

**Report of the Workshop on Accountability, Transparency and Conflict:
Challenges for Local Governance,
held at Peacock Beach Hotel-Hambantota, from 6th to 8th February 2009**

6th February 2009

Participants arrived at the hotel on the 6th at around 8.00p.m.

7th February 2009

The workshop programme commenced at 9.00 am with the welcome address by the professor S.T. Hettige of the University of Colombo. He said that the workshop would focus on issues related to local governance with particular attention to good governance and the potential of local councils in dealing with matters of conflict and corruption. He further pointed out that many activities are taking place in local council areas without the supervision and even the knowledge of local authorities. For example, the transfer of school teachers takes place without the concurrence of the LAs. In many countries, the LA's supervise the activities of the schools within their jurisdictions. Therefore, there is a need for exploring the possibility of bringing the activities of other agencies at local level under the supervision of LAs.

After the remarks and the welcome address of Prof. Hettige, an introduction to the workshop was given by Prof. Camila Orjuela from the University of Gothenburg of Sweden. She said that this workshop is part of the research project to be conducted as a collaboration project of the Gothenburg University and the University of Colombo. She explained that they received small grant from the SASNET to organise this workshop and expressed her appreciation of the support given by SASNET.

Presentation-I- Integrity of Local Government Institution (LGI) in Sri Lanka

After the inauguration session there were three presentations made by representatives from the Transparency International, Colombo, Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance and the Asia foundation. MS. Gareesha Wirithamulla, Transparency International Sri Lanka, made the first presentation on "Integrity of Local Government Institution (LGI) in

Sri Lanka. The paper was based on a research study conducted by her institution. The study had covered Badulla and Kurunegala districts.

This survey itself had been conducted by the Social Indicator (SI), the survey research unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) on behalf of the Transparency International Sri Lanka. The fieldwork was conducted in five selected Local Authority areas from Badulla, Monaragala, Kurunagala and Puttalam districts (5 in each district) from 30th July to 25th August 2008. In-depth interviews and structured questionnaires had also been used to collect data.

The study had three objectives: a) understanding the existing forms of corruption and malpractices from the viewpoint of local authority officials (elected and appointed members) and service recipients, b) identifying the reasons for lack of understanding of rules and regulations and reasons for non adherence, and c) identifying the attitudes of officials and elected members towards malpractices and their ideas on overcoming the situation.

According to the survey, there are many problems encountered by the service recipients when they approach the local authorities for various needs. The problems faced by them are; purposely delaying the work until payments/ bribes/ gifts are made, not giving equal treatment due to ethnic and similar considerations, negative attitudes of the officials & lack of interest in their work, absence of officials during normal working hours & reporting late to work, absence of procedures to hold officials accountable, inefficient officials with lack of experience and knowledge, people's lack of understanding of necessary documents needed for a particular service, need to know a person of influence to get a service done, people didn't get a chance to participate in LA activities, language barriers, etc.

The study revealed why people bribe the various authorities to get their work done. Among the reasons pointed out by the service recipients; to get work done faster and easily, to avoid delays in normal procedure, to respond the official's indirect demand for money by delaying the work, to get something illegal done, as a gift or a token of

appreciation, are very important. Furthermore the research revealed the common methods used by the people to get things done from LAs. Among them; using political influence and seeking help from a known person are very significant.

The study had identified two groups of service recipients, namely who get work done quicker and who face a lot of difficulties in getting things done from LAs. According to the respondents, persons with the following characteristics got their work done faster from the LAs. They are; those who represent an association, affluent people, those who had acquaintance/relatives in the LAs, those who are linked to prominent politicians, and finally those who visited the LAs which had little work or less busy. Furthermore, some Tamil speaking people and people with low income have reported that they face a lot of problems in meeting their needs through the LAs.

Profile of service recipients who said they got their work done without problems that can be enumerated as follows.

1. Citizens who visited LAs with an efficient leadership (chairman)
2. Citizens who are affiliated to an association such as rate payers association
3. Citizens who visited LAs that have a lesser workload
4. Affluent people
5. Citizens who visited those LAs that are generally visited by fewer service recipients.

The survey had also focused on the most important governance problems experienced by public officials. Some of the problems faced by them are; officials reporting late to work, officials taking an unnecessarily long time to complete an assigned task, excessive work load, have to do the work of others, and finally inadequate resources and funds.

