

**Nonviolent Peaceforce Sri Lanka Project**  
**Quarterly Report**  
**Volume 1, No 10, January to March 2007**

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### **General Situation in Sri Lanka**

The end of the First Quarter of 2007 saw the continued downward spiral in the political and military stability of the country that began at least as far back as President Mahinda Rajapakse's election in November 2005. In a politically turbulent month, January witnessed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the UNP, the main opposition party, being torn apart after 18 UNP Members of Parliament defected from their party and crossed over to the government. To accommodate the defectors, new ministerial posts were created, resulting in a giant cabinet of 54 Ministers.

Shortly after its inauguration, three members were sacked by the President due to an alleged plot against him. It is known that one of the accused 'conspirators,' former Foreign Minister Samaraweera, had appealed on several occasions to the President to take responsibility for the human rights situation in the country. The UNP continues to accuse the government of transferring substantial amounts of money to the LTTE to secure the 2005 presidential election for Mahinda Rajapakse, and details of the "secret deal" continue to appear in the press a year and a half after the election.

Despite what appears to be continuous breaches of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) signed by the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in 2002, neither side has thus far chosen to give the required 14 days notice to officially abrogate the agreement. Other political parties in the President's coalition, namely the JVP and the JHU, are pursuing the judicial system to cancel the CFA independently of the two signatories. The Court of Appeals recently dismissed their petition, but the two parties announced their intention to take it to the Supreme Court.

### ***The International Response***

The international community has taken many opportunities during this time period to express alarm at the deteriorating situation, and human rights organizations (including

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Forum-Asia, among others) have issued reports and press releases highlighting continuing human rights abuses and the increasing civilian suffering due to the dramatic escalation in fighting. The urgency of the situation was underscored when a helicopter carrying high ranking officials and diplomats to Batticaloa was fired upon by the LTTE (resulting in slight injuries to the Italian ambassador) when it was landing near the district head offices of the government in the heart of the town on a humanitarian fact-finding visit. The LTTE officially apologized, blaming the government for not informing them this trip was scheduled, even though the visit had been well announced in the media.

For the first time in 25 years Sri Lanka was discussed at the UN Security Council in New York, and during the fourth session of the Human Rights Council in Brussels. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, expressed hope for the establishment of an Office of the High Commission in Sri Lanka. The special representative to the Secretary General on internally displaced persons (IDPs), Walter Kalin, called the situation in the east “urgent.” The UN Working Group on Disappearances presented their report to the council, registering “grave concern” at the increase in reports of disappearances. Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary or Summary Executions, urged the United Nations to establish a “full-fledged international human rights monitoring mission” in Sri Lanka. Defence spokesman, Keheliya Rambukwella, said that since only three of the 39 countries represented at the Council meeting addressed the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, reports in the press were misrepresenting the proceedings and the level of international concern.

While Sri Lanka was recognized for establishing a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) with an advisory group, the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP), to look into 16 cases of grave Human Rights violations. There were accusations that the government was more concerned with heading off international scrutiny than in implementing effective remedies. Increasingly, it is becoming clear that the set-up of this structure in the current environment will produce limited results. For example, it is set up to operate outside the Sri Lankan justice system and will report only to the President. Several cases involve the testimonies of witnesses, and without a comprehensive witness protection program these cases may never get resolved. There is little doubt that the process will be frustrating, especially because many new HR violations continue to take place that will not be taken up by the Commission. Despite all this, the Human Rights Council, unfortunately once again, deferred a draft resolution on Sri Lanka that was tabled last October.

During an international donor conference, Western powers, including the United States, were urging Sri Lanka's government to commit to a political settlement with the rebels, potentially holding back sums of aid if no progress is made. Some analysts believe that the government might not heed international prods to resume peace talks.

Also at the international level, the United States in their annual State Department report on Sri Lanka highlighted the decline in human rights, and 38 US congress members called upon President Bush to appoint a special envoy to Sri Lanka who would also monitor the HR situation. The UN Secretary-General called for ‘targeted measures’ against the LTTE and Karuna group for their continued involvement in child recruitment. In the meantime, the Government tried to turn down the heat from the accusations laid out in the Alan Rock report, by attempting to discredit Rock in the press, as well as by joining 60 other countries that approved the so-called Paris Commitments to end the use of child soldiers. However, according to another report, ‘Complicit in Crime’, published by the

Human Rights Watch (HRW), the government of Sri Lanka is again accused of supporting the Karuna group in the abduction and recruitment of children to fight the LTTE (see also a 2004 HRW report “Living in Fear” regarding abduction and recruitment of children by LTTE.). Most embassies continue their travel restrictions for their own operations and staff in the North and East, and continue to issue advisories warning their citizens against living, working or traveling in these areas.

