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# **Livelihoods at Risk**

**Land Use and Coping Strategies of War-affected communities in the Trincomalee District**

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## Preface

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 is a joint venture of the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP), Sri Lanka and the Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural and Rural Development (CATAD) from Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. The study is funded by IFSP with the financial assistance of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and is carried out by an interdisciplinary Sri Lankan-German team of young researchers and practitioners.

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 explores socio-economic coping strategies and changes in land use pattern of conflict-affected communities in Trincomalee District. The study follows the livelihood system approach developed by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK.

The preliminary results of the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 are documented in the IFSP Working Papers 37 to 45. The different steps of knowledge generation along the consecutive research phases and the research results are presented for further discussion.

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## INTRODUCTION:<sup>1</sup>

### Background of the Study

Conflict is the overriding constraint to development in the North and East of Sri Lanka. While war has become normalcy and is experienced as a reality by people, it leaves people with hopelessness and frustration. How do people manage to survive in such an environment? It would be essential for various actors and agencies active in rehabilitation and development to gain a thorough understanding of how people cope with the prevailing conditions of a protracted war. The Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (ISFP) therefore commissioned the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 to explore socio-economic coping mechanisms of conflict-affected communities in the Trincomalee District with particular emphasis on land use pattern and on food and nutrition security.

This working paper presents the research results of the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001. The findings have been presented and discussed in a stakeholder dialogue process in Trincomalee, Peradeniya and Colombo in October 2001 and at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany in November 2001, involving public presentations, workshops with partner and IFSP staff, and discussion circles with selected academics and practitioners in Sri Lanka and Germany. The dialogue focused on several aspects: (i) operationalisation of research results into practice, (ii) consistency of research findings with other studies, (iii) suitability of livelihood system concept as an analytical and planning tool. This stakeholder dialogue is an important part of the activities of IFSP and CATAD with the aim to disseminate micro-level information about the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka to a wider range of key resource institutions, and at the same time, to feed their knowledge back into the research design of the ongoing activities of the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001.

The paper proceeds as follows: Starting with a brief description of the background of the civil war in Sri Lanka, it explains the objectives of the study and the theoretical framework of analysis: the concept of food and nutrition security (FNS) and the livelihood system approach (LSA). It describes briefly the research locations and elaborates one case study in more detail following the livelihood system model. The paper furthermore presents a three-pillar model of coping strategies and provides examples from the five research locations in the Trincomalee district. We furthermore look into how specific organisations cope in the context of the conflict. Finally, we will discuss how interventions can support sustainable livelihood strategies and where development agencies and projects should focus policies on.

### Research Context:

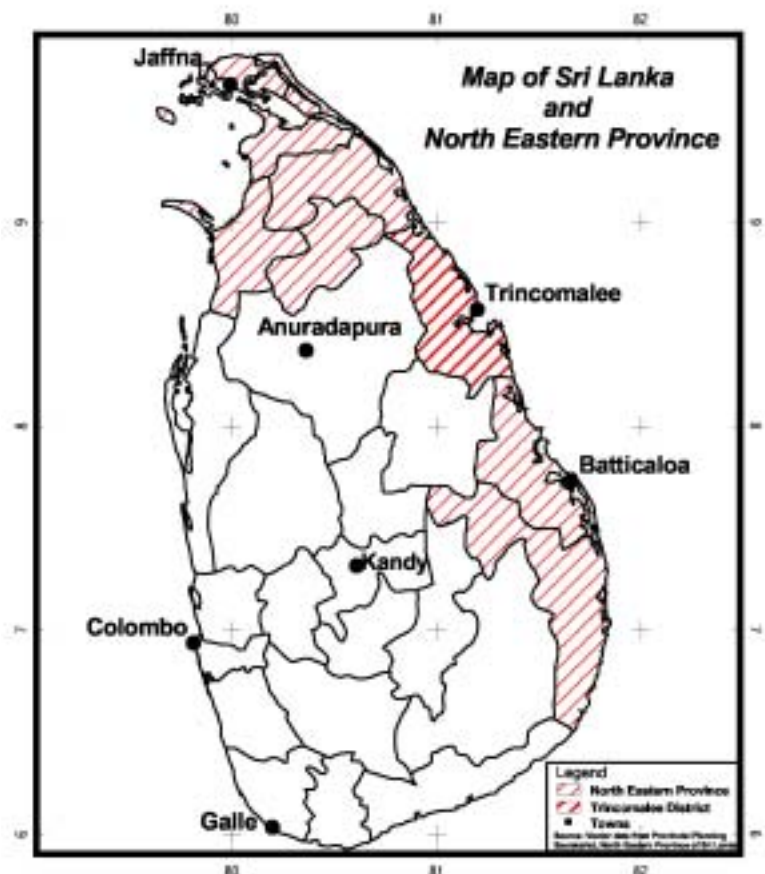
The civil war in Sri Lanka can be described as a complex (political) emergency: the conflict is embedded in, and is an expression of, existing social, political, economic and cultural structures (cf. Goodhand and Hulme 1999). It involves every dimension of society and the lives of the people in the conflict zones of Sri Lanka (mainly the Northeast). It is ethnicised or ethno-nationalist in nature, characterised by loyalty to one particular communal group, accompanied by strong antipathy towards other communal groups living within the same state.

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<sup>1</sup> Valuable comments and suggestions are gratefully acknowledged from Rohini M. Singarayer.

The Trincomalee District is located in the eastern part of the Northeast Province (NEP) of Sri Lanka, which is the war zone of the island. The district is ethnically mixed, being home to populations from all three major communal groups, viz. Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils. Warfare in the district has been extremely divisive with both conflict parties, the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pitting the communities living there against each other (O'SULLIVAN 1997). Violence in the east was not limited to fighting between these two, but involved sporadic clashes between different communal groups, especially in the early 1990s between the Tamil and Muslim populations. Though the civil war aggravated in the other districts of the North-East from 1990, Trincomalee district had experienced many sporadic clashes between Tamil and Sinhala communities in 1980s. Agricultural production has been disrupted and declined substantially due to insecurity and fear of cultivation: many paddy fields are inaccessible due to the security situation. Mobility of goods and persons is disrupted through a system of checkpoints.

18 years of conflict and civil war in the area have resulted in an alarming degree of malnutrition and impoverishment (REINHARD & KRÄMER 1999). Houses, village infrastructure and the production base are destroyed. Basic social facilities, such as health services and education, are inadequate. The severely restricted local economy prevents the individual from approaching opportunities. Particularly affected are households that depend on fishing, small-scale farming and daily wage labour. The vulnerability of female-headed households is especially striking. Many families recently returned from refugee camps to their home villages and are without adequate means of livelihood. The prevailing destabilising security situation is a serious constraint for long-term oriented development co-operation.