The research findings revealed public officials' opinions on reasons for low performance of LGI (local government institutions). They are; lack of adequate human resources, lack of funds, lack of competence and training, lack of public awareness about LAs activities, lack of transparency, lack of clarity in rules and regulations, political influence in

recruitments, lack of monitoring and supervision, LAs inability to understand the needs of the public, lack of clarity in job description, lack of sanctions/ disciplinary action, and finally, lack of public participation.

The staff members of the surveyed districts have pointed out the areas that are most [prone for corruption. They have pointed out that there is a tendency for corruption in purchasing supplies, in the tendering process and awarding construction contracts, when recruiting staff, in collecting revenue, and finally, when promoting and transferring staff members.

The survey revealed that not only the service recipients and the officials but also the elected members face governance related problems. The elected members face problems such as the negative attitudes of officials, lack of interest on the part of officials in their work, inefficient and ineffective leadership, the absence of clear procedures and unnecessary political interference from above.

The elected members had pointed out as to why they do not adhere to rules and procedures of LAs most of the times. They tend to ignore the rules and procedures; when there is political backing (interferences), to help acquaintances (friend/ relatives), when officials know that they would not be punished for their offences, in occasions where law prevents officials from delivering an essential service, when officials are not transferred for a long period of time, when there is too much interference from the chairman, when officials need money from the service recipients, and when officials interpret rules and regulations for their own benefits, etc.

The study identified reasons for poor performance of LGIs (local government Institutions) from the respondent's point of view. Among them, officials lack of interest in work, weak leadership, lack of monitoring and supervision, interference of influential politicians, incompetent staff, insufficient training, inadequate salary, inadequate resources, inadequate funds, interference of the centre, absence of fair transfer system, poor knowledge of the rules and regulations, language issues, etc.

In keeping with the findings of the Survey, researchers have pointed out that the following steps should be taken to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of Local Government Institutions, from the elected member's point of view. They are; changing the negative attitudes of officials, better salaries, promotion schemes, welfare programs as well as implementing a proper transfer system. They have also pointed out that the local government institutions should be independent in recruiting competent staff and giving proper training. The councils in turn should also encourage and educate the public to bring the correct documents, build the capacity of officials, and finally relax strict rules and regulations imposed on staff.

According to the above Survey, the staff members interviewed had suggested the following ways to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of local government institutions. They are; encourage people to participate in LGI activities, officials should be accountable to the service recipients, citizens should demand more information from LGIs and also more transparent procedures should be introduced.

The study suggested ways to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of LGIs. Among the best practices suggested to improve the Local Authorities are; eliminating unnecessary external interferences, having transparent procedures, changing the attitudes and opinions of the people and officers, increasing officials and peoples knowledge in the LAs, increasing the salaries of officials and their welfare benefits, identifying peoples needs, recruiting competent and committed staff, having a genuine leadership (chairman) to motivate the officials, and finally, giving an adequate training to the officials are very significant measures.

The study further explored how the day to day activities are affected by the lack of accountability and transparency in key institutions. They are; delays in getting services (e.g. getting construction permits, the lack of garbage disposal, etc). The low quality of service and lack of accountability result in unethical and illegal practices (bribes,

extortion, favourism, etc), higher cost for service recipients (e.g. to pay santhosam), and loss of trust in the governance system.

The research findings have pointed to the important role that local government institutions can play in combating corruption and promoting good governance. The aspects that have been highlighted by the study are:

- a. the need to ensure equal treatment to all service recipients,
- b. Removal of language barriers in accessing services,
- c. Strategically advantageous position of LA's in understanding and addressing the needs of local people,
- d. Developing local leadership as a role model in democratic and accountable governance and ethical behaviour and
- e. Promoting local government as a building block for national development

During the discussion after the presentation, Mr. Dammika, representing the Asia Foundation pointed out that the Central government reaches out to local communities through the Divisional Secretariat office, bringing the central government closer to the local communities, making Local Government Authorities less relevant .

Prof. Hettige pointed out that the structural barriers prevent people's participation in the local government system. He further said that the Indian government has created "*Panchayath Sameethi*" system through which people's participation is enhanced. He said that even under the existing rules and regulations of the Pradeshiya Sabha system of Sri Lanka, there is provision to establish certain committees through which people's participation can be assured. But authorities concerned have not taken steps to constitute these committees and make use of them to develop good governance practices. He mentioned that the Colombo Municipal Council in the 1990's established several such committees through which people in the Colombo city limits could participate in the management of community affairs.

