unstable and insecure lives in poor living conditions with no end in sight. It has been reported that these suffocating living environments resulting from the conflict have contributed to a range of gender problems. According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and NGOs, domestic violence to women/girls, especially sexual abuse and rape by their own fathers and brothers, occurs frequently in families living in these camps. Another fact is that 80% of the child soldiers of the LTTE are volunteers not kidnapped children. Many of them have volunteered to join the LTTE because otherwise their families would be attacked by the LTTE as col

laborators with the government forces. By the same token, however, their families are in danger of being regarded as members of the guerilla organization, detained and tortured by the government forces. In guerilla warfare, where the battle front normally moves this way and that, residents in affected areas always become targets of attack and often fall victim to landmines. Consequently, it is the weakest with no escape who suffer most from conflicts. What is worse, those bereaved women and children who have lost all hope in life as a result of the deaths of their family members are often taken advantage of as suicide bombers, feeding a vicious cycle of violence.

### Peace-building in Sri Lanka

When the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE reached a cease-fire agreement under the mediation of the Norwegian government in February 2002, the situation in Sri Lanka began to change for the better. The LTTE has also shifted its strategy from seeking independence to seeking autonomy. This is in response to the mounting pressure on it from the international community as part of the “war on terrorism” after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. LTTE could not have sat at the negotiation table without this change in policy. In fact, both sides of this armed conflict have maintained total cessation of organized hostilities since the cease-fire agreement. As internally displaced persons have also begun to gradually return to their homes after this cease-fire, their number has now fallen to about 270,000.

The Japanese government convened a conference (Tokyo Conference) in June 2003, inviting both sides, namely the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE, in order to facilitate the peace process between the two parties through Japanese ODA. In fact, this was a litmus test for Japanese diplomacy’s commitment to peace-building. However, as it turned out, representatives of the LTTE did not come to Japan. As a result, the international conference on post-conflict reconstruction was held in the absence of one of the two parties. Consequently peace talks have been stalled due to the unstable political situation in Sri Lanka and other reasons. The situation of the LTTE is also complicated by internal factional struggles. Particularly, the troops in the Eastern part of the country, which has a large Muslim (Islamic) population, object to the LTTE’s decision to renounce its claim for independence. In other words, neither of the two parties is a monolithic organization. In a nutshell, both sides are now preoccupied with politi-

cal maneuvering in an atmosphere of suspicion. Peace talks are still deadlocked as of August 2004.

In such circumstances, it is, in fact, not necessarily a good idea to wait for a political solution. If nothing is done, former internally displaced persons who have returned to their homes may have to flee again because they cannot endure living in ruins. However, if ODA provides humanitarian aid to the affected areas at this point in time, that may also help the LTTE wage armed struggles. Therefore, the Japanese government has declared at the Tokyo Conference that Japanese government will closely link the use of ODA with peace processes. Not only the Japanese government but also other foreign governments as well as the Sri Lankan government plan to set about implementing full-scale reconstruction programs once a political solution has been reached. For the time being, however, the Japanese government has no alternative but to adopt a wait-and-see approach towards the implementation of new projects involving ODA.

The exceptions are small-scale projects, such as the reconstruction of hospitals, schools, etc., and educational activities aimed at the strengthening of peace through mutual understanding etc. Japanese ODA is also involved in these projects through NGOs. In addition, the Japanese government provides support for human resource development projects for creating employment opportunities through the UNDP and other international organizations. In fact, it is important to provide support, even if in a small way, to preparatory activities leading up to a full-scale reconstruction of the country thorough many different channels. At the same time, it is equally important to provide support in a careful and systematic manner based on a good understanding of various factors contributing to the conflict. Otherwise, assistance could be put to political use, fuelling instead the conflict.

### Peace-building Assistance

However, it should also be remembered that the dispatch of Indian peacekeeping forces toward the Northern and Eastern Province 1987, which provided the People’s Liberation Front with a pretext for launching armed raids, has developed into a battle between the LTTE and the Indian forces, further complicating the conflict. The failure of this intervention even resulted in the LTTE assassinating the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. This is why India refuses any negotiations with the LTTE and has not given its blessing to the cease-fire agree-

ment in 2002. At the moment, there is hardly any foreign intervention in Sri Lanka, except for a small cease-fire monitoring mission comprised of monitors from Scandinavian countries.