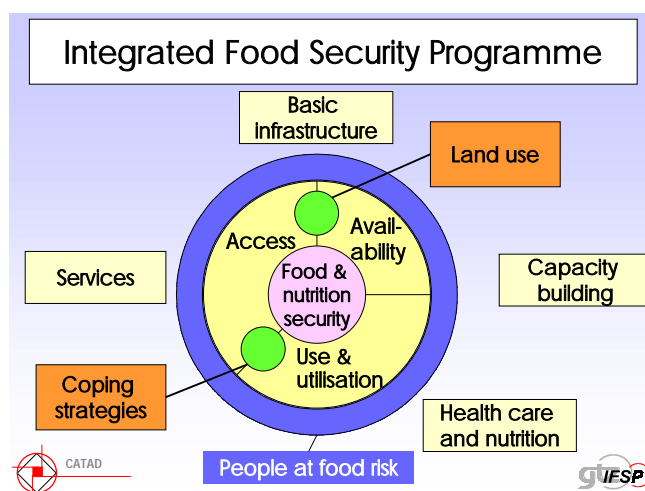
## FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS: LIVELIHOODS IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

### The Concept of Food and Nutrition Security:

Food security is often reduced to a problem of food production. Amartya Sen argued (Sen, 1981) that people might be starving even though sufficient food is locally available. Malnutrition and starvation is often more a problem of purchasing power or other entitlements to food than one of availability. O'Sullivan (1997) has extended Sen's market entitlement concept and includes non-market entitlements, viz. public entitlements provided by the government (services in education, health and relief) and civil entitlements (assistance provided to population by non-governmental organisations institutions). The concept of food and nutrition security (FNS) goes even beyond the entitlement approach and includes aspects of how food is used in quality and quantity and looks into intra-household food distribution (Reinhard and Wijayarathne 2000).

The German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) subsequently distinguishes three dimensions of food security (BMZ 1998):

- (i) *Availability* of food at all times (is sufficient food locally produced or imported to be available at local markets?)
- (ii) *Access* to food at all times (do households have the purchasing power or other entitlements to buy food?)
- (iii) *Use and utilisation* of food according to good dietary standards (is the food nutritious and are people in a status of health to absorb it?)



Since 1998, the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) provides support services in all three dimensions of food and nutrition security, viz. rehabilitation of infrastructure, capacity building of agricultural support services, and through health and nutrition awareness programme. The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 focused on two main aspects of food and nutrition security: (i) How do people manage to secure their food and income requirements (coping strategies)? and (ii) How does the conflict affect land use patterns with regard to land use rights and consequently, land resource utilisation, which determines regional food availability as well as household access to food?

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 aimed at enhancing understanding of IFSP and partner institutions in two key research questions:

- (1) How do people cope with the conflict situation and the involved risk?
- (2) How do people and institutions deal with the changing land use pattern evolving from the conflict?

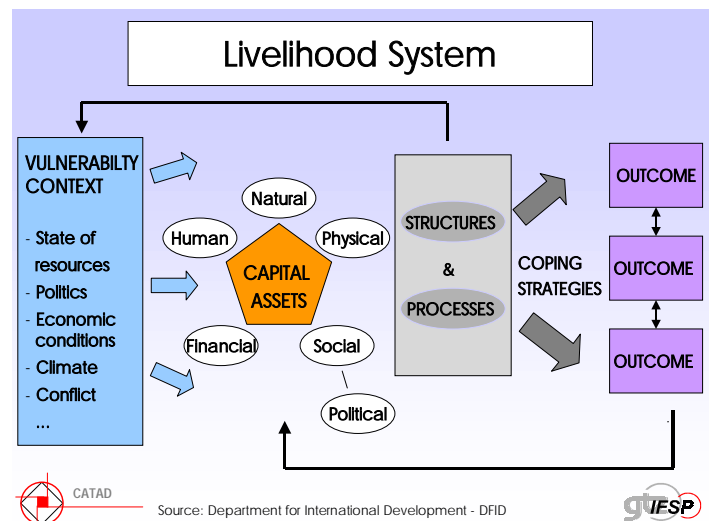
The research subject of socio-economic coping strategies mainly addresses the interface between the dimensions of access to food and of use & utilisation: How do people manage to secure their food requirements and how are they making use of the food in an insecure environment shaped by armed conflict? It will also look into the dimension of food availability by addressing the production side of farming systems. At this point, land use comes in as a particularly important aspect of availability of food: what farming systems are commonly practised and how do they provide people with income (access to food) or subsistence (availability of and access to food). Land use covers the aspect of economic land resource utilisation and of land use rights, which determine whether or not people are ready for long-term investment in land resources.

### The Livelihood Systems Approach (LSA):

The livelihood systems approach (LSA) is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities of development and is promoted by the British Department for International Development (DFID).<sup>2</sup> The LSA could be useful to further understand the mechanisms in livelihoods, which determine household food and nutrition security.

An important strength of the livelihood system approach is that it emphasises people's potentials in a holistic way rather than stressing problems, constraints and needs. It understands that livelihoods and institutions that influence and shape livelihoods, are dynamic. And it looks at the linkages between what we observe at the micro-level and how macro-level policies impact on the situation of the micro-level. A 'livelihood focused' development approach would aim at removing constraints to the realisation of potentials and building strengths of people. This is very much in line with current thinking of the Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP).

The livelihoods systems approach is a particularly useful analytical tool to observe and understand behavioural pattern of people and communities in complex political emergencies, i.e. protracted social and ethnicised civil wars and conflicts. It does not perceive communities as vulnerable and helpless victims, but looks into their coping strategies in the existing frame conditions (*vulnerability context*). The vulnerability context contains the natural, social, economic, political and cultural frame conditions, which determine the life of people. These factors, on the other hand, can hardly be influenced by a single villager or community itself. This, however, does not mean that the vulnerability context was static. It is dynamic and changing over time.



<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion see Scoones 1998; Carney 1998; Chambers & Conway 1992.

Having the difficult and challenging frame conditions in mind, the livelihoods approach looks into the household resources (5 *capital assets*: physical, natural, human, financial and social) and attempts to trace how people combine their assets (*coping strategies*) in order to arrive at certain results (*outcomes*). Apart from the vulnerability context, transforming *structures and processes* will influence and shape behavioural pattern of people. What 'structures' (institutions: organisations, laws, policies) are present in the livelihood context and how are these structures performing and acting ('processes'). Processes would thus refer to the actual institutional arrangements (rules of the game, (dis-)incentives).<sup>3</sup> In complex political emergencies, we can often observe a huge gap between laws and policies and actual behaviour of the responsible structures in enforcing them. Therefore, the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 differentiates more between what are the official institutions (structures: organisations, laws and policies) and how these are actually followed or by-passed through informal arrangements (processes). Transforming structures and processes are critical in determining who gains access to which assets and define the actual value of certain assets. Markets and legal restrictions have a profound influence on the extent to which one capital asset can be converted into other types of capital assets.

### **Box 1: The Five Capital Assets:**

#### **Natural capital:**

The natural resource stock from which resource flows useful for livelihoods are derived (e.g. land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, environmental resources)

#### **Human capital:**

The skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health important to the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies.

#### **Physical capital:**

The basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy, and communications) and the production equipment and means, which enable people to pursue their livelihoods.

#### **Financial capital:**

The financial resources which are available to people (whether savings, supplies of credit or regular remittances or pensions) and which provide them with different livelihood options.

#### **Social capital (with political capital):**

The social resources (networks, membership of groups, relationship or trust) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods. Political capital as sub-component of social capital refers to access to wider institutions of society, in particular alliances with local or regional power holders (civil, formal & informal, militant).

(Adapted from Scoones 1998, further developed by IFSP-CATAD 2001)

<sup>3</sup> At this point, we deviate slightly from the DFID definition, which distinguishes structures as (organisations, from layers of government through to private sector in all its guises) and processes (policies, laws, rules of the game and incentives).

### Vulnerability and Risk:

What is particularly at stake for livelihood systems in complex political emergencies? The major effect of war on livelihood systems is an increase in uncertainty and risk. In a vulnerability context shaped by random violence and the rule of armed forces and gangs, it can become a risk of life to continue livelihood activities based on agriculture or fisheries: paddy lands are partly in insecure areas close to the jungle (and thus under control of LTTE), while the security forces impose restrictions on fishing due to activities of the sea tigers. Furthermore, people have experienced displacement, having to flee homes to the jungle or other areas of Sri Lanka during sudden eruption of fighting or violence.