Presentation-II-Community Participation in Local Government

Mr. B.A.Dhammika, Programme Officer, Southern Province Local Governance Programme, of the Asia Foundation made the second presentation on the above theme. He identified four categories of people who participate in local government institutions. The four categories are; close relatives of LG politicians and staff, general public in rural areas, general public in urban areas, and specialists in Local Governance. Then he went on explaining how these four categories of people view local government institutions. According to him, the close relatives of the local government officers look at the Local Authorities in different ways; as institutions involved in local development activities or have something to do public health, or generate income by issuing various licenses, or by imposing various taxes on local people.

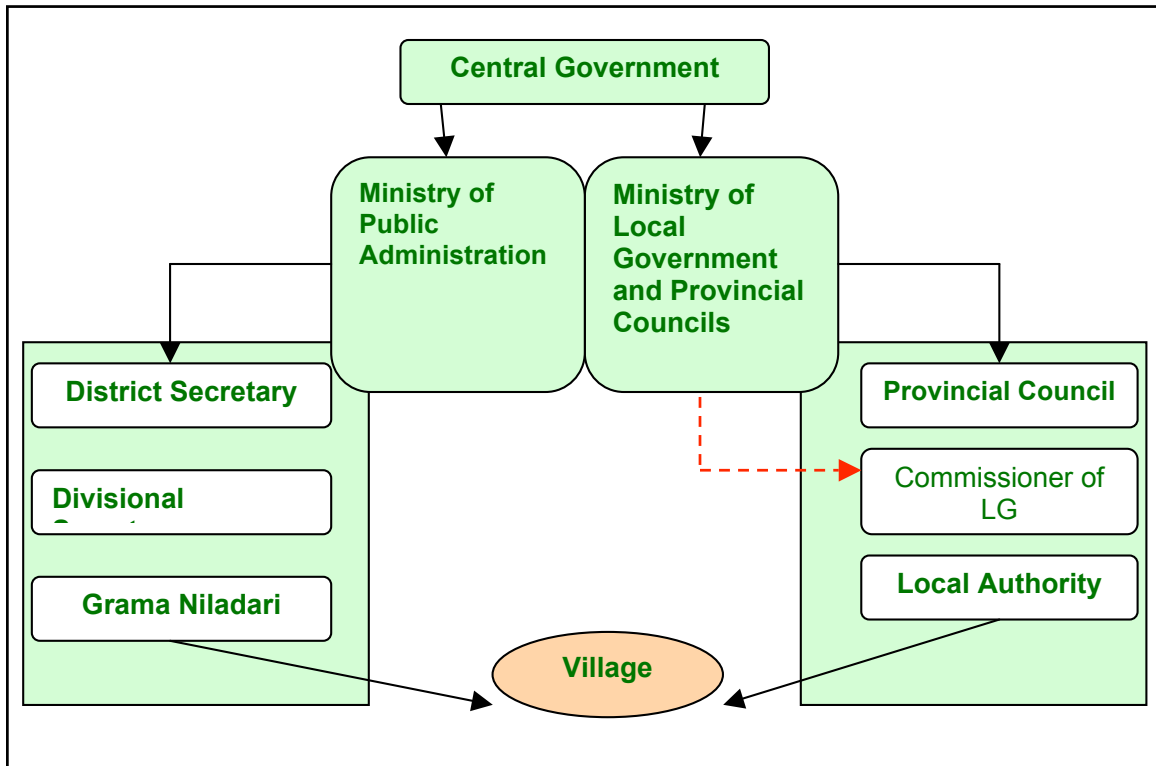
According to the presenter, the general public in rural areas also perceive the functions of Local Authorities primarily in terms of their responsibilities relating to the maintenance of physical infrastructure such as village roads, culverts and common wells.

On the other hand, experts look at local government from a broader governance perspective and identify issues accordingly .i.e. lack of transparency, lack of people's participation, efficiency, outdated procedures, rules, etc,. Finally, they also point to the fact that the central government operates, according to them, in a way that marginalises local government for all intents and purposes. .

Presenter gave reasons as to why different categories of persons have different views on LAs. The relationship between the Local Authorities and the general public is very limited and also the citizens and the local authority leaders have not understood that they have common objectives. On the other hand, the specialists or experts not have ability to explain the theories in practical language, or rather the specialists are not able to touch the local realities in their analysis. And also the specialist could not localize the specialized global knowledge at delivery point.