### ***In the Absence of a Ceasefire***

The fifth anniversary of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) came and went in February, without the predicted dramatic confrontation between the armed parties, but with no semblance of adherence to the ceasefire conditions laid out in the document in 2002. It is generally acknowledged that the CFA currently exists only on paper. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission now has limited presence or functions in the North and East and is based near the capital rather than near the areas of conflict. This limits the information they can document, especially when there are not only individual incidents to monitor, but whole battles.

Government air strikes, shelling and the use of multi-barreled weaponry is a daily occurrence in multiple locations throughout the North and East, on land and sea. The LTTE used its incipient air power to carry out a surprise air strike on an Air force base located next to the country’s only international airport during the last week of March, killing at least 4 and injuring a couple dozen others. It is said that they are the first insurgent group to use air power, and new reports allege they are also trying to acquire a submarine to add to the sea capability of their Sea Tigers.

Another serious concern is the number of disappearances in Sri Lanka. According to recent statistics every five hours one person in Sri Lanka disappears. In some cases they are prominent people, such as the Vice Chancellor of the Eastern University in Batticaloa, missing since mid-December; in other cases, particularly in Colombo, they are prominent business people of the minority communities for whom ransoms have been demanded (including a 5 year old daughter of a Tamil businessman); and in yet further cases, they appear to be ordinary civilians with limited means. Public protests have been held in Colombo, as well as a large strike by traders associations to protest the abductions and ransom demands. There are no serious investigations taking place and in almost all cases no one is charged. But in a surprising revelation in the first week of March, the Inspector General of Police admitted that a “large number” of officers and troops (433 at that point) had been arrested on charges of abductions and extortion.

Meanwhile, the security forces seem to be using the provisions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Emergency Procedures, the Weapons Act, and other Presidential Directives, to detain people throughout the Island, sometimes without due process. In one incident, three journalists were arrested and instantly accused of helping the LTTE. Allegedly they confessed to the crime but no legal representation was provided and their location of custody is unknown. They are also suspected to be linked to two bus bombings in the South.

Such bomb attacks are attributed to the LTTE almost unanimously by analysts, and continued during this quarter killing a dozen civilians and police, and injuring dozens more. The LTTE is also accused of an attack on the Colombo harbour that was prevented by the Navy, although a big explosion took place that damaged a container ship no evidence in this incident has been produced that shows the LTTE involvement in the attack.

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*For further information, please contact Christine Schweitzer, Programme Director*

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It is becoming increasingly difficult to identify the facts in Sri Lanka. Most information is manipulated and few media are unbiased and give credible information. Information is increasingly being controlled by the government according to local journalists. In the East, the Karuna faction is preventing Tamil newspapers from being distributed among the people. Information is also used to discredit INGOs. Several aid organizations such as ZOA and Save the Children have suffered from a government-controlled campaign that attempted to show that INGOs are supporting the LTTE. Such misinformation heats up the temperature among nationalist groups in Colombo that immediately take to the streets and rally aggressively at the offices of the INGOs.

After months of fighting with the LTTE, the military captured the Vakarai area in the northern part of Batticaloa district in the East. The LTTE cadres fled through the jungles and tens of thousands of people who had been caught in the crossfire sought safety in areas such as Valaichchenai. Many of the newly arrived IDPs were previously displaced from Trincomalee district during the latter part of 2006, some as early as April 2006, others were from the LTTE-controlled areas within the district. Many Tamil people saw their young men and children being detained by the military or the Karuna faction while they were seeking safety in government-controlled areas. Most ended up in camps in Welikanda, which is notorious for child recruitment and training activities of the Karuna group, as described in the HRW report. Families claim that in some cases the army brings escaped children back to the Karuna camps. Sometimes they are told by the army that their loved ones are classified as ‘surrenderees’ and are then sent by the Sri Lankan Army to ‘rehabilitation centers’ in other parts of the country or to prison.

Despite the many reports about its complicity, the government continues to deny the existence of the Karuna camps and the children being held and trained there. However, increasing escapes by youth from the camps is further evidence of an ongoing war crime (according to the latest definition by the International Criminal Court). It is clear that the government of Sri Lanka has lost the moral high ground on the child soldier issue, that they had for years when only the LTTE had openly used children as young as 10 or 12.

In the East the trend of displacement of people that began last June continued in February and March. According to the latest figures by UNHCR, Batticaloa district has now more than 158,000 IDPs. The recent wave was caused by the continuous bombing of LTTE areas to the west of Batticaloa town. There aren't sufficient IDP sites for civilians who are fleeing the targeted areas. As a consequence, current IDPs are being sent back home on buses to Vakarai and Muttur areas, sometimes against their wishes. The process of return is problematic for UNHCR, which in March partially disengaged itself from the previous elements of the process it had worked with the government on, because the resettlements do not follow the guidelines of an informed, dignified, voluntary and safe return. Public awareness campaigns to educate IDPs on their rights through the distribution by some UN agencies of leaflets and posters in Batticaloa district resulted in phone threats to their offices.