It seems that the lack of stability be a main feature of a CPE such as the civil war in Sri Lanka. According to the vulnerability concept, households in CPE face three elements of livelihood risks (adapted from Chambers 1989, Bohle 1993):

- (i) *exposure to crises, stress and shocks*: In CPE, political shocks are the most prominent feature, while we can also observe long-term declining trends (dilapidation of infrastructure, decline of agricultural production).
- (ii) *Inadequate coping strategies*: Civilians have very limited possibilities to cope with severe consequences of violence and fighting (political shocks). The main strategy seems to be leaving the arena of struggle (displacement, migration) by those who have the means to do so.
- (iii) *Severe consequences*: The shocks and crises, households experience in CPE, seriously harm the recovery potential of households to prevent a deterioration of their (re-) productive potential. A reduced (mentally, socially and economically degraded) situation becomes normalcy.

In such times of uncertainty and distress, people might rather concentrate on short-term survival than on sustainable management of natural resources. It is therefore essential to assess the *feedback loops* (positive and negative impacts) of the different livelihood outcomes on the capital assets, and in the longer term on structures and processes. While resource management tends to emphasise the environmental effects of coping strategies and outcomes for the livelihood system, it is equally important to look into the social, economic and political feedback loops to the household capital assets (positive as well as negative). In CPE, a conflict impact assessment could be useful to elaborate how certain coping strategies and outcomes might contribute to deepen ethnic grievances and thus causes of conflict, while other outcomes might strengthen civil society and thus local capacities for peace.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Methods and Methodology

The research team followed the concept of action-and decision-oriented research (ADR) developed by the Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural and Rural Development (CATAD) at Humboldt University of Berlin (cf. Nagel & Fiege 2001). ADR aims at providing practitioners with operational, i.e. action-oriented, information to facilitate planning, implementation and evaluation tasks: the concept is closely linked with the principles of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) and focuses on explorative and iterative research approaches. Furthermore, the IFSP-CATAD Project places emphasis on stakeholder dialogue (communication with external resource institutions) and on capacity building of IFSP and partner staff (internal learning). The research team combined young researchers and practitioners with various disciplinary backgrounds from Sri Lanka and Germany to enhance inter-cultural and interdisciplinary teamwork.

The research methods were mainly qualitative involving group discussions with various social groups in the communities and informal village walks. Interviews with households were the key to investigate socio-economic coping strategies of people. Wherever appropriate, selected RRA tools were used in group discussions. The information was complemented through data from key informants. The research teams followed a checklist of research questions and formed two thematic sub-groups, one focussing on household strategies and one on land use rights.

### Limitations of the Study:

The IFSP-CATAD Project mainly employed qualitative research methods focusing on understanding behavioural pattern within the limited time frame of three months. The sample of villages and interviews conducted is relatively small. IFSP-CATAD did not conduct a large-scale questionnaire survey. Consequently, we do not intend to claim the research results as representative for the Trincomalee district or even the Northeast Province. We rather understand that we point at spotlights and describe and analyse observations arising from the case studies. The emphasis is on interactive learning with IFSP staff and partners to derive appropriate project intervention strategies.

Researching in complex political emergencies places certain limitations on the scope of the study. In order to 'do no harm'<sup>4</sup>, the research team had to limit their area of investigation in particular with regard to the role of conflict and militant parties in the local economy and social life in order to continue the project activities in volatile but needy areas and to protect the Sri Lankan team members from retaliatory action of concerned parties. The volatile security situation furthermore restricted the time available for conducting village studies.

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<sup>4</sup> The 'do no harm' concept is a framework for development aid to avoid negative, unintended effects of project interventions (Anderson 1999). The same principle should be applied for research studies carried out in conflict regions.

## RESEARCH VILLAGES: VULNERABILITY AND TRENDS

### Village Sketches: Vulnerability, Income Sources and Trends

The research team carried out qualitative village studies in five locations of the Trincomalee District. The locations were selected according to several criteria, viz. proximity to borderline of cleared and uncleared area (risk dimension), while taking different agro-economic and ecological zones, different levels of poverty and the three communal groups into consideration. Furthermore, the team selected villages where IFSP has been working in the past and villages where IFSP is planning to work in future. In the context of an ethnicised political environment, the selection of research locations can itself become a political agenda.

**Table 1: Village Sketches – Vulnerability, Income Sources and Trends<sup>5</sup>**

	Kalyanapura	Kumpurupitty	Vaddam	Menkamam Dehiwaththa*	Iththikulam
<b>Vulnerability context</b>	Sinhalese border village	Tamil village in a non-stabilised area with onion boom	Muslim border village at coastal strip	High tension border village with land disputes	Uncleared area with poor infrastructure
<b>Main income source</b>	Paddy, home guards, wage labour	Wage labour, onion cultivation	Fishing, Middle East employment	Paddy, wage labour, Home guards*	Highland cultivation, wage labour
<b>Key trend</b>	Fragile prosperity on the fringe of power	Missing the onion boom?	Squeezed between the lines	Grievances over land	Turning threats into opportunities?

Table 1 elaborates village sketches of the five research locations and discusses the vulnerability context, main income sources and key trends. The research team observed that depending on the different contexts, the trends in the five locations differed considerably:

- (i) In *Kalyanapura*, paddy farmers could safeguard a *fragile prosperity in the fringe of power*. Even though this Sinhalese settlement village suffered from LTTE attacks in the past, villagers still dispose of a reasonable economic base (paddy cultivation, home guard employment), because they can count on the support of influential politicians, powerful administrators and the armed forces.

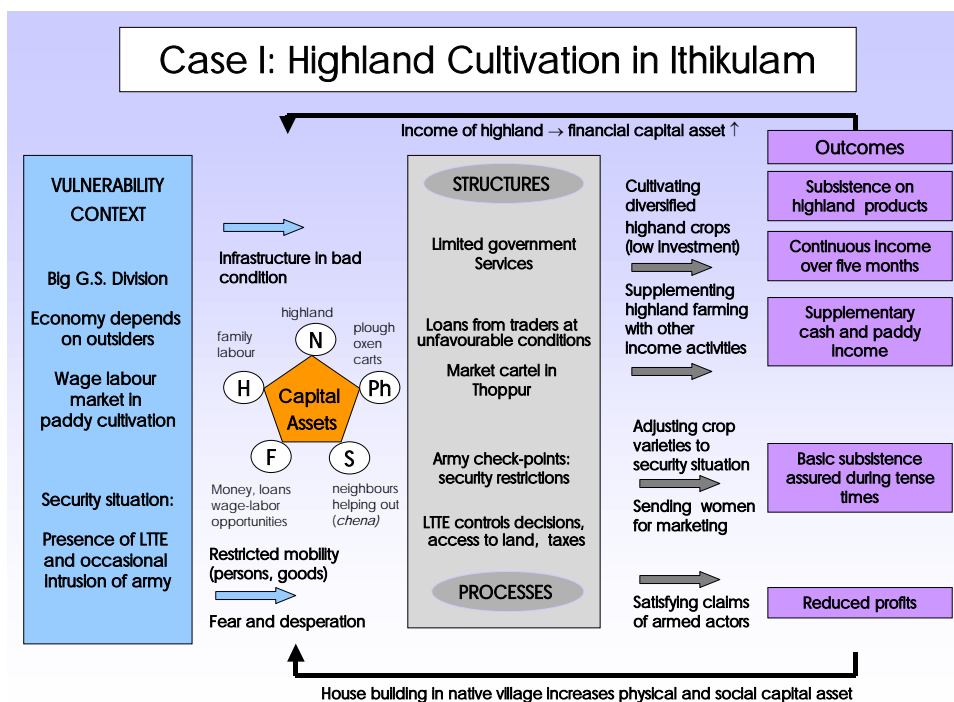


<sup>5</sup> Detailed village profiles are available, cf. Devarajah et al. 2001; Dharmarajah et al. 2001; Flämig et al. 2001; Ziebell & Ziegler 2001.