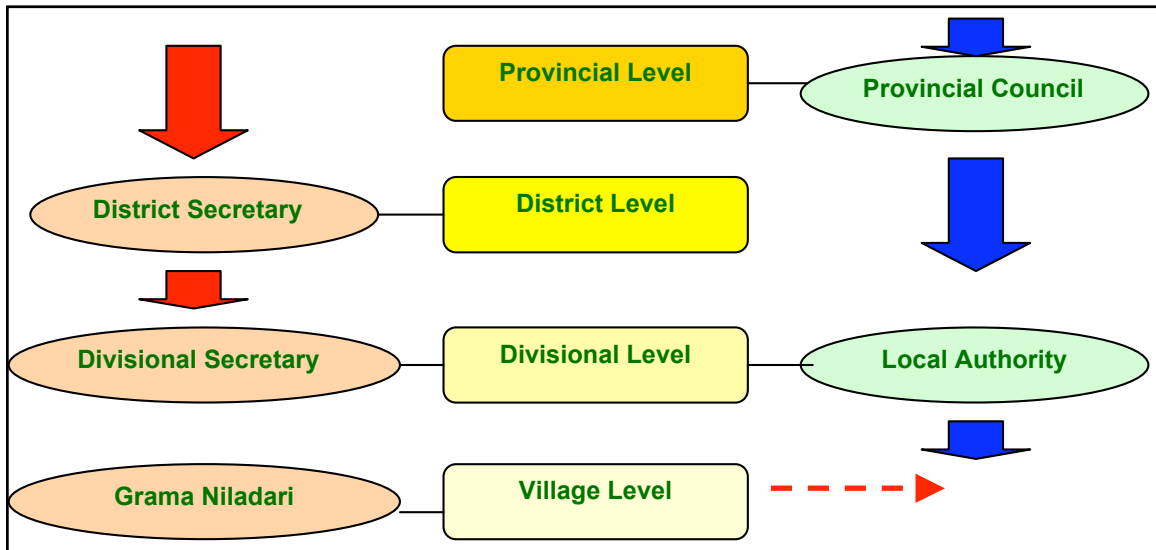
He said that various government administrative structures intermingle at the village level. This has confused the villagers or the people in the locality as to which institution they should approach to get things done. He provided the following diagram to show the various administrative structures that affect the lives of the local people

Figure 1: Politico-administrative Hierarchy in Sri Lanka.



He further explained that the Central Government of Sri Lanka has a bigger influence at village level than the local authorities. Figure 2 below shows the regional politico-administrative structure within which local authorities operate.

Figure 2: Regional Politico-administrative Structure in Sri Lanka



He pointed out that there is no effective link between rural people on one hand and the Las on the other, though they were established to empower regional communities and address their problems. He made the following suggestions to improve the link between the LAs and local communities.

- Institutionalized committee system at village level
- Smaller electoral units like wards within the local government system
- Citizen committees
- Closer interaction between local level officials and LA representatives on one hand and citizens' committees on the other

Presentation-III-The Role of Local Government in addressing Local Issues including Conflict Resolution

Mr. Dharmarathne, Deputy Director-Research, representing the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance, made his presentation on “Legal and Administrative Structures and issues relating to Local Governance.” He started his presentation with a brief introduction to the administrative structure of Sri Lanka. While the Central government and the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government and the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs are at the apex level, eight (08) Provincial Councils

under the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government operate at the regional level. On the other hand, 25 District Secretariats under the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs operate at a sub-regional level providing a link between the national and regional level structures. A provincial council comprises a governor, a chief minister and a board of ministers. He said that these two administrative systems operate in parallel, with little functional integration. The numbers of the local authorities are given in the Table below;

Table 1: Distribution of Local Councils by Province and Type

Province	MCs	UCs	PSs
Western	06	14	28
North Central	01	-	25
Central	03	06	33
Sabaragamuwa	01	03	25
Uva	01	02	24
North Western	01	03	28
Southern	02	05	42
North-East	03	09	65

There is a district secretariat in each of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka. And there are several divisional secretariat offices under each district secretariat.

The presenter also outlined the legal framework of local authorities. Focussing on Municipal Councils, he said that the Minister may, by order published in the Gazette,

- (a) Declare any area to be a Municipality
- (b) Redefine the geographical boundaries of the Municipality so declared

Under the existing Urban Council and Pradeshiya Sabha legislation also, the minister has considerable power. The minister may, by order published in the Gazette, declare any area, which by reason of its development or its amenities is urban in character, to be a town for the purposes of this ordinance and may define the administrative limits of the town so declared. The Minister may, by the same or any subsequent order, assign a name and designation to the Urban Council to be constituted under this ordinance for the town

so declared.. The minister has considerable powers with respect to Pradeshiya Sabhas as well.