The increasing problem of armed groups operating in and around IDP camps has become a top priority for international organizations and diplomats. The camps are sometimes unsafe for IDPs as well as for the national humanitarian staff who are under threat. Despite appeals by international actors, the government continues its military strategy, thus inviting increasing pressure regarding the many human rights violations that occur in the process.

Perhaps due to pressures from a variety of stakeholders the number of reported abductions of children by the Karuna group has declined towards the end of this period in

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Compiled by Rita Webb

the government controlled areas in the East. Some reports indicate that more parents are also resisting the recruitment tactics by the armed groups. The LTTE has also started to release some children under the age of 17. The TMVP (considered the political arm of the Karuna group) is attempting to further consolidate its control in the Batticaloa area and has asked people to report problems to them instead of the police. They have in most cases failed to honour their commitments to UNICEF, related to child soldiers and inspection of their camps. Trincomalee is also faced with an increased presence of Karuna faction cadres. It is worth noting that NPSL currently does not have access to other LTTE controlled areas where second hand sources tell us that a lot of recruitment and training is happening in preparation for a defence of their northern areas. There are also reports of forced recruitment in Jaffna of older youth.

Overall, there is greater armed presence and confrontations, more frequent and larger military engagements, and more targeted killings and abductions on a daily basis in all four Districts where Nonviolent Peaceforce works. An estimated 3,000 – 4,000 civilians have been killed since the beginning of 2006 and more than 215,000 people displaced. Learning to leverage our protective presence—and keep ourselves safe – in a war environment, as opposed to a ceasefire environment, is our current challenge.

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## District Environments and the Work of the Teams

### *Jaffna District*

Jaffna Team has maintained continuous presence in Jaffna District throughout this quarter, ever since its full-time return last November following a three-month hiatus due to the escalating conflict. Life is difficult in several significant ways for both NP staff and for local community. The A9 continues to be closed, the main land route for access to the peninsula for both goods and people. The team continues to rotate team members in and out by air, with someone generally stationed in Colombo to help support and coordinate the communication and cargo supply lines. In March the Bishop of Jaffna made an appeal to the President to open a sea route so more people could be accommodated than can now go by air; that request is still pending at the time of this report.

Shortages continue for fuel but supplies of other essentials have increased somewhat as this quarter came to a close. Ration cards were provided to government offices, NGOs, the UN and other agencies, and NP's request to the government to increase the diesel limit was approved. Bigger grocery stores were able to re-stock some needed items like milk powder and soaps, and prices remain high but have come down compared to the last quarter of 2006. Costs of local vegetables also reduced drastically for a time because Jaffna farmers were unable to get their produce to its bigger intended market. For some it was not cost effective to even harvest all of their crops. But everything is driven by uncertain availability and an undependable supply line.

Daily incidents of violence continue to affect the lives of all who live and work in Jaffna and the large military presence is intact in the streets. As this quarter has progressed, there have been some periods of normalcy during the daytime hours, but night time remains tense. Curfew remains in effect for 8-10 hours each night, although NP has been able to renew its monthly curfew pass which allows both international and national staff to travel from the office to their residences during restricted hours. In general night-time travel is minimized overall, in keeping with NP security procedures at this time.

During this period there have been continuous large-scale field troop movements and gradual increases in the exchange of heavy artillery firing, with periodic aerial bombing. The seas in the North are a frequent site of clashes as well, and the fishing industry is enormously affected by imposed restrictions on fishing hours and access to the sea in certain areas. The threat of—and fear of—suicide bombers, on land and sea, results in frequent cordon and search operations in which many people are rounded up and put through an interrogation process by the security forces. Two known suicide missions were thwarted so far this year in Jaffna. There have been a number of claymore attacks as well.

The work of the team in this environment has been focusing on supporting local human rights defenders and helping to increase their space to do their important work. This includes accompanying partners to meetings, presentations and trainings on human rights, prison visits to those caught up in the violence, case follow-ups on specific incidents, and other information sharing. Visits to the prison reveal a number of troubling circumstances. More than 65 threatened youth and men have voluntarily “surrendered” through the Human Rights Commission in Jaffna out of fear of being killed or abducted. Once in the system, their lack of rights under the Surrenderee Act and the conditions under which they are kept are worrisome. Under Presidential Directives to the Commission for Rehabilitation, who oversee this year-long “rehabilitation” program, the

magistrate court will not be granting any requests by a “surrenderee” for voluntary release. The surrenderees do not have separate accommodations and are being housed with the regular prison population and, therefore, subject to all the prison conditions, lack of services, unhealthy conditions and proper care, and abuses that were pre-existing in the facility.