- (ii) Are villagers from *Kumpurupitty missing the onion boom* in Nilaveli area? Many landowners in this village lease their land out to tenants who cultivate onions and reap the high profits, while the landowners remain poor.
- (iii) Fishermen in *Vaddam* keep a low economic and political profile: *Squeezed between the lines* (army - navy and LTTE), many households are reluctant to invest in boats and rely on remittances from Middle East employment.
- (iv) *Grievances over land* have increased tensions between the Tamil village of *Menkamam* and the Sinhalese settlement of *Dehiwaththa*.
- (v) In *Ithikulam*, displaced farmers *converted threats into opportunities*: highland cultivation provides a reliable household income and enabled farmers to rebuild houses in their traditional villages and thus re-establish social capital.

Livelihood System of Highland Cultivation in Ithikulam (uncleared area)<sup>6</sup>

What are the implications of the vulnerability context for livelihoods of people? The following chart elaborates the example of a village in uncleared area and places the different elements into the livelihood model. Villagers in Ithikulam originate from an ancient village, Sreenivasapuram, which they had to leave due to the security situation. Due to a lack of alternatives, villagers engaged in highland rainfed cultivation.<sup>7</sup>



The vulnerability context of the village is shaped by two major factors: dependence on outside economic actors and presence of both conflict parties, which restricts the mobility of people and goods and has triggered fear and desperation. On the other

<sup>6</sup> Uncleared area refers to those areas in the district under the predominant control of the LTTE. Entry to these areas requires a pass from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence.

<sup>7</sup> For more detail cf. Ziebell & Ziegler 2001.

hand, the irrigation schemes in the surrounding areas provide good opportunities for wage labouring in paddy fields. How can people combine their household resources (5 capital assets) to carry out livelihood activities (coping strategies)? We can distinguish two main coping strategies: one is economic coping, while the second one focuses on dealing with the security situation (political coping).

As a main agricultural activity and income source, households cultivate diversified highland crops, which bears several advantages in the given context: highland cultivation demands lower investment and reduces thus the dependence on loans, which are only available to unfavourable conditions (high interest rates or dependence on traders). This allows households to secure subsistence on highland crops and a continuous income over the cultivation period of five months. Furthermore, households engage in complementary income activities, in particular wage labouring on paddy fields in neighbouring villages in cleared area, thus supplementing the cash and paddy income. Highland cultivation allows sufficient flexibility in household labour allocation, since women and children also work on the fields, a feature, which is uncommon in paddy cultivation.

How are villagers adjusting to tense security situations? Some households change their cropping pattern and cultivate corn (maize) in tense times, since they can more easily store this crop and thus wait for marketing, until the security situation eases again. Another coping strategy is to send preferably women to the market, which is on the other side of the borderline in cleared area, since men are afraid of harassment by the armed forces. These coping strategies seem to allow households to secure a basic subsistence even during tense periods. Finally, villagers tend to satisfy claims of armed actors (taxation, bribery) as a precondition for carrying out livelihood activities in these areas, thus accepting reduced profits.

With regard to land use rights, only few farmers possess legal documents for land titles. Nevertheless, people feel that their land is secure, since all villagers know from each other who cleared which land and neighbours can therefore stand as witness in case of disputes. Meanwhile, land is informally split by dowry and fragmented. However, informants clearly pointed out that LTTE is controlling the clearing of land for cultivation and enforces rules on the use of jungle resources (e.g. firewood collection). Nevertheless, villagers also approached the cultivation officer (CO) in order to apply for permit – and subsequently grant – titles for their land. It seems that farmers seek title documents from both parties in order to be on the safe side regardless of who will be the future power holder in the area.

In the case of Ithikulam, villagers could convert an externally imposed threat (conflict) into a new economic opportunity: highland cultivation ensures a reliable income and has enabled some of the villagers to invest in house building in their village of origin, thus re-establishing their physical and social capital. Tenant paddy cultivators in the surrounding villages, on the other hand, reported that they cultivated at very low profits due to the high cultivation costs imposed on them due to more expensive inputs (transport to uncleared area) and unfavourable loan and marketing conditions (traders' cartel in Thoppur). In most years, yields are only sufficient for subsistence and hardly provide additional cash income for households. The livelihood system approach points to the necessity of analysing all important factors and their interplay, and how these determine livelihood strategies and outcomes instead of considering only one dominant factor, viz. the conflict.

# COPING STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

## Three Pillars of Coping Strategies:

In the livelihood system model, coping strategies defines the behaviour of people in a given vulnerability context: How do they combine their capital assets and make use of structures and processes in order to carry out certain livelihood activities which contribute to securing their living?

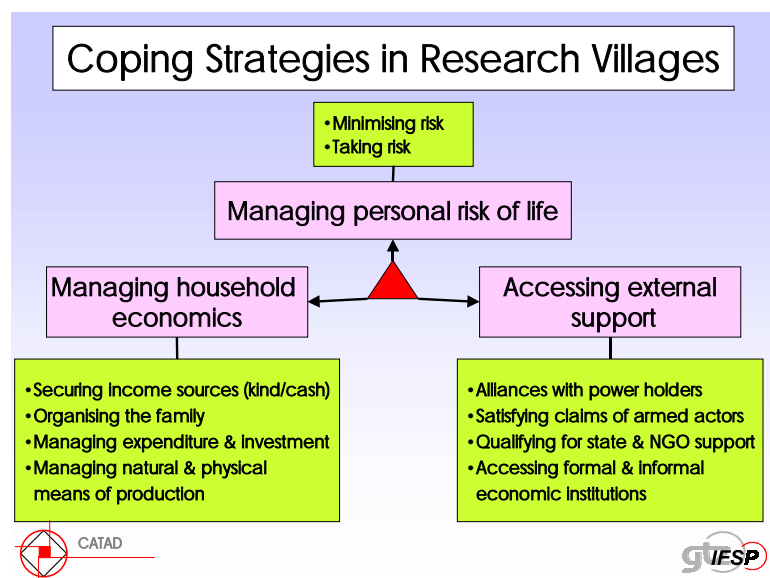
### Box 2: Definition of Coping Strategies:

How people combine their capital assets to carry out livelihood activities in order to achieve food security and to sustain their livelihoods.

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We will now look at common trends and particularities in the coping strategies of the five research locations. Out of the complex qualitative data on behavioural pattern, livelihood activities and coping strategies, the research team identified three pillars of coping strategies:

- (i) *Managing personal risk of life* looks into how people cope with the increased probability of negative consequences for personal lives imposed by the violent environment of the civil war.
- (ii) *Managing household economics* identifies different strategies of organising the capital assets within a household.
- (iii) *Accessing external support* discusses how individuals or communities make use of structures and processes, in particular, how they access or influence political and military actors.



