

SASNET presentation

CAPACITY BUILDING

Social Reconstruction in North and Northeast of Sri Lanka (Sida/Sarec programme)
2003-2007

Research leaders/coordinators:

Sri Lanka:

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Sweden:

Michael Schulz, Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University
(Padriğu)

Tentative activity plan

Collaborative undertakings between Peradeniya, Jaffna and Göteborg Universities.

The capacity building programme is constituted of the following three interrelated elements:

- MA & M. Phil programmes
- phd programme
- research

Overall objectives:

Developing capacities and skills in the university setting, among the junior staff members of the university departments, in areas of peace building and reconciliation. More specifically in the areas of repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced focusing on issues such as generating income and employment, dealing with land rights, rights to exploit natural resources, and civil rights by various ethnic groups, within a context of reinforcing and establishing ethnic neutrality and principles of plural society. The research program will be linked to a new program of teaching on regional planning, sociology of development and applied sociology at the post graduate level. One aim of the program is to generate in-depth empirical knowledge and theoretical understanding about war-to-peace transitions from a point of view of social, cultural, economic, and development perspectives.

The specific objectives are to:

- Examine theoretical and methodological issues related to social reconstruction in war-to-peace transitions;
- Carryout research on issues related to social reconstruction in war-to-peace transitions; and
- Generate policy-oriented information and procedures regarding social reconstruction in war-to-peace transition.
- Build educational as well as research capacities at the Universities (Peradeniya and Jaffna) involved in the programme.

Time period

The programme period lasts until the end of 2007. The intention is to apply for a second programme starting from 2008 until the end of 2011.

PhD programme

Six students are currently undergoing the training at the phd programme at Padrigu. Two students are from the Department of Sociology at Jaffna University and four are from the Department of Sociology at Peradeniya University. Nearly all students have completed the theoretical courses in the programme. Furthermore, the students have presented and completed their proposals and are accepted by the Swedish supervisor team. Data collection is completed and soon all six phd students have returned to Sweden in (since January 2006) and are conducting the data analysis, as well as are writing the thesis chapters. It is planned that the writing of first drafts should be completed in January 2007. These drafts will be handed over to the internal evaluation group. After the approval from the evaluation group the work to finalize the theses starts and the dissertation defence are planned to take place in September 2007. The idea is that these students will be future key players in building local MA and M. Phil programmes in peace and development research as well as contribute to the build up of a research data base on social reconstruction issues.

MA & M.phil programmes

Peradeniya University intends to build several courses in Peace and Development at the MA and M.phil levels. The idea is to enable an interdisciplinary course at the faculty level. A masters' level course on social reconstruction, peace and development will be introduced at the Faculty of Arts as a means of introducing peace and development and social reconstruction studies to the Faculty of Arts at Peradeniya. This programme will initially provide scholarships for 15 candidates chosen from among the applicants for M.Phil degree courses in the faculty. The candidates will be selected from among activists, planners, and NGO workers who carryout work in the area of social reconstruction, peace and development in the north and east in particular.

Research

In the programme the idea is to build up a research capacity in the field of social reconstruction, in particular in the war torn areas of North and Northeast of Sri Lanka. Several steps are going to be taken. Firstly, the idea is to collect data primarily in the North and Northeastern areas of Sri Lanka mainly in an inductive way. Research in the war torn areas has hardly taken place and there is a great need to collect data as well as build a joint database that the research community can share. Hence, for this purpose a public website for the reconstruction project will be completed. In this broad research theme an inter-disciplinary approach is required in order to understand/explain better the social reconstruction process.

Projects

Project (s)1

In the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, a study is being carried out on the displacement to understand the effects of the war and the disasters on displacement and poverty in the area. This study is being carried out with interviews and a survey to find out the situation in the Eastern Province. The studies that are being carried out in stages are conducted in different districts. After the data collection through the survey and interviews, a detailed report on the conditions will be written and a workshop / conference will be held in the Eastern Province to

discuss the findings with the stakeholders in the district, NGOs and the state departments. The intension of this conference is to set the ground for initiating a development plan for sustainable development in the districts to enhance ethnic harmony.

Project 2

This research project seeks to analyse the reconstruction process in war torn areas and how it is linked to the politics of the peace process initiated in Sri Lanka in 2002. The aim of the project is to analyse the reconstruction process in war torn areas and how it is linked to the politics of the peace process that was initiated in Sri Lanka in 2002. The research deals with three interrelated research questions:

- 1) In what ways do issues of reconstruction matter in the negotiations and interaction between representatives of the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE – as disputed issues and as opportunities for joint problem solving?
- 2) How do people at a grassroots level in war torn Sri Lanka experience the process of reconstruction and the issue of ‘peace dividend’?
- 3) How are top-level policies and discourses about reconstruction linked with the local level understandings and experiences, i.e. how do leaders communicate reconstruction issues to the grass roots and what are the possibilities for grass roots to articulate their needs and influence actors at a top level?

Budget: this project has a separate Sida/Sarec budget outside the capacity building programme. Michael Schulz is the research leader (including Camilla Orjuela).