Jaffna team continues to provide presence in vulnerable areas, especially for those communities identified as vulnerable with whom we have previously worked. They are also focusing on the human security, conflict and other issues of 9 of the 23 IDP camps currently operating in the District. If, as predicted, the push by government security forces to overtake LTTE areas in the East moves in the near future to a new military campaign in the North, there will be many more IDP camps created as civilians attempt to flee from wherever the most intense areas of fighting will be. The team’s plan to help restart the previous protection network that was a forum for collective international and national organizations to work on human security issues, including those of IDPs in particular. This has stopped functioning in recent months but is needed more than ever.

Many of the human rights activists that the team supports have received multiple direct threats over time and while their confidence has been strengthened when partnering with NP, they also express concerns and doubts about their ability to remain safely in the District long term and continue their human rights work. In the meantime, the pressing issues of identifying safer spaces for threatened youth, supporting and strengthening vulnerable communities to mobilize their resources for increased protection, and facilitating the work of local human rights activists in a very unstable environment will continue. Finding neutral spaces and partners to discuss and work for human rights remains a primary challenge for strong committed members of the community. They receive intense pressure to join or support human rights initiatives that focus primarily on the violations of the government. Working with NPSL helps relieve that pressure to a certain extent and creates some space.

Full time Jaffna Field Staff as of end of March 2007: 7

### ***Trincomalee District***

The first quarter of 2007 saw changes in the organization of the work of NP in Trincomalee District. Since the throwing of a hand grenade at the NP Mutur field office in May of 2006, followed by the full scale attack on Mutur Town by the LTTE causing the displacement of civilians, and the continual escalation of the fighting in the southern part of the district throughout the rest of the year, the Muttur Team had relocated their base operation to Trincomalee Town, where our other district team was established. From there the Mutur team continued to address the needs of the civilians in the southern part of the District, primarily in Muttur and Seruwila Divisions. Following a three month assessment between September and December it was decided that that the work and the available resources of NP would be better and more effectively utilized if the two teams were merged into one district team and organized themselves to work in both Trincomalee and Mutur offices. This transition was completed by mid-March.

The security situation in Trincomalee district this quarter has been tense and reflects the instability in other parts of the country. There is a strong military presence throughout the

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areas where NP operates, with frequent checkpoints and thorough searches, including on occasion body searches, even of INGO staff. That said, there is a notable reduction of the military presence in the town and the tense situation has been reduced. Civilians are seen travelling during longer hours and even in evening times in some areas. Registering vehicles to leave the District can delay a journey by as much as an hour. Military and police round-ups still occur regularly. There is increased evidence of the presence of Karuna cadres and extra-judicial killings are still occurring, with the perpetrators' affiliations not always clear. Shelling continues to be heard on a daily basis towards both the north and south of the District, which restricts movement into some areas. Though the frequency and intensity of shelling have declined. Trincomalee town area was relatively quiet during March, with police taking the lead at most of the checkpoints rather than the army. The town commander thinks the situation improved greatly in this period. The shops are opening longer in the evenings and there are generally more people out and activities are happening later into the evening.

Much of the programme and activities of the team focused on supporting the peace initiatives of partner organizations including the Peace Committees. Because of the displacements and disruption in community life, many peace committees disintegrated or were unable to function in recent months. In some areas where people are now returning to their homes and beginning to re-establish community ties, the team is supporting efforts to re-invigorate and support those peace committee members who are ready to take up their community peace work again. In some cases, the team is able to connect peace committees with other partners who can provide trainings in human rights and other capacity-building initiatives to provide a focus and increase the longer-term impact for the committees. A key challenge in working with the Peace Committees is the heavy role that the police play in the formation and functioning of the committees. In an ethnically-charged environment like Trincomalee, where all three communities feel imperilled and have their own grievances, perceived collaboration with the police can prove to be a liability in other areas of the work.

This quarter saw the beginning of the return to Trincomalee of many IDPs who had fled to the south in the latter part of 2006. As an interim many IDPs are sent to a transit centre in Killivedy initially, though some fear that they will be stuck there for years. Many areas previously worked in by NP in 2005 can not be resettled yet and have primarily only a military presence. The team is covering many towns and areas during this transition time to monitor the protection and security situation for the returnees and remaining IDPs, both in transit camps and in host families. Because of the scale of the displacements, addressing the needs and insecurities requires the cooperation and collaboration of many actors, all of whom NP Trinco works tirelessly to have good working relationships and communication with.

