

**Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Peace Promotion
Through Education**

**The Experience of the Basic Education Sector Program
in Sri Lanka**

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Summary

This report relates the four-year experience of the Basic Education Sector Program (BESP) in Sri Lanka, a country torn by armed conflict between ethnic groups for two decades. With reference to the specific political and social conditions as well as to the relationship between conflict and culture, the report illustrates how BESP contributed to crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion. In a country characterized by an overwhelming longing for peace on the one hand and violence on the other hand, in which three ethnic groups live both separately and together, education has begun to build bridges within and between these groups by teaching language, helping children who have lost schooling through the conflict catch up to grade level, counseling students with war-related psychological problems and creating a joyful teaching and learning environment in the primary classroom. The unique BESP approach and materials can serve as a model for other developing countries which have faced or are facing (prolonged) armed conflict and are thus struggling with the challenging issues of how to prevent crises, teach conflict resolution and promote peace through education.

List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BECAre	Basic Education for Children in Disadvantaged Areas
BESP	Basic Education Sector Programme
BMZ	Bundesministerium für Zusammenarbeit (German Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development)
CP	Central Province
DC	Development Co-operation
DFID	Department for International Development
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Co-operation)
HPO	Head Plus One
ISA	In-service Adviser
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDTU	Material Development and Training Unit
M+E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHRD, E&CA	Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education & Cultural Affairs
MoE	Ministry of Education
MT	Master Trainer
NCoE	National College of Education
NEP	North East Province
NIE	National Institute of Education
PACT	Poverty Alleviation and Conflict Transformation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
TC	Technical Co-operation
TIP	Teacher In-service Project
Triple R	Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation
VERP	Vanni Education Rehabilitation Project
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

In recent years, crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion have rapidly gained priority as viable goals of modern development work worldwide. While crises can ultimately only be prevented by political and/or structural means, creating peace can be construed as a political and as an interpersonal objective. Many effective measures of conflict resolution can be implemented in societies at different stages of conflict on the micro, meso and macro levels. The overall aim here is to impart knowledge and skills to individuals, groups and decision makers, enabling them to solve interpersonal, group, social and political conflicts nonviolently and creatively. One of the most effective means of teaching conflict resolution and promoting peace is to go through the formal education system: Here we have a “captive” audience comprising children and teachers from all walks of society, i.e. across cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic barriers.

If the stated goals of teaching conflict resolution and promoting peace are to become meaningful as measures that touch real people’s lives and change them significantly for the better, it is important to identify successful examples of how they are being put into practice. The Basic Education Sector Program (BESP) in Sri Lanka is one such example. This report looks at the aspects of BESP which have served to promote peace and conflict resolution, examines their impact, relates their relevance for Sri Lanka and the region and makes recommendations for further action. The information is based on program documents and impact studies, as well as on two 11-day visits to Sri Lanka in May and October 2004. In May I was a participant of the Program Progress Review Mission, charged with appraising the peace education/conflict transformation aspects of BESP. The purpose of my task in October was to gather further information for the report at hand. Altogether, I met with the following parties:

- German Head and Sri Lankan National Director of the program in Colombo
- Officials at the Ministry of Education in Colombo
- Officials at the National Institute of Education in Maharagama
- Provincial and zonal education authorities, principals and teachers in Trincomalee
- Representative of the Vanni Education Council of Tamil Eelam in Killinochchi
- BESP Senior Advisor responsible for peace education
- BESP/GOPA consultant responsible for monitoring and evaluation
- BESP Material Development and Training Unit
- BECAre staff, counselors, befrienders, trainers and master trainers, principals and zonal education authorities in Vavuniya and Jaffna
- Major contributors to the BESP psychosocial counseling program in Jaffna
- VERP II staff members responsible for the catch-up program in Killinochchi
- TIP CP staff, master trainers, education officials and teachers in the Central Province

- TIP NEP and TIP Cell staff members in Trincomalee
- Director of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies in Colombo and two program coordinators
- Major donors, e.g. UNICEF, ADB, DFID, JICA, SIDA in Vavuniya and Colombo
- Stakeholders in the field of psychosocial intervention in Vavuniya (donors and NGOs)
- GTZ staff member of FLICT (Fund for Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation)
- GTZ country director
- German ambassador.

In addition, I visited the national colleges of education in Vavuniya and Pastunrata, a teachers' center in Teldeniya and schools in Vavuniya, Jaffna and Kandy, participated in a Youth Conference in Colombo and contributed to the planning workshop for the inauguration of the "post BESP" education project in October 2004.