After 20 years of civil war, people on both sides of the conflict have now become tired of armed struggle. In other words, the timing is right for peace-building. A sign of this change is exemplified by the LTTE and the People's Liberation Front current participation in democratic political processes by winning electoral seats, in spite of a question of election fairness. Moreover, the general election in April 2004 has produced a parliament in which members support the president, although it is a coalition government. This provides a good opportunity for both sides to find compromises through political processes. Thus, the next challenge is "conflict-resolution for governance," more specifically, to explore how to lead their political maneuvering to produce political solutions. In fact, financial support from ODA can encourage political solutions. However, it can also intensify political maneuvering and undermine the neutrality of the government, complicating the politics of the situation. In order to make sure that ODA achieves the former, it is necessary to prepare a fair, clear and neutral framework for each stage of peace talks as a condition of the peace talks. The important thing is to convert the "vicious cycle of conflict" into a "virtuous cycle of peace" through these efforts.

On the other hand, efforts are also required to develop new economic and social structures in order to eradicate all forms of social discrimination and prejudice, which contribute to the conflict. Since this requires ODA support, it is essential to develop a framework that involves all parties of the conflict. The framework should also include the cooperation and partnership between Sri Lanka and overseas NGOs, including Japanese organizations, to ensure that financial support is not used for political purposes.

## Japan's Roles

As for the roles of Japan, it is particularly important for the Japanese government to link its large-scale ODA projects to the progress of the peace talks. The government of Japan should also assume some political responsibility for promoting peacemaking in the region. At the same, it must secure the trust of the main parties in the conflict by maintaining its neutrality as a nation with no direct connection to the conflict. Concerning the general public, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable, it is also important to constantly carry out small-scale projects to di-

rectly benefit them at the NGO level, even if these initiatives are in isolation from the peace talks process. Moreover, provision of financial support for human resource development projects through international organizations, such as, the UNDP and the UNHCR also form an integral part of preparatory activities leading up to a full-scale reconstruction of the country and contributes to conflict prevention measures. Bilateral assistance through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) needs to be implemented in a careful manner while taking into account political power games. However, as far as humanitarian infrastructure (e.g. facilities such as clinics and schools and human resource development programs) is concerned, interregional, interethnic and interreligious equilibrium must also be taken into consideration. These are challenges to be addressed in the fields of humanitarian assistance and social development. These humanitarian aid programs are best carried out by involving the main parties of the conflict in the processes. They should also be operated in parallel with programs for human development which also foster mutual understanding.



Professor Yasunobu Sato with the (Sinhalese) leader of the Mawataweva IDP (Internally Displaced Person) Camp on the outskirts of Anuradhapure City in north central Sri Lanka, Ms. Neetha Nelundeniya (second from rt.), family members and neighbors.

In 1992, she and her family fled LTTE controlled Mannar City, where she used to work as a factory laborer. She informed me that she had been threatened with death if she did not leave the city. In fact, many of her colleagues had been killed. She said that her family could not return to their home because they had fled the city without any belongings. They had no relatives or property in the city, and her husband had gone to LTTE controlled Kilinochi to work as a construction worker using a pass issued by the LTTE. Ms. Nelundeniya worked as a volunteer worker, for a local NGO called Samasevaya, which provides support for IDPs.

- 1 Development theories have evolved through paradigm shifts, namely, from economic development to social development aimed at equality in the distribution of resources. Then they shifted to human-centric development, aimed at the enhancement of self-sustaining capabilities of individuals, in other words, to promote human development. The notion of "human development" provides the basis for the doctrine of "human security" developed by the UNDP, which will be described later in this article based on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.
- 2 This term is defined by Johan Galtung as a state that is free not only from "direct violence" but also from "structural violence," such as, poverty, suppression and discrimination.