## First Pillar: Managing Personal Risk of Life:

The first pillar assesses how individuals and communities adapt their survival strategies to the increased risk of life due to the civil war. In most cases, people followed various strategies in order to minimise risk. However, in certain circumstances, the pressure of poverty forced some of them to deliberately take a personal risk in carrying out economic activities to secure income:

- ✓ A common strategy was to *leave the residence or cultivation temporarily or completely*: Many villagers have migrated out of the area. Often those, who are remaining are those who lack the means to start a new life in a new location. Apart from that, we could observe that in the two Sinhalese research villages, many farmers resided with relatives in the peaceful zones of Sri Lanka and only returned back during the cultivation period. It was also common

practice to send children to other towns for schooling in safe areas and to offer a better education, where they stay with relatives.

- ✓ In Kalyanapura, a Sinhalese border village, some farmers *hired Muslim wage labourers for harvesting*, because this ethnic community is less susceptible to attacks from LTTE.
- ✓ In times of tension, villagers in Ithikulam (uncleared area) preferred to *send women and elders through checkpoints*, since men are afraid of being harassed by the armed forces.<sup>8</sup>
- ✓ In the two Sinhalese research villages, *farmers worked in groups on the field* in order to reduce the risk of LTTE attacks or kidnapping. Furthermore, the army protected field work in tense times. However, farmers can only work on the fields during daytime which reduces their available working hours during cultivation periods considerably.

On the other hand, poverty urged some to take a high risk:

- ✓ Fishermen from Vaddam, a Muslim community, occasionally violate the security zones for fishing imposed by the navy, when they expect a big catch in the particular area: They take the risk for a high economic gain.
- ✓ Children of poor widows in Ithikulam take a high risk and collect firewood in the jungle, even though entering these areas is dangerous due to wild animals and presence of armed actors (army and LTTE).

These risk minimisation or risk taking strategies can be clearly linked to the specific situation of the protracted conflict and the society of violence in the Trincomalee district.

### Second Pillar: Managing Household Economics

The second pillar looks into how people combine, adjust and rearrange their household resources, the five capital assets, in order to carry out economic activities. We distinguish four sub-categories:

#### *(1) Securing income (in cash or kind)*

- ✓ *Migrating for income opportunities* is a widespread coping strategy, which is common in all poor rural areas of Sri Lanka (cf. Dunham & Edwards 1997; Shanmugaratnam 1999; World Bank 2000). We can distinguish between migration to the Middle East and temporary labour migration. Especially women go abroad to work as housemaids. In a few cases, children were sent to towns, such as Trincomalee, to work as housemaids in order to live in a safe place, and to earn a small complementary income for the family. Labour migration to paddy or onion cultivation areas is a common strategy which provides considerable income during a limited period of the year. In many cases, even tenant or landowners farmers complement their farming activities with income from wage labouring.

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<sup>8</sup> This coping strategy was also reported from Batticaloa, cf. Goodhand & Lewer 1999.

- ✓ *Farmers confine themselves to a few key income sources*, since the conflict situation has reduced their choice and opportunities: In many cases, jungle resources are not accessible, cattle have been lost in the past violent incidence. In Kalyanapura, villagers stated that they have sufficient income from home guard employment and thus limited interest in livestock keeping. Crop diversification on paddy lands is hardly practised, which is a common trend in Sri Lanka despite various government programmes to promote other field crops (OFC) in paddy fields.
- ✓ *Brewing illicit liquor* is an illegal strategy of some vulnerable, especially female-headed households (widows), to secure their income. In some research villages, the impact of liquor consumption was striking: alcoholism is widespread and demonstrates negative effects in the form of domestic violence, reduced health and ability or willingness to work. Even though power holders and government officials are aware of the problem, they are unable to take action against the illegal liquor production, even the LTTE avoids preventing widows of Ithikulam from liquor brewing.
- ✓ *Home guard services* provide steady and significant cash income (approx. LKR 5000) to Sinhalese farmers in border villages. Home guards replace the armed forces during the night to defend their village from LTTE attacks. The result is an artificial cash inflow into the village economy. Farmers have few incentives to diversify their farming activities.
- ✓ *Firewood selling* is a profitable in uncleared area. However, LTTE restricts the scope of firewood collection in the jungle, while some firewood remains with the armed forces when firewood traders pass checkpoints (bribery).

(2) *Organising the Family:*

- ✓ Households in Ithikulam in uncleared areas transferred *full responsibility of decision-making to women, when husbands are away* due to security reasons or for temporary labour migration. Women then decide themselves about crop pattern, marketing and expenses.
- ✓ *Children become involved in highland cultivation* in Ithikulam (uncleared) to support their parents, especially when one family labourer has left the household temporarily for economic activities. Furthermore, young men often return back to their families in tense times for security reasons and then support their family in highland cultivation, while female household members or elders pass checkpoints to the markets.
- ✓ *Sharing labour with neighbours in cultivation* was a traditional practice. The trends how this tradition still plays a role in farming vary considerably in the research villages: In the Sinhalese border village Kalyanapura, neighbourhood support and group work increased as a means of protection against LTTE attacks. In the Tamil village Kumpurupitty, on the other hand, displacement and out-migration of a considerable number of villagers weakened social bonds and neighbourhood networks and help stopped to function.
- ✓ *Division of labour has not changed significantly*. Villagers stated that in times of necessity, households relax social norms and traditional gender-based division of labour. However, families would in most cases return to their traditional pattern as soon as the security situation becomes more relaxed

again. It seems that variations in gender relations are therefore mainly temporarily, imposed by outside forces without substantial impact on long-term gender relations.

### (3) *Managing Expenditure and Investment:*

- ✓ *Investment choices:* Trends are contradictory in how and where households set priorities in investment. It was a common trend in most villages that households preferred investment in moveable items (jewellery, TV etc.), which could be transported in times of displacement. However, in two research locations (Vaddam, Ithikulam), many households invested in house construction, even though both villages are close to the borderline between cleared and uncleared area. This observation surprised the research team, which would have expected the contrary investment strategy in these unsafe areas. Furthermore, in Vaddam, villagers invested in house construction (from cash remittances of overseas employment), but were reluctant to invest in productive fishing equipment to avoid taxation and loss of investment (armed actors confiscate equipment occasionally).
- ✓ *Exchanging labour among tenants instead of employing wage labourers* in order to reduce cultivation costs in times of distress and economic hardship.
- ✓ *Degrading social status* is a strategy in times of hardship: households cut down their budget for entertainment, ceremonies and luxury items. This seems to be a common coping strategy of poor households, when facing economic stress or crisis.
- ✓ *Using informal food markets:* The security restrictions of transporting food items into uncleared and semi-cleared areas forces people to adopt a flexibility in handling food markets. They are smuggling food into these areas, exchange restricted food items among neighbours and convert food from dry rations into cash.
- ✓ *Shopping on credit* is a strategy to overcome the low income periods, when income from either agricultural production or wage labouring is not accessible. In some cases, shop owners or *mudalalis* do not insist on claiming back the full amount of a loan, and thus oblige poor villagers to stick to them for marketing products.

### Third Pillar: Accessing External Support

Households and individuals access and influence various strategic actors in order to derive external support. In the model of the livelihood system, this strategy refers to structures and processes and how these, on the one hand, shape behavioural patterns of households, while, on the other hand, households deliberately make use of them for their advantages. It is important to note that the political capital of households, which we defined as access of households (or communities) to power holders differs considerably according to the ethnicity. In Trincomalee, this means that Muslims and Sinhalese dispose of networks with politicians (3 MPs are Muslim, one MP is Sinhalese) and with the armed forces, while the Tamil population are better rooted within the district and provincial administrative apparatus and could also bring in LTTE as a potential means of threat. It was observed with concern that this system of politico-economic patronage continues to fuel ethnic grievances and dividing lines.