In some places the areas of intended return are still heavily mined and return is delayed. The situation is tense in some areas with a noticeable rise in violent incidents in March. A number of killings, abductions, harassments, arrests and beatings are alleged against the security forces. While many Sinhalese and Muslim persons have returned to their villages/areas, many Tamils fear to return to their home areas and must still spend overnights in schools and temples. Their movements are restricted and access to their lands and livelihoods impeded. In some cases the team has accompanied IDPs on "go and see" visits so they can assess themselves what the situation is in their home area and if it is feasible to return in safety and dignity.

The conflict and subsequent displacements have had a huge impact on the agricultural sector, as well as on the fishing community, the main industry in the District. This impacts all three communities in Trincomalee district, and the team has been trying to support the cross-community efforts of on the fishing communities and helping to find ways to have their grievances heard by the navy and government agencies. This requires establishing and maintaining good relationships with all stakeholders, including the Urban Council, the Department of Fisheries, the navy, and other organizations and agencies that can advocate for the needs of the fishermen to pursue their livelihood.

In addition, the Trincomalee team continues to support many individuals and families to address individual cases of human rights abuses and threats when requested. They continue to work with the families of the five students shot on Trincomalee Beach in January 2006, who continue to face harassment and threat because of the high profile nature of the boys execution and the inquires into their killing (see previous reports). Networking with other organizations and agencies, at the local, national, and international levels, helps to expand the options and resources available to the civilians that NP Trincomalee serves.

Full time Trincomalee Field Staff as of end of March 2007: 11

***Batticaloa District:***

***NP Valaichchenai and NP Batticaloa (Town) Field sites***

The two teams in Batticaloa District work closely together to address the security concerns and human rights needs of the civilians in the district. While situated only 32 kilometers apart, the driving time between the two sites has become increasingly longer. Movement within the district is largely restricted to the one main north/south road that runs the length of the district, the A15. With each new attack or threat of attack on the security forces, the number of military and police check posts has increased and detours around their camps and military installations have lengthened. The last week of March saw the first post-Cease Fire suicide attack on an army camp, resulting in yet another detour and retaliatory shelling on a civilian area. The road itself has also enormously deteriorated due to the constant heavy military and lorry traffic and to the eroding effect of rains.

This quarter has been an intense period of fighting and displacement in the East, with Batticaloa district receiving the bulk of IDPs coming from the North from Trincomalee district, beginning as far back as July of 2006, as well as from the LTTE-controlled areas of the northern and western parts of Batticaloa District. When NP came to Batticaloa District in 2003, the lines drawn by the CFA resulted in approximately 85% of the District being under the control of the LTTE, with about 15% (mainly a narrow strip running on either side of the A15) being controlled by the Government. By the end of this quarter the government security forces have substantially re-drawn the boundaries of control, with most major LTTE bases reported to be demolished or over-run, and most of their areas now under government control.

One of the greatest factors contributing to the insecurity and fear in the district is the number of armed youth that are able to roam without challenge throughout government-controlled areas. Most of the youth appear to be associated with the Karuna faction,

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although increasingly armed youth outside EPDP offices has been observed as well. The Karuna group has opened new political offices almost on a weekly basis, under the name of the TMVP political party (a party not yet registered under government guidelines yet). In some cases families or local NGOs were forced to leave from the houses or buildings they want to occupy. Their presence in an area often makes the neighbours want to move to a new location but if they own their house, they often don't have another option for moving elsewhere. Living near one of these offices can be risky, as several have been attacked by the LTTE, including two that were located not far from Valaichchenai staff housing. Outside and within the compound of these offices (which are sometimes referred to as "camps" by civilians) are often seen numbers of armed youth, and sometimes mothers as well, who are seeking to either see their children or perhaps seeking some information about their children from the persons there.

At the end of the quarter, even after a precipitous return of thousands of IDPs to Trincomalee district and the Vakarai area in northern Batticaloa district, the displaced population is estimated to be about 158,000, or one fourth of the population. Families have difficulty keeping track of one another, schools and other government services are barely functioning (and not functioning at all in many areas), and humanitarian organizations cannot keep up with all the shifting needs of such a large, transient population. Post-tsunami development work has essentially stopped. Add to this the determined military campaign to reclaim all parts of the District, the counter-resistance by the LTTE, and 'normal life' (employment, education, etc.) is almost completely disrupted there.

Following the capture of Vakarai in January by the government and after months of intense shelling from areas near to both our field offices, the quarter ended on a quieter note with the Army's forward defence lines now being shifted further into the jungle areas in the western part of the District. In some cases the shelling has fallen in what was previously designated "government-controlled" areas, with 8 civilians killed the last week of March in a village half-way between our two offices, three being children in one family. Villagers say the shelling came from a nearby army camp; the army says it was LTTE. In many incidents, that is how accountability is avoided, with each side blaming the other.