Mr. Dhrrmaratne also touched on the functions of the local authorities in his presentation as follows;

- A Municipal Council constituted for each Municipality shall, subject to the powers reserved to or vested in any other authority by this Ordinance or by any other written law, be the local authority, within the administrative limits of the Municipality, charged with the regulation, control and administration of all matters relating to public health, public utility services and public thoroughfares, and generally with the protection and promotion of the comfort, convenience and welfare of the people and amenities of the Municipality.
- The Urban Council constituted for each town shall, subject to the powers reserved to or vested in any other authority by this Ordinance or by any other written law, be the local authority, within the administrative limits of the town, charged with the regulation, control and administration of all matters relating to public health, public utility services and public thoroughfares, and generally with the protection and promotion of the comfort, convenience and welfare of the people and amenities of the town.
- The Pradeshiya Sabha constituted for each Pradeshiya Sabha area shall be the local authority, within such area, and be charged with the regulation, control and administration of all matters relating to public health, public utility services and public thoroughfares, and generally with the protection and promotion of the comfort, convenience and welfare of the people and amenities of the area.

The people in the local areas have many needs that cannot be fulfilled by the LAs due to resource and other constraints. Some of these needs identified by the presenter were; lands, “Samurdhi”, pensions, garbage disposal, electricity, water, telecommunication, disease prevention, road maintenance and repairs, vehicle licensing, etc. To fulfil these

needs, LA's and the Divisional Secretariats need pool their resources together but this does not happen due to the bifurcation of administrative and political functions at local level.

The Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance (SLILG) is empowered to address various needs of LAs. It is a body established by an Act of Parliament, No. 31 of 1999 & commenced functioning with effect from 15th October 1999 under the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government. SLILG is the premier national Institution devoted to capacity building in Provincial Councils and Local Government through Research, Training and Consultancy, Dissemination of Information leading to innovative and effective Local Governance in order to support the aims of the devolution process in promoting Good Governance. The SLILG has several specific objectives. They are:

- Formulate and deliver programs of capacity building aimed at institutional strengthening of Local Government institutions in partnership with provincial Management Development Training Units (MDTU)
- Function as a resource centre on Local Governance providing technical information services for stakeholders
- Provide special services in the development of management systems and organizational change and
- Build the capacity of SLILG in order to enable it to provide advocacy and research support for strengthening institutions of Local Governance.

After the three presentations were made, there was an open discussion. Mr. Dhammika Mahendra said that always the governor, a key position at sub-national level, is controlled by the political parties or the President or the incumbent government. Mr. Rukshana Nanayakkara who represented the Transparency International said that some PSs have done a good job but no adequate publicity is given to them. Gareesha, representing the same organization said that they would try to find out why do the people tended to seek facilities from the central government. For example, people in general like if the central government addresses the electricity issue, etc. One of the participants said that the government should change the existing election system in general and LAs in particular. This method may help you all to take the public participation in governance. And also the

participants felt that the LAs should be given more powers by amending the constitution. Prof. Hettige said that some of the PSs can handle small scale projects operated in the area and if one PS cannot do it alone, they should establish partnerships with neighbouring local councils to undertake larger projects in such areas as transport, waste recycling and other social infrastructure.

Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi from the PAFREL said that the LAs should deliver a better service to their people to secure popular support. he also pointed out the need for addressing the problems relating to the LAs in Sri Lanka. Prof. Hettige further said that the some of the PSs that collect considerable taxes from the public should give a better service for the people. And also he said that the central government should allow LA's to control all the resources that fall within the administrative limits of the LAs. Mr. Nandasiri, Chairman, Sooriyawewa Pradeshiya Sabha, complain that this is not happening. He gave the example of the hot springs that fall within the jurisdiction of his council. The southern provincial council has taken them over and handed over them to a private contractor to manage it as a private, profit-making venture. As a result, the local council has no control over it or does not gain any revenue. However, now the local council has filed legal action against this move. He further pointed out that such actions on the part of higher authorities undermine local councils and cannot help improve the situation at local level He further said that he would never be able to contest in the national level elections as the cost of campaigning is prohibitive. Today a person contesting in provincial council elections might have to spend as much as six million rupees, an amount that he would never be able to find. But, at the PS level, it is not difficult he knows a lot of people, though canvassing is still quite tiring.