We discuss three sub-categories of the third pillar. While (1) Alliances with power holders is an active strategy of establishing networks for support, (2) satisfying claims of armed actors is a passive strategy of reacting towards forced claims from violent groups.

*(1) Alliances with power holders*

- ✓ Villagers (as individuals) seek *good relationship with government officials for special advantages*, e.g. to receive resettlement funds, Samurdhi stamps or for land permits. Households in uncleared areas largely lack this strategy, since the administrative system is hardly functional in these regions.
- ✓ *Creating networks with politicians and powerful administrators* is a powerful tool of some communities and individuals in order to impose their claims on others or to gain an advantaged position in the allocation of funds, the alienation of land etc.
- ✓ *Seeking alliances with armed forces* is a prerequisite for larger economic activities, such as trading in order to enjoy a more relaxed handling at checkpoints. In Kalyanapura, farmers receive protection from the army during field work close to the borderline.
- ✓ *Deliberate non-alliance*: In two cases (Vaddam, Ithikulam), villagers avoided to co-operate with either side, since they feared the pressure from the other side, should they alliance with one conflict party. Both villages are close to the borderline.

*(2) Satisfying claims of armed actors*

- ✓ Villagers generally fulfil all claims from armed actors, be it enforced taxes or bribes from either conflict party. However, they also have developed some tricks of by-passing taxation by playing down their economic status and other strategies.

*(3) Qualifying for state and NGO support*

- ✓ *Hiding economic facts* was a common strategy in all villages: interviewees play down their social and economic status, income and belongings in order to fulfil eligibility criteria for relief, welfare and project support from various agencies. In one case, villagers even reported that they displaced shortly, even though the security situation had eased again, in order to qualify for resettlement aid from the government.
- ✓ Trends are contradictory with regard to *how communities use and establish community-based organisations (CBO) as a means of attracting and addressing government agencies and NGOs*. In the Sinhalese village Kalyanapura, the strong and well-established farmer organisation with a highly reputed president could establish close links with powerful administrators and politicians, which helped them to defend their interests and to attract government support. In other cases, displacement and migration disrupted the social fabric of communities and CBOs ceased to function, since in many cases, it was the leaders leaving the villages. Other villagers were reluctant or not accepted to

take leadership functions. In some areas, potential leaders (including traditional leaders) avoid a high profile, since they fear pressure from the conflict parties. Thus, community-based organisations are generally weak.

## LAND USE RIGHTS

Land constitutes a major natural capital assets for households. In the Sri Lankan society including the Tamil society, owning land determines social status, and people develop a close emotional bond to their village and their land. Irrigation infrastructure and production equipment are physical household capital assets required to make use of the land resources. The ongoing conflict has impacted on land use pattern in two main aspects:

- (i) *Limited access to land and jungle resources:* The security risk impedes people from going to fields close to jungle area or to make use of the jungle resources, since they suspect LTTE presence in the jungle. In some cases, the armed forces do not allow villagers to access certain areas.
- (ii) *Abandoned natural resources due to displacement and migration:* Many people have left the district to escape from the prevailing unstable security situation. These migrants or displaced are often those who were better-off in former times. They leave their land and assets behind.

Land use rights are thus a sensitive and politicised issue in the context of the protracted war in Sri Lanka. Grievances over land resource distribution in large-scale settlements (e.g. Gal Oya, Mahaweli) have been major trigger of the ongoing conflict. The current volatile situation of land utilisation, land use rights and encroachment is a serious constraint for development, and could, in the future, create new socio-political cleavages among the communal groups in the Trincomalee district. The subsequent section of the paper investigates how people and how strategic actors on the level of structures and processes (administrators, politicians) deal with land use rights under these conditions.

### How People Handle Land Use Rights

I will now briefly examine how people – and institutions – cope with handling land use rights under the prevailing conditions of a protracted civil war (see boxes).

Encroachment of unutilised state land, abandoned land, tank bed and grazing land is common practice in the research area and poses serious problems. Furthermore, people handle land titles informally: many villagers rely on witnesses instead of written documents for proving ownership. For transfer of permit land, many villagers 'buy' relatives: they pretend kinship bonds with the respective person buying the land, since kinship relation is a prerequisite for

### Handling Land Use Rights I: How *people* cope

- Encroaching ... state land, abandoned land, tank bed land, grazing land (upstream area of tank)
- Handling land titles informally
  - Proving ownership by witnesses
  - Pretending kinship-bond for land transfer (Ku, V, M)
  - Sharing cultivation of land (I, Ka)
- Relying on verbal and informal agreements
- Changing tenants, avoiding obligatory sale of land (Ku, M, I)
- Outsourcing risk of cultivation to tenant (fixed rent)
  - Giving own land into tenancy and working as wage-labourer (Ku)



transfer of permit land. Another common trend is sharing of land cultivation. Families expand and the young generation is sharing cultivation on the family land, which officially belongs to one person only.

The practice of tenancy arrangements are based on fixed rents, outsourcing the cultivation risk to the tenant, while landowners avoid long-term tenancy relations. Tenant in areas with high competition for tenancy contracts thus have to build up a good 'reputation' as reliable tenants in order to receive a new contract for the subsequent cultivation season.

#### How Key Actors on Institutional Level Handle Land Use Rights:

In general, the administration shows low profile in settling land disputes and avoids taking action or responsibility due to fear of political pressure ('Vogel Strauss' policy of burying one's head in the sand). On the other hand, administrators largely tolerate illegal practice of land use rights. They relax regulations for land use rights and, in some cases, issue informal land titles for encroachers on abandoned land to stabilise their position. They also accept deviations from rules and regulations by people when claiming land ownership or transferring alienated state (permit) land.

Power holders, on the other hand, patronise own (ethnic) clientele and force administrators to deviate from the legislation in order to achieve benefits for their own people. Administrators rarely resist such political interference.

Coping strategies of key actors on institutional level, viz. on the level of structures and processes could be determined for many other activities, such as government welfare, economic actors (traders, banks) or non-governmental development agencies. Part of these coping strategies have already been discussed during stakeholder dialogue I (cf. Korf 2001a).

#### Handling Land Use Rights II: How *key actors on institutional level* cope

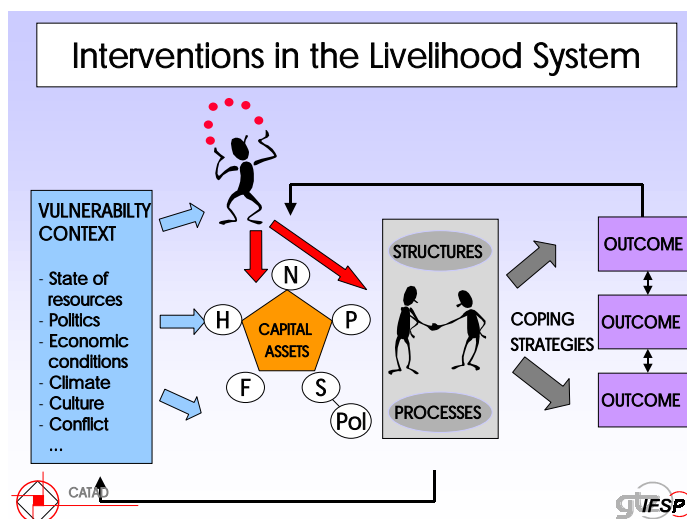
- > Showing low profile („burying one's head in the sand')
- > Avoiding to take action and responsibility
- > Relaxing regulations informally
  - > Tolerating encroachment
  - > Issuing land permits informally
  - > Accepting deviations from regulations and procedures
- > Delaying procedures
- > Patronising own (ethnic) clientele
- > Accepting challenges of political interferences



## INTERVENTIONS IN THE LIVELIHOOD SYSTEM

We understand that any intervention on community level should focus on supporting coping strategies of people. This is particularly true in the case of rehabilitation, reconstruction and community development for food and nutrition security. However, development agencies often have superimposed micro-projects, which did not really support those strategies people themselves understood as promising under the stressing vulnerability context.