The work of the teams here, as in our other field sites, focuses on monitoring the security and human rights situation for civilians in general, and in this time period for the IDPs in particular, including their right to participate in the decision when to be returned in safety and dignity to their original home. The teams make regular visits to all of the IDP camps in the areas of our offices, maintain relationships with the camp management and the government servants in charge of the camps, attend all the coordinating meetings to share information and concerns and gaps, assist in the distribution of information regarding the rights of IDPs, and connect individuals and families with needed resources where possible.

The teams also respond to reported incidents of violence, such as Batticaloa Team's quick response to a claymore attack which killed 11 persons including 4 policemen and resulted in the immediate roundup of some 80 people, both staff and students, or a response to reports of attempted abductions at an IDP camp. If there are civilian injuries in our areas, the teams often goes with civil actors to visit with the families, such as visiting the families in Valaichchenai whose relations died in the claymore attack at the Oddamavadi market. In some cases teams are able, at the least, to make phone calls to various contacts

in the Security Forces, the Police, the Human Rights Commission, and to other protection agencies, to alert them to a situation and to the fact that the situation is known and is being monitored. Such quick communication can be important in how people are treated by the authorities during and after a violent incident, it can also draw in quick allies in the district or outside of the district with whom we have a relationship. Unfortunately, communication capability has been enormously diminished since the government turns off the mobile signal during times of military campaigns, including throughout much of this time period in Batticaloa district. This heightens the teams' security concerns as they are unable to readily contact others outside of NP in times of crisis or active violence, as well as our own local staff, who don't have land lines.

Another area of focus of work for both teams has been to provide long-term support to local civil society peacemakers and a growing group of mothers we work together to support. With our local partners, the teams have met at least monthly with parents who have had children abducted by an armed group and engage with them in conversations and activities to build their confidence and skills for self-advocacy. The goal is to help parents use the democratic and human rights processes that are supposed to protect them, such as accompanying them to file police reports or facilitating a meeting with other agencies or entities, including the TMVP, that they have difficulty accessing, or fear to access on their own. In some cases they are helped to connect with other needed resources (as often it is a bread-winner who is taken from the family which increases the poverty and vulnerability of the whole family), including support for transportation costs so they can visit their children in one of the training camps, or livelihood supports by connecting them with an existing private fund or a new fund from Unicef that supports the advocacy of families and has been made available to NPSL to administer when both fear and economics prevent families from taking action.<sup>1</sup>

As the fighting has intensified over the past months, many youth in the district are escaping from the armed groups. These youth are particularly vulnerable to either re-abduction or to punishment or death for having escaped. They are also of heightened interest to the Security Forces, as they may have some information that could be of use to Army intelligence. NP has been able to assist some of them in getting to safer places, whether outside of the district, if the family has some connections or outside resources, or within the district, such as helping them enrol in a residential training course where they can be physically safer while at the same time building skills for a more productive future. In order to enhance the ability to respond to such ongoing abductions and forced recruitments, the teams are also in the process of exploring how we might establish a kind of "Abduction Secretariat" which can engage other actors and agencies to participate in more joint responses to abductions and pro-active efforts to keep all youth safer.

Because of the more rural setting of the Valaichchenai office and the long and well known track record of that office, our office there has also been a visible attraction receiving many family visitors and cases of all variety that come to the door. As a result the team tries to keep the office seven days a week, which is often a challenge, given the comings and goings of FTMs and the minimal staffing, especially in light of the overall security needs and the desire to have proactive presence in the rest of the district. We

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<sup>1</sup> It was recognized that while families faced barriers of knowledge or fear/intimidation to access recourse and coping mechanisms for protecting their children, sometimes they lacked the funds. This may be especially true for displaced families, which at one point in this quarter was 2/3 of the district. Access to this fund is a new initiative in partnership with UNICEF.

continue to try to develop new relationships with partners that can use this door to the community for social

Full time Field Staff in Batticaloa District as of March 2007: 8, Valachchenai Office: 7

Full time Batticaloa field staff as of March 2007: 5

### ***Colombo and NPSL***

NPSL Colombo continues to raise issues for the protection of civilians in relevant forums and with networks at the national level. Some of these forums allow NGOs and IAs to interact with government officials and ministers on issues of advocacy for the communities they work and for their own political space, independence and security issues facing them. This is increasingly important because of the amount of anti-INGO propaganda spread by those who feel that international condemnation of human rights violations or international advocacy are a threat to Sri Lankan sovereignty. NPSL also continues to be a member of CHA, as well as protection forums for children hosted by UNICEF and for IDPs hosted by UNHCR. Both of these forums allow NPSL to raise issues that our partners and teams in the field experience and witness such as continued forced recruitment of children by armed groups and the forced or coerced returns of IDPs who have concerns about returning to their original homes.