2. Conflict, conflict culture, education and development cooperation in Sri Lanka

2.1. The historic context of the ethnic conflict

The population of Sri Lanka is around 19 million. The majority Sinhalese make up 74% of the population. The largest minority is the Tamils, who make up 18%; of these 13% are Jaffna Tamils native to the island, who live mostly in the North and East and 5% are Tamils of Indian origin, who are concentrated on the plantations of the Central Province. The smaller minority of Ceylon Moors speak Tamil and make up 7% of the population. Other minorities like Burghers constitute less than 1% of the population. The vast majority of the Sinhalese are Buddhists, most Tamils practice the Hindu religion and the Ceylon Moors are Moslems; 8% of the population are Christian.

Sri Lanka was ruled by three colonial powers in a row, each for a period of around 150 years, beginning with the Portuguese in 1505, continuing with the Dutch in 1650 and ending with the British in 1948. The Republic of Sri Lanka was declared in 1972 and is a member of the Commonwealth. The per capita income is US\$ 840 a year. Thirty percent of the population live below the poverty line, and 20% of the population lives in extreme poverty; rural areas harbor at least 30% of the poor. Most of the island's wealth and economic power is concentrated in the South and West (notably Colombo), where the majority of the Sinhalese reside. The North and East, which have been hardest hit by the armed conflict of the past two decades, have fewer natural resources and are – and have traditionally been – economically deprived to a greater extent than the rest of the country. Sri Lanka is dependent on foreign aid to balance its budget. While minority parties are represented in parliament, the government has been dominated by the Sinhalese majority since the late 1950s. Tamil parties represent a minority position and do not share in governing the country at the same level as the Sinhalese. In the past this has led to their perception of discrimination and their resentment towards the ruling (Sinhalese) elite. The concerns of the Moslem minority are frequently overshadowed by the dominant Sinhalese-Tamil line of conflict.

Recent inter-ethnic violence erupted in 1983 and continued to 2002. In the course of this period, language, ethnicity and religion became contentious issues. Aside from periodic terrorist attacks on the capital city of Colombo, the armed conflict raged in the North and East of the island over a period of two decades. The major conflicting parties are the Government of Sri Lanka, fighting to retain the status quo of a united nation, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), struggling to establish an independent Tamil state in the Northeast Province. The war directly affected three million people. Of these, 800,000 are living overseas and/or as refugees. One million people were internally displaced, many living for extended periods of time in welfare centers (refugee camps). During the war more than 60,000 were killed. A cease-fire on the basis of negotiations led by the Norwegians has

been in effect since 2002. Although no one can predict how long the cease-fire will hold, a peace accord does not seem to be on the current political agenda. This represents a somewhat precarious situation in which it is unclear whether a lasting agreement will be achieved or whether armed conflict will resume. For the moment, the government controls the South and West, as well as Jaffna in the far North, and the LTTE controls part of the North and East known as the Vanni area.

In addition to this conflict, which has gained the most international attention by far, between 40,000 and 60,000 people have lost their lives in uprisings organized by dissatisfied Sinhalese youth and beaten down by government forces in the economically deprived deep South since 1971. Strife between the Tamil and Muslim minorities in the Northeast – the Moslems have only partially been included in the peace process – and the difficult situation of the “plantation Tamils” living in the Central Province (for whom the LTTE takes no political responsibility) are further potential sources for conflict.

2.2. Conflict culture

One of the fundamental structural problems in Sri Lankan society is the separation of people along language, ethnic and religious lines. On the surface, these parallel societies live peacefully side by side. They mix when circumstance calls for it but there is often very little interaction between them, especially in regions of the country with a dominant population of one or the other communities. There seems to be little if no resentment on a personal basis. On the other hand, cultural isolation promotes a lack of knowledge and understanding about other ethnicities, religions and traditions. As much as the religions and cultures may differ from one another, they seem to have one thing in common: A love of and yearning for harmony. This leads to an avoidance of interpersonal conflicts and to a tendency to view conflict as a purely political issue. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that there are very few functioning traditional informal or modern formal conflict resolution mechanisms – especially for dealing with conflicts between ethnic groupings. Differences that arise between individuals or groups are often not mutually acknowledged and are therefore not dealt with directly. These may even be everyday disputes, e.g. between neighbors, that would arise in any society, especially one with impoverished living conditions. As the differences turn into conflict, however, they are frequently avoided until they explode into violence. This is true not only for conflicts between communities, but also for those within families and communities.

The result is a vicious circle: People, especially those who have experienced violence first-hand – whether caused by personal or political strife – develop an aversion to or even a fear of dealing with conflicts directly. Perhaps it is indicative that Sri Lanka has a relatively high

suicide rate. Conflicts in general thus come to be perceived as negative – something for which politicians and not average citizens bear responsibility.