Community mobilisation and development should therefore focus on a two-tier strategy of intervention in a livelihood system: on the one hand strengthening household capital assets through training, support of service provision and facilitation of processes which re-establish social capital in the community. On the other hand, people can only carry out certain livelihood activities according to their coping strategies, if the structures and processes are conducive.



Here lies the main challenge for development agencies. How can institutional arrangements be enhanced that support coping strategies of people, and how can the access of people to those institutions be enhanced which are essential for them to carry out their livelihood activities?

Bigdon & Korf 2001 emphasise that empowerment goes beyond more than capacity building, since empowerment depends upon the context in which someone or a social group is to be empowered. In the logic of the livelihood system, we could define empowerment as the ability and power of individuals to pursue their livelihood activities and coping strategies. This, however, largely depends upon the institutional arrangements and governance structure (structures and processes) as well as the vulnerability context.

In how far are development agencies able to influence the vulnerability context? Agencies involved in community development will hardly be able to impact on the level of the vulnerability context. In Sri Lanka, agencies have very limited power and entry-points to induce a negotiated conflict settlement between the conflict parties. In addition, effects of economic globalisation are externally imposed and can hardly be mitigated. However, some governance structures on macro-level could be positively influenced, if donors co-ordinate effectively and challenge opposing actors with a conditionality of aid. It is the lack of micro-macro linkage which has limited the impact of poverty alleviation and rural development programmes in the past.

Agencies and external actors can influence, but not enforce changes in coping strategies, since behavioural patterns are difficult to steer. Therefore, agencies should not try to impose prescribed strategies, but create incentives to encourage certain behaviour which favours sustainable economic development. When we recall the identified coping strategies, we can determine which principles are essential for IFSP and partner institutions in order to create such incentives and thus to support endogenous potentials and development processes. The chart 'Implications for IFSP and Partners' looks into the three pillars of coping strategies and investigates principles for sustainable interventions in the livelihood system:

Implications for IFSP & Partners		
Managing personal risk of life	Managing household economics	Accessing external support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to stabilizing the area? (but perceptions of people count!)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triple approach of creating <i>Incentives</i> (no relief):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthening capital assets</li> <li>– removing constraints from structures and processes (risk ↓)</li> <li>– Supporting entrepreneurship</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening social networks</li> <li>• Encouraging transparent community institutions</li> <li>• Demanding institutional accountability and responsibility</li> <li>• Linking economic institutions to village economy</li> </ul>



- (i) *Managing personal risk of life*: development agencies have limited scope for improving the security situation (cf. Bauer, Bigdon & Korf 2000). Nevertheless, the presence of agencies and their activities on the ground can contribute to stabilising the area. However, the perceptions of people determine their behaviour. If villagers do not feel safe, they will leave the area, even though international agencies might be present.
- (ii) *Managing household economics*: IFSP stresses development-oriented interventions to overcome the relief attitude. We recommend a triple approach for creating incentives which combines measures on different levels of the livelihood system: strengthening capital assets (potential of people) should always be combined with removing constraining factors from the level of structures and processes. Often, agencies deliver support or services to households or communities, but overlook the institutional arrangements which might impede target groups from utilising the delivered services and inputs. Furthermore, it is essential to support entrepreneurial actors on local level to restore dynamic processes in the village economy. Support of IFSP and partners should therefore address both groups: vulnerable households and emerging entrepreneurs.

- (iii) *Accessing external support:* Institutional development and capacity building should cover four complementary levels: Strengthening social networks (neighbourhood support) and encouraging transparent and accountable community institutions are essential steps to establish social capital and trust of people in their community. Demanding institutional accountability and responsibility is a challenging task for IFSP: the project should urge its partner institutions and other involved organisations to take action in a way which is transparent and understandable to all stakeholders. Good governance, trust of people in their governmental institutions are pre-conditions for peaceful co-existence of the three communal groups in Trincomalee. Furthermore, it is essential to link economic institutions (e.g. banks) to the village economy. Due to the conflict, this link has been further weakened, and agencies such as IFSP could support and encourage such actors to take more economic courage to involve in the village economy.

It is on purpose that the above implications do not specifically deal with the various projects, programmes and activities of IFSP and partners. The implications highlight principles, which are essential when designing or re-adjusting project policies, interventions and activities. The IFSP-CATAD Team has discussed in-depth with community mobilisers and engineers of IFSP as well as with selected partners of IFSP what these principles imply for their own work and measures. It is now the task of IFSP management, staff and partners to derive conclusions for own project policies and interventions. The research findings are to be understood as a 'mirror' and feedback to the various actors in development in Trincomalee, while the livelihood system approach offers a tool for analysing project interventions.

## DISCUSSION POINTS FROM STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE:

The IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 is an inter-active research study: the team involved in an intensive stakeholder dialogue throughout the research period, presenting preliminary findings to stakeholders and resource persons (cf. Korf 2001a; Korf 2001b). We will now elaborate some of the issues discussed during the final phase of this stakeholder dialogue during the presentation of final results in Trincomalee, Peradeniya, Colombo and at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany. The thoughts below point at key topics for further research, at strengths and limitations of the present research approach and derive conceptual and theoretical thoughts related to the overall research topic of coping strategies in complex emergencies.

### (1) Coping with poverty or with conflict – is there a difference?

Has the conflict accentuated poverty and thus coping strategies? Many of the coping strategies presented in the three-pillar model could also be related to coping with poverty. What are the coping strategies of people which are specific to the conflict? Which strategies are site-specific? In other words, are there any difference in behaviour between poor villagers in conflict and in peaceful areas of Sri Lanka. The livelihood system approach (LSA) highlights that coping strategies are the outcome of an interplay of various factors and impacts – not one single - on the different elements of the livelihood. It is therefore difficult to distinguish poverty and conflict coping stringently. However, the first pillar in our model – managing personal risk of life – is clearly linked to the conflict situation and the related increased personal risk. Apart from that, uncertainty and insecurity also increase the economic risk of investment, and this factor is mirrored in various coping strategies of the second and third pillar. In this regard, increase economic risk can also be caused by macro-economic conditions, e.g. through national open-market policies, and coping with thus induced risks might be similar to coping with economic risks induced by the security situation.

It was also noted that a comparative analysis could possibly clarify, whether or not poverty has accentuated compared to the situation prior to the conflict. In a confidential report to the Government of Sri Lanka, the World Bank has hypothesised that poverty is more accentuated in some of the peaceful rural areas than in the conflict zones. It was concluded that the impact of war on socio-economic conditions seemed overstated in many reports, and, secondly, that state welfare and relief could prevent a large-scale decline of the population into deep poverty. This argument, however, must be seriously questioned, since it does not place the current circumstances in its historical context, i.e. the relative situation compared to ex-ante (pre-war conditions).