NPSL maintains relationships with the diplomatic and donor community, sharing information about the situation on the ground and finding out more about their work. NPSL also works with a network of human rights and peace activists. NPSL has been speaking with them about a larger presence in the north and east and between NPSL Colombo and the field sites we have facilitated them in their fact-finding missions affecting their fellow Sri Lankans as well as supported the advocacy resulting from their findings.

NPSL's programmatic work will be greatly advanced with creation of the Colombo Response Team (CRT). Adejeo Haruna has come to Colombo from Trinco to facilitate the initiation of this. There are several elements for this team to develop laid out in the terms of reference. The CRT hopes to help develop a respond rapidly to protection needs identified by field teams, partners and local actors that can serve to complement and supplement existing capacity; to serve as a liaison between the field teams and Colombo actors so that the capacity and effectiveness of interventions in the field increases and more options for redress and remedy become available in both Colombo and in the field and assist in enhancing the strategic capacity and impact of NP by linking NPSL grassroots work to other levels and sectors.

During this time NPSL has continued our partnerships with Christian Aid in Trincomalee and with Oxfam Australia in Batticaloa. NPSL has signed a new partnership agreement with UNICEF starting February 1st. The objectives of the partnership are as follows: To support families directly affected by violence against children through measures that increase their safety and confidence; To support the capacities of communities to participate in flexible, proactive or reactive initiatives that address the threats to children and families; To increase the capacity for information sharing and subsequently coordinated action and advocacy at the community, district and national level on issues that addresses the protection of children. The partnership brings with it 38,414,000.00 Rs

worth of funding including in kind contribution such as two new vehicles and five laptops. It also includes a so-called 'Family Support fund'. NSPL found that often the economic and violent barriers to families were operating at the same time. For example, while NPSL could support a group of families to start mobilization and break through their fears through accompanying them and hosting meetings, if their confidence was increased to a point where they were comfortable to act more independently, they could no longer afford it. Or a community facility that is able to offer some safety and new skills to an ex-child soldier could not afford to expand their programme for more students. These are just a couple of the examples of how the family support fund may be used, provided by unicef and administered at NPSL discretion when appropriate.

NPSL also signed a partnership with CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. This partnership lasts from March to September and is for 100,000.00 Canadian Dollars. The objectives of this partnership are to facilitate the development of so-called coping mechanisms and to support community and humanitarian initiatives and increase the confidence and capacity for problem solving in the communities that suffer from violence and hostile acts; and to increase the level of discourse and coordinated action at the community, district and national and international level on the human security and human rights situation of Sri Lankan communities.

As a learning organization NPSL is still trying structure it's self in a way that meets all of the programmatic and human resource needs, among other needs, while operating in a difficult environment like Sri Lanka. A new development is the creation of new positions in both Trinco and Battar Districts, the District Support Coordinators (DSCs). It provides field based supervision for the field team staff. This role is intended to strengthen the linkages and communication with the management team in Colombo, and to provide the needed logistical, human resources, and administrative support that has proven difficult to provide from the distance of the head office in Colombo.

NSPL completed its audit for 2006 and conducted additional audits over its 2006 donor expenditures. It is also having to install a new and practical accounting system, 'Peachtree', to meet the many demands of having more numerous and diverse donors. Part of this also resulted in the hire of more administration support.

During this time NPSL has also had to continue with the attaining work permits and visas for international staff. This system is ever-changing and getting more bureaucratic as the anti-foreigner sentiment increases in some areas of the government and the security clearance requirements get stricter. It is becoming an increasingly time consuming and expensive necessity. Two of NPSL's field staff had to be sent back to their home countries to complete the process, one of them for a month while he got the necessary documentation in Kenya.

NPSL hosted and participated in the annual gathering of the International Governing Council (IGC) of NP. For many of the staff, directors and IGC members this was an opportunity to visit the field sites and interact with the NPSL staff. The IGC approved the 2007 plans of NPSL including the budget.

Full time Management and Support staff as of March 2007: 10

## Appendix

*Sources and Literature: Links to Internet that have information of current situation*

### *Official Sri Lankan and LTTE Sources*

Sri Lankan government: <http://www.priu.gov.lk/> and

Official webpage of the Sri Lankan Government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) <http://www.peaceinsrilanka.org/>

Tamil Eelam Homepage: <http://www.eelam.com/>

Referenced Sources:

UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions calls for urgent measures to end political killings and to strengthen protection for human rights in Sri Lanka April 27 2006

<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/16F8C22F9FB1E05EC125715E0037176E?opendocument>

### *Sri Lankan NGO and Media Sources*

The Academic : <http://www.theacademic.org/>

Centre for Policy Alternatives: [www.cpalanka.org](http://www.cpalanka.org)

Digest of News Links at Lanka Academic Network:  
<http://www.lacnet.org/slnews/index.html>

Google news: <http://www.google.com/alerts?q=&hl=en>.