In the evening of the first day of the workshop, the participants were divided into three groups to discuss the various issues regarding the LAs and make recommendations to address the identified issues in the discussions. Three themes selected for the group discussions were as follows: a) *“Accountability and Transparency of Local Government Institutions”* (group 1), b) *“Community Participation in Local Governance”* (group 2),

and c) “*The Role of Local Government in Addressing Local Issues Including Conflict Resolution*” (group 3). Each group comprised of more than five members.

The group that dealt with the theme “*Accountability and Transparency of Local Government Institutions*” (group 01), discussed the question as to why *corruption is common in the LAs*? They identified three problems regarding the issue, namely, . lack of understanding on what activities are done by the LAs, language issues, and lack of training and human resource development. Furthermore, the group made a few recommendations in order to address these issues. These included: establishing committee system to elicit greater participation of community members, conducting programmes to improve the public awareness about LAs, and educate the community on the procedures of various services of the LAs to reduce the unnecessary delays.

The group two discussed the theme “*Community Participation in Local Governance*” broadly and considered community participation in local government and central government bodies. They identified three stages where community participation is needed, namely, planning, implementation, and also monitoring. The group felt that adequate community participation can be observed only when there is a committed leadership as well as when there is outside intervention of professional organisations or influential individuals. In general, they felt that there is no satisfactory level of community participation in the local government institutions. They made several recommendations to promote a reasonable level of community participation in local governance. Among them; consultation with divisional secretariat officers, establishing a system through which the LA s can consult various officers of local authorities as well as the central government institutions based in each DS divisions, establishing village level committees comprising the clergy; respectable civil society members and the members of trade associations, introducing a quota system to assure the representation of marginalised groups such as women, youth, the poor, disabled people in the various committees, initiating a public information mechanism on development activities occurring in the areas of the LAs, creating an information desk, regular village level consultation meetings, making maximum use of the existing powers of the LAs, and

finally creating awareness among the citizens about the activities and services of the LAs.

The group that dealt with the theme “*the Role of Local Government in addressing local issues including conflict resolution*” identified several factors that prevented the LAs from addressing the problems of local residents. Among them are: a) conflicts among various groups representing different ideologies within LAs, b) lack of proper coordination among the various groups at the village level and the LAs, c) LAs not having adequate powers to address various issues within its jurisdiction, d) citizens’ not having adequate knowledge about the activities of the LAs, e) LAs not having adequate power to supervise and monitor development activities occurring in their own areas and finally, f) LAs not having adequate resources to address the various problems of the citizens. Furthermore, the group also made a few suggestions. Among these were: introducing codes of ethics for citizens, officers and politicians) connected with the LAs, establishing GS (*Grama Sewaka*) division level committees, giving more powers to the LAs, initiating an information desk at the LA premises for citizens to get needed information, empowering LAs to supervise and coordinate development activities taking place in their administrative areas, giving more resources to LAs enabling them to address various burning problems of the people living in their areas.

After the group presentations, participants spent some time to prepare for the field visits scheduled for the following day. It was agreed that each group will visit one of the three locations selected in the vicinity of Hambantota and focus on all three issues in their selected locations. Groups were instructed to appoint a group leader and prepare for presentations after returning from field visits.

8th February 2009-Field Visits and the Presentations

As already agreed, the three groups of participants visited three selected locations. Group 1 went to Hambantota old town, group 2 visited Suriyawewa and finally, group 3 made a field visit to Hambantota New town. Hambantota old town was heavily damaged due to tsunami. Currently the town is undergoing a lot of changes due to the new harbour project initiated by the incumbent government with the assistance of the Chinese government .

Suriyawewa was the farthest location visited by participants. This is predominantly a farming community, engaged in the cultivation of rice, banana and *chena* crops. Hambantota new town comprises of people resettled due to tsunami and the harbour project.