This situation can be regarded as a socio-cultural phenomenon: There is a fundamental contradiction between denying the very existence of conflicts and experiencing armed conflict over an extended period of time. As society strives ardently for harmony and consensus it becomes permeated by confrontation – and has produced citizens unable to deal with conflicts (*Schwerpunktstrategiepapier*, p.6).

Separation and the lack of a constructive conflict culture, then, are implicit causes of violence in Sri Lankan Society. In her paper on the *Experiences of the Anti Terror Program in Sri Lanka*, Thania Paffenholz cites the “mental culture of war” as one of the biggest obstacles to establishing peace in this small but conflict-ridden country. This culture polarizes the thinking of individuals, groups and the political establishment and is reflected in the failure to comprehend positive developments as a result of the peace process. In her view, steps must be taken to overcome the pervasive willingness to resort to violence as a means of conflict resolution on a personal and political level. These steps can serve as a basis for creating lasting peace. (Paffenholz 2004, p. 11)

2.3. Education and conflict

While education is very high on the political and social agenda in Sri Lanka, the school system reflects the general structure of civil society. With the exception of about 600 “Amity schools”, which serve a mixed population, and a number of mixed schools where Sinhala and Tamil are both used as mediums of instruction, the vast majority of schools in Sri Lanka are divided along ethnic and language lines. Even in areas where Sinhalese, Tamils and Moslems live side by side, each community runs its own autonomous schools. There are therefore very few or no opportunities to break down barriers, build up understanding for the other cultures and learn to communicate with them in their own or in a third language. Language instruction in the “second national language” – Tamil for Sinhalese and Sinhalese for Tamils and Moslems – is on the curriculum but frequently taught and learned half-heartedly or not at all. The reasons for this are again manifold: Although Sinhalese intellectuals recognize the value of Tamil art and literature, many Sinhalese do not see the need of learning a minority language. Tamils, on the other hand, resent having to learn the majority language – which some learn anyway as a matter of course or because circumstance, e.g. dealings with the bureaucracy, force them to do so. English is regarded by both sides as an important “link language”, enabling communication between ethnic groups in a language considered important by all. To complicate matters further, innovative language materials for all three or five languages (Tamil and Sinhalese as mother tongue and 2nd national language plus English) have been lacking.

In the Northeast Province, where the war raged for two decades, 1,900 schools were damaged; a number of these are being renovated by the EU and the ADB. Many schools were forced to move and reopen in other areas under conditions of dire hardship, e.g. insufficient space and staff, unstable student populations. Ninety-two percent of the children were directly affected by the war, 57% were unable to carry out their normal routine, many were displaced, living temporarily in welfare camps and later returning home to rebuild their damaged or destroyed dwellings. A number of teachers were also dislocated; an estimated 10 - 15% of the teachers are themselves traumatized. At least a quarter of all children of school age were affected by the war psychologically, having witnessed first hand acts of violence committed against family members or death and destruction resulting from bombings. Many children, especially those who live in camps, suffer from depression. Currently, 75,000 children in this area are not attending school. Deprived economic conditions have caused an increase in child labor.

Education is a highly sensitive political issue in Sri Lanka. The Tamil-speaking education community harbors deep resentments about the allocation of resources to their schools and perceives political motives behind this problem. A problem cited again and again is the major shortage of Tamil teachers. I was told in Jaffna that in NEP alone, an additional 5,000 teachers are needed and that altogether the country lacks 9,000 Tamil-medium teachers. This source stated that there is an excess of 8,000 Sinhala-medium teachers in the South. While I have no way of checking the accuracy of these numbers, it is hard to imagine that they are completely fictional. The Government of Sri Lanka, on the other hand, takes deep offence at the very mention of the possibility of such a problem, let alone the idea that it could have been brought about by a conscious strategy to deprive Tamils of quality education. Government officials emphasize repeatedly that development aid in the area of education is needed in the whole country and should not only or even primarily be allocated to the Northeast. Such resentments have kept the wounds of armed conflict from healing. For the most part, therefore, the education system serves to deepen the divide between ethnic groups rather than to overcome it. On the level of the individual school, interpersonal conflict resolution or the creation of a creative conflict culture have hardly been on the agenda up to now. The two-year teacher training program (plus one year internship) is primarily concerned with imparting knowledge and has only recently begun to deal with issues such as teacher-pupil interaction, discipline or teaching methodology in any significant way via the Pre-service Primary Teacher Education (PPTE) course. This means that new teachers entering the workforce are not sufficiently prepared for the realities of classroom life. In fact, corporal punishment is not uncommon and teachers on both sides of the divide complain of an increase in school violence and a general decline in social values. This decline is seen as resulting from traditional social structures breaking down – partially

as a consequence of economic deprivation and partially as a consequence of the prolonged armed conflict.