Access to and priority claims for resources are critical in determining differences in coping strategies between villages in complex emergencies and peaceful areas. It was argued that the freedom of choice was seriously restricted in the conflict zones due to limited access to resources because of the security situation. Furthermore, in the multi-ethnic context of Trincomalee, the basic conflict is about which (ethnic) community has better access to resources and to support. A key question for further research is whether or not and how the conflict might have influenced pre-war inter-communal exchange and inter-dependencies.

### (2) Social differentiation within livelihoods:

How do vulnerable households and individuals cope? The IFSP-CATAD Project investigated common trends in coping strategies of people to challenge current project practices and to derive policy adjustments. Further research should determine the differentiation within communities and households: the impact of the war varies between regions, communities, among households individuals (intra-household resource allocation). How much are some more affected than others? A key question remains: which capital assets are available for vulnerable groups within the communities? However, a focus on household assets is insufficient to understand the dynamics of coping, since the main constraining factors, which determine the strategies and livelihood activities are often on the level of structures and processes.

### (3) Revival or decline of social and cultural capital?

Empirical research findings from Sri Lanka and South Asia can provide further explanatory hypotheses to understand human behaviour in the context of poverty and conflict. Two key issues are of particular relevance for livelihoods in complex emergencies:

- ✓ The Concept of (Anti-) Social Capital:<sup>9</sup> One much debated theme is the impact of conflict on social capital. The concept of social capital argues that networks of civic engagement are principal determinants for development (Putnam 1993). Social assets, viz. trust and co-operation within and between families, kin and communities, are crucial elements for livelihood strategies. Protracted conflict can undermine and even destroy social capital: Conflict entrepreneurs could use their oligopoly of violence to discourage civic engagement. Goodhand and Hulme (1999) use the term 'anti-social capital' to denote these forms of networks and engagement, which trigger factionalism and sustain warfare. They assume that anti-social capital might be established comparatively quickly, while the incremental process of building up social capital is a long-term process.

An ongoing village study from Batticaloa<sup>10</sup> revealed that people lack organisations and institutional arrangements to make claims for support. Social networking was therefore essential to secure a basic social security in the absence or depletion of household capital assets. In his anthropological studies in Asia, Clifford Geertz has observed a trend of 'shared poverty' – people move away from investing in economic to social investment in times of economic decline or stress. However, the demand and claims from the extended family might overburden the household assets and individuals might look for strategies to downsize the intra-family claims. This could also explain the strategy of hiding economic facts and downsizing wealth, which was commonly observed as a strategy in the interviews during our study.

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<sup>9</sup> Scoones (1998) defines 'social capital within the livelihood systems framework as 'the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations) upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies requiring co-ordinated actions'.

<sup>10</sup> The study is carried out by Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Bohle, South Asia Institute, Department of Geography, University of Heidelberg in collaboration with Eastern University, Batticaloa.

- ✓ The role of religion and cultural capital: The role of religious leaders was controversially discussed. The research findings from IFSP-CATAD point to a differentiated picture: in Muslim and Buddhist communities, the mosque society (Vaddam) and the Buddhist priest (Kalyanapura) played a fundamental role in village life, and often acted as intermediary institution between community and external support organisations. They also took advocacy functions and acted as judges in dispute settlement. In Tamil communities, the role of the Hindu priest was much less exposed, and it was hypothesised that the Hindu priest was more vulnerable and thus kept a low profile. Religious leaders from Buddhism and Islam take a more charismatic role in community life than in Hinduism. However, a recent study from the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) concluded that religion plays a vital role for entrepreneurs in Trincomalee, including all three religions (cf. Weeratunge 2001). Do people invest into religion?

One main hypothesis or conclusion was that the conditions of war challenge the identity of people and the rising importance of social and cultural capital could be understood as a means of re-establishing identity. Investment in religious institutions and symbols (temples) could contribute to strengthen other institutional arrangements on community-level. We could also observe that religious leaders are critical for the political capital of communities in that they determine how villagers can put pressure on power holders and lobby for their interests. On the other hand, the IFSP-CATAD research team also observed a trend that potential village leaders had either left the area or kept a low profile, remained invisible with the result of lack of leadership. Exposing oneself implies a high personal risk:<sup>11</sup> Nobody wants to become a 'hero', since this might mean endangering one's own life.

#### (4) The Livelihood System Approach (LSA) as a tool and concept

Food alone is not sufficient to determine household food and nutrition security. The livelihood system approach (LSA) provides a more holistic framework for understanding the various factors which determine behaviour, viz. coping strategies, and outcomes, viz. levels of food and nutrition security, of war-affected communities. The IFSP-CATAD Project utilised LSA as a framework for empirical research, and additionally, introduced it as a planning tool to IFSP and partner institutions:

- ✓ *LSA as a tool for whom?* It was suggested to employ LSA as an additional planning tool to complement participatory needs assessment (PNA), which is the current entry-point for IFSP support community mobilisation. While PNA emphasises the emic (inside) view from villagers, LSA could support planners and community mobilisers to gain a more complex view of the dynamics in a community (etic, i.e. outside, view).
- ✓ *Can LSA replace large-scale questionnaire surveys?* Large-scale questionnaire surveys collect quantitative data, however, the data collection process (a large number of data collectors with doubtful qualifications) raises doubts about the validity of data?

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Goodhand & Lewer 1999 for similar findings in Batticaloa.

The livelihood system model provides a holistic framework, but it remains difficult to grasp all details and elements of the complex reality of a village society. The livelihood model of Ithikulam which we elaborated in this working paper, focused on coping strategies with regard to farming systems. It does not look into many other aspects of social and economic life. It would be a demanding task to draw a comprehensive picture of the community or of a household. Box 3 contains some suggestions of how the explorative research of the IFSP-CATAD Project 2001 could be further deepened and complemented in order to provide information, which is applicable in development practice.

### **Box 3: Agenda of Further Issues in a Livelihood Analysis:**

- ✓ Integrate the conflict dimension in the livelihood system analysis,
- ✓ Analyse in-depth the impact of certain interventions in the livelihood system,
- ✓ Determine dynamics of coping strategies over time,
- ✓ Rank poverty levels, outcomes and vulnerability levels,
- ✓ Quantify capital assets with PRA-tools,
- ✓ Identify factors that make coping strategies successful (success stories, good practice),
- ✓ Assess how strategic behaviour influences coping strategies,
- ✓ Review coping strategies and vested interests of strategic actors within government organisations and NGOs, and of power holders, and how this determines structures & processes arrangements of livelihood systems.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

All in all, the livelihood system approach constitutes a challenging and promising framework for research and development. It is a positive and systemic approach and could be instrumental to allow agencies deriving policies of doing 'a little good'. 'Coping' is often associated with defensive, re-active behaviour. However, the findings show that people are not all vulnerable, helpless victims of the circumstances, but that they actively cope and deal with a given context. Nevertheless, violence is obviously the main threatening factor which impedes many people from engaging in sustainable economic activities.

Action-oriented research is complementary to participatory planning. Participatory needs assessments (PNA) cannot replace applied scientific research, which is instrumental in providing in-depth understanding of behaviour, trends and coping strategies. The other way round, research cannot replace participatory planning and community mobilisation as a process. It is furthermore essential to work on the macro-micro implications of grass-root studies, and to confront key actors on the macro- and policy level with such research findings do assess how macro-level decisions impact on micro-level peasant communities.

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