After returning to the hotel following field visits, group leaders started making their presentations under the three broad themes we dealt with during the course of the workshop. The discussion started initially under the theme of “*Accountability and Transparency of Local Government Institutions.*” Group members who visited Suriyawewa started the discussion making the following observations. They felt that the people of Suriyawewa had no proper understanding of the nature and role of *pradeshiya sabhas* (PS), people have no access to information about the development activities initiated by the PS, and they also had no proper knowledge on how to get various from the PS. They referred to the case of a road construction project undertaken by the central government in the area coming under the Suriyawewa PS. The road construction was done without any consultation with the PS but people tended to believe that it was a project of the PS. The work of road construction was not well supervised and as a result the quality of the construction was very poor. But the contractor had been paid the full contracted amount. However, the people of the area put the blame on the PS for the short-comings of the project such as cracks that appeared on the tarred road. These situations indicate incidences of corruption and abuse of power. Furthermore, the people interviewed had felt that the activities of the PS are overlapping with the work of central government bodies while Suriyawewa PS has serious financial constraints. Finally the group members said that the people they interviewed were happy about garbage collection done by the PS. This is largely due to a waste recycling project initiated by the PS with the assistance of an NGO. Local people have further said that the officials attached to the Mahaveli Development Authority (that comes under a ministry of the central government) are highly corrupt but the local council cannot do anything about it.

The group of participants who visited Hambantota old town pointed out that the people they interviewed felt that the members of the Urban Council have a sense of

accountability towards the local people. They had both positive and negative ideas towards the UC. Some have told that the UC is really helpful to the people while some others have told that the UC is corrupt. On the other hand, Group member's who visited Hambantota new town said that the people they met did not think that the UC as a corrupt institution. They had told that "*they get things done without any problem when they visit the UC.*" On the other hand, they had accused the ministers and MPs of the central government for financial misuse and abuse of their power. The main problem that the people in the new town faced was that they were not clear to which local authority they should report their issues. They came largely from Hambantota UC area new town which now fall under Hambantota PS which has no experience in working with the business community. Furthermore the proposed Hambantota MC structure has aggravated their problem as none of the LAs are coming forward to address their issues by investing their resources for an area proposed to be included in the new MC. As a result of this situation no development activities were taking place in the area according to the people interviewed.

Next, the discussion on "*community participation in Local Governance*" commenced and participants who went to Suriyawewa said that they did not find any evidence of any community participation in development activities of the area. People were aware of PS's work such as repair of roads, fixing of street lamps, collection of garbage, etc. People did not like to go to the PS to discuss about development activities and make suggestions as to how things should happen assuming that the members of the PS do not wish to take into account such a contribution of the people. People were given many promises during the election campaign but these were not fulfilled afterwards. A more positive aspect that came to light was the willingness of the people to act as a pressure group. Group members who visited Hambantota old town had told that those who do social work were usually elected for the LAs and that they often do a good job of work for the people after their election. But the problem with many elected members of the UC as people observed was their lack of awareness about financial and administration regulations. This situation had been acting as a barrier for them to serve the people. They suggested that the government, local government authorities and the non-governmental organisation should

get together in organising training workshops for the elected members of the LAs on the above procedural matters. The members of the group felt that the elected members of the LAs had no of knowledge about participatory development approaches. On the other hand, the elected members of the LAs have to do development activities, have to collect varies taxes from the people and this demanded a training in resource mobilization and financial management. During the discussion, the Assistant Commissioner of Local Government in Hambantota pointed to the resource constraints of the LAs. The group members who visited Hambantota old town did not observe any evidence of peoples participation in local governance. They had many unsettled issues. Tsunami victims, and the people resettled as a result of the new harbour project had many unresolved issues regarding infrastructure and also the compensation etc. They had felt that the LAs and the central government institutions were very lethargic in addressing various issues that they face.

The last group discussion was on the *Role of Local Government in addressing local issues including conflict resolution*” using the information collected from all three field locations. Group members who visited Suriyawewa said that the people with whom they discussed had no proper knowledge on the role of members of parliament, elected representatives of provincial councils and of local government institutions. People expected the PS to fix street lamps, repair roads etc, and they did not realise that this was almost an impossible task for the LA’s due to resource constraints. As a result of this situation, the LAs have become very unpopular among the people. On the other hand, the members of the LAs too have given promises at election times without thinking about the difficulties they would face after the elections. The elected members in general were not aware of the financial regulations and Administrative regulations and as a result , they start unnecessary quarrels with the official’s attachd to LAs. People said that the Mahaveli Authority is very corrupt but still people feel that it is the duty of the elected members of LA (*podu manthriwaru*) is to bring this to the attention of the “big ministers” (*maha manthriwaru*) and eradicate the abuses. The people of Suriyawewa also felt the need of proper coordination between LAs and the other development agencies such as those of the central government or the NGOs when they do any development interventions in the area. Elaborating on this situation, a member of the group that visited