<http://www.info.lk/slnews/>

<http://www.lankapage.com/>

LAcNet News (also to be found going to the Digest of News Links of Lacnet listed above): <http://www.lacnet.org/slnet/>.

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka: [www.peace-srilanka.org](http://www.peace-srilanka.org) , Mailing List order at [peace2@sri.lanka.net](mailto:peace2@sri.lanka.net)

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL): <http://www.paffrel.lk/>

Sarvodaya: [www.sarvodaya.org](http://www.sarvodaya.org). They also offer a mailing list.

Social Issues: <http://www.infolanka.com/org/srilanka/issues.html>

Society for Peace, Unity and Human Rights in Sri Lanka: <http://www.spur.asn.au/>

Sri Lanka Page: <http://www.lankapage.com/> (internet paper, Sinhalese-oriented)

Tamilnet: <http://www.tamilnet.com/>

The Island: <http://www.island.lk/> (newspaper)

University Teachers for Human rights (Jaffna): <http://www.uthr.org/>

### *Articles and pages of international NGOs on Sri Lanka*

Amnesty International: <http://web.amnesty.org/>

Bastian, Sunil, The Failure of State Formation, Identity Conflict and Civil Society Responses – The Case of Sri Lanka, University of Bradford, Centre for Conflict

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Compiled by Rita Webb

Resolution Working Paper 2, Bradford August 2002, Order at Bradford University, Department of Peace Studies, <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/peace/pubs/pubs.htm>

Coy, Patrick G., "What's A Third Party To Do? Nonviolent Protective Accompaniment in Sri Lanka with Peace Brigades International". Paper presented at the 35th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association Washington D.C., March 28-April 1, 1999

European Centre for Conflict Prevention, The Peace Process in Sri Lanka. The need to involve civil society actors, a seminar organised by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, November 13, 2002, <http://www.conflict-prevention.net/>

Harris, Simon, Lewer, Nick, Operationalising Peacebuilding and Conflict Reduction. Case Study: Oxfam in Sri Lanka, University of Bradford, Centre for Conflict Resolution Working Paper 11, Bradford August 2002, Order at Bradford University, Department of Peace Studies, <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/peace/pubs/pubs.htm>

Human Rights Watch: <http://hrw.org/reports/world/srilanka-pubs.php>

Peace Brigades International: <http://www.peacebrigades.org/lanka.html>.

Refugee Council United Kingdom: [www.gn.apc.org/brcslproject](http://www.gn.apc.org/brcslproject)

Witharana, Dileepa, Community Peace Work in Sri Lanka: A Critical Appraisal, University of Bradford, Centre for Conflict Resolution Working Paper 12, Bradford August 2002 Order at Bradford University, Department of Peace Studies, <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/peace/pubs/pubs.htm>

*Glossary of Abbreviations and Names*

AHAM= a community based organization working with children in the Trinco district.

CBO = Community-based Organisation

CSO = Civil Society Organisation

DRMU = Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Erik Solheim: Norwegian Special Envoy

FCE = Foundation for Co-Existence

FTM = Field Team Members

GoSL = Government of Sri Lanka

HR = Human Rights

ICRC = International Committee of the Red Cross

IDP = Internally Displaced Persons

JHU = National Heritage Party (party of Buddhist monks)

JVP = Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Maoist party, in coalition with SLFP) People's Liberation Front

LTTE = Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (led militarily by Velupillai Prabhakaran)

MPC = Mutur Peace Committee

MT = Management Team

NACPR = National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation

NESOHR = North East Secretariat of Human Rights

NGO = Nongovernmental Organisation

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Public version

*For further information, please contact Christine Schweitzer, Programme Director*

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PAFFREL = Peoples' Action for Free and Fair Elections

SLA = Sri Lankan Army

SLFP = Sri Lanka Freedom Party (governing party. Prime Minister is Mahinda Rajapaksa)

SLMM = Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission. (Set up under the cease-fire agreement to monitor breaches of the agreement. Staffed mainly by Scandinavian military personnel in civilian clothes. Ca 50 personnel)

TC = Team Coordinator

TNA = Tamil National Alliance (LTTE presenting party in parliament)

UNICEF = United Nation Children's Fund

UNP = United National Party (concluded cease fire agreement with LTTE in 2001/2002, had majority until elections in 2004- Prime Minister was Ranil Wickremesinghe)

ZOA = Dutch NGO working with local staff in Sri Lanka.

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Public version

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