Suriyawewa said that the people of the area had complained to the President about problems created by a the mismanaged road construction project accusing the LA of misconduct but at the inquiry, it was found that the road construction was done by one of the INGOs and the PS had nothing to do with it This shows the lack of correct information to people. The members of the group felt that there were many issues created in the area as a result of not having proper coordination between the central government bodies and the LAs. When the central government wanted to do anything they just start the work without getting proper approval from the LAs. The central government is not responsible for the LAs where s the LAs are controlled from above. People in Sri Lanka in general have no proper understanding of the three layers of government, namely, the central government, provincial councils and the local government, and it is necessary to educate the people about this. Participants felt that such basic information should be incorporated into the school curriculum so that citizens will have understanding of existing governance structures of the country at an early age.

At the end of the discussion, Prof. Hettige pointed out that the Institute of Local Governance in Sri Lanka has understood many weaknesses identified by the participants based on their field visits. But the problem is that the implementation of reform proposals is slow. Ms. Bettina Meier of the Transparency International said that, as participants of this workshop, we must take some positive actions to make the public aware about the role of local government and their scope etc., through various projects and programmes that they implement at their institutions. Mr. M. A.Thassim, who represented Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce, said that they had decided to work with the LA's in the future. Assistant Commissioner of Local Government of the southern Province said that they have no adequate powers to address various administrative issues of the Las. This he identified as a major obstacle in improving local governance.

The workshop ended at 1.00p.m with a vote of thanks by Anton Piyarathne, a Senior Lecturer attached to the Open University of Sri Lanka who also functioned as the coordinator of the workshop.

Some of the Areas for further discussions

The participants of the workshop felt that there should be more attention on the following issues regarding the local government in Sri Lanka.

01. The discussions on corruption and malpractices of the Local Authorities stressed the need for further research on nature of them.
02. The participants were not happy about the understanding of rules and regulations by the rulers as well as the citizens. Therefore they do not adhere to the rules and regulations. This is one of the complex area should be studied further.
03. There were situations some LAs (local Authorities) had overcome the problems such as malpractices etc. It would be very much interesting to understand the aspirations of the people towards the LAs and how they are fulfilled by the LAs.
04. With the introduction of “Citizen Charters” for the LAs there is a slight improvement of the satisfaction of both the politicians as well as the citizens. This situation has to be understood by further discussions.
05. There were problems of the interventions of the central government over the issues of the Pradeshiya Sabhas, and similarly the intervention of the Provincial councils over the matters of Pradeshiya Sabhas. This situation should be understood by more qualitative research work.
06. It is very interesting that the local politicians try to balance the expectations of the voters as well as their existence (party). The politicians adopted various mechanisms to cope up with this situation. This situation was pointed out by the some local politicians participated at the workshop.
07. The role of the officials and the working culture is also having finally influence the out put of the Local Authorities. Therefore understanding the interventions of the officers or the role of officials should be understood well at the local level.

08. In general, understanding how the cultural elements have influenced the service delivery of the LAs is also one of the crucial areas that researchers should focus on. In the discussion on service delivery it was pointed out that some people get things faster than the others from the LAs.
09. How to make more people friendly, more transparent and accountable Local Government system is a complex issue. This should be studied further.
10. The role of the officials such as divisional secretary, assistant Divisional Secretary, Grama Niladari, in the local governance should be discussed further. The interventions of them may confuse service of the LAs.
11. The resource constraints of the local government authorities had been discussed often during the workshop. It is very essential to understand how far resource constraints have an impact over the service provision of the LAs.
12. The LAs play a key role in maintaining the peace, integrity, of the area. It is very vital to discuss the contribution of LAs towards this.
13. It is very significant if one can do a study on the income and expenditure of the LAs. In some cases the income sources of the LAs are owned by the central government or to the quiet influential administrative bodies such as the Provincial Councils. Analyzing these aspects one could understand capacity of the LAs.
14. It appeared that the most of the politicians newly joined have no clear idea about what their roles are. If a person has no idea about the expectation he or she may be able to deliver the job. Therefore understanding the knowledge of the Local Politicians at these levels about their role would be very useful to improve the situations of the LAs.
15. It is more practical if one can do an action research with a few selected local government agents on various selected aspects would really support in understanding the expectations of the people as well as the behaviour of the politicians etc.
16. In some instances sudden changes of the changes of the administrative areas or else planning for such changes have an impact on the lives of the people.