2.4. Development cooperation and conflict transformation

In light of its endeavor to put crisis prevention, conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace onto its political agenda, the German Federal Government adopted an action plan entitled *Zivile Krisenprävention, Konfliktlösung und Friedenskonsolidierung* (Civil Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Peace Consolidation) in May 2004. While the government recognizes the necessity of reducing the structural causes of conflict, supporting reconciliation processes after wars and undertaking capacity-building measures, it also advocates strengthening civil crisis and conflict resolution by identifying and supporting active members of society who are willing to promote peace. This can be achieved by reducing stereotypes and images of the enemy, fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting mechanisms of peaceful, nonviolent conflict management and dispute resolution. Educational institutions can contribute to this process by opening up differing perspectives on curriculum content and promoting conflict transformation.

Significantly, the policies stated in this paper are valid for the German government as a whole, i.e. for the Foreign Office as well as for the Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ). For its part, the BMZ has declared Poverty Alleviation and Conflict Transformation (PACT) a major focal area of development cooperation. This reflects the aim of the BMZ to support human rights, promote democratic values and further conflict management.

2.5. Development cooperation goals in Sri Lanka - the German contribution to conflict transformation through education

These developments have led to a shift in priorities in Sri Lankan-German development cooperation (DC) in recent years. Bilateral discussions have focussed on the question as to how peace-building politics and development aid can be more closely linked with each other to ensure sustainable development and to avoid the economic and social costs of violent conflicts. In May 2001 the two governments agreed to adopt PACT as a focal area, complementing Support of Economic Reforms/Market Orientation of the Country and in the long run replacing the focal area of Education. (As Sri Lanka has the status of a partner country, Sri Lankan-German DC should in fact concentrate on one focal area – Sri Lanka is an exception with two focal areas.) Although originally planned as an 8-year program, BESP will be phased out by May 2005. There is, however, a clear understanding that German DC should continue its support to the educational sector under the focal area of PACT. Both sides view education as an inherent crosscutting element of bilateral cooperation with a

major contribution to make towards the long-term goal of returning Sri Lanka to a state of peaceful coexistence, with a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. To this end, a new 4-year school-based program oriented towards conflict transformation has been put on the agenda and will commence in mid 2005.

The GTZ strategy paper *Friedensentwicklung und Krisenprävention* (Peace Development and Crisis Prevention, Draft, Sept. 2004), which was commissioned by the BMZ, provides a conceptual framework for this shift in priorities and points out the connection between peace promotion and education. The causes of conflict in Sri Lanka are seen to lie in a combination of underdevelopment and discrimination. This has led to a concentration of political and economic power in Colombo, systematically preventing the development of the poorer areas in the North and East. German DC aims at supporting the reconstruction of the economic and social infrastructure in the North and East, removing the causes of conflict and supporting Sri Lanka in its effort to develop a state, economic and social model based on the tolerance and integration of all sections of the population.

As education and language politics have become factors in the conflict they also represent an important opportunity to overcome cultural and ethnic barriers, especially as education is a priority of the Sri Lankan government and society in general and youth and education are considered to play an important role in crisis prevention. Both the structural and content aspects of education are at issue here. The general expectation is that education be made available to all, but in reality not everyone receives an equal chance. The German side wishes to contribute to the alleviation of this situation by supporting concrete measures towards treating the different regions equally and working on the causes of conflict potential through education programs and consciousness-raising. Since in the long run equal access in all three languages is seen as a prerequisite for conflict resolution, German DC seeks to promote specific projects towards carrying out a countrywide 3-language policy in the context of initial and in-service teacher training and in schools. A further common goal for the year 2008 is to integrate peace education and conflict transformation into the curriculum and into teacher training. While the Government of Sri Lanka is Germany's negotiation and contract partner, German DC is open for cooperative relationships with the LTTE and politically related organizations in the Northeast.

3. Framework of the BESP Project

3.1. Context and goals

In support of the ongoing education reforms in Sri Lanka, the Basic Education Sector Program (BESP) came into being in mid 2001 by amalgamating the then independent projects of Teacher Training and Staff Development Project, Teacher In-service Project (TIP) and Basic Education for Children in Disadvantaged Areas (BECAre). All those projects now form components of the program. This work was a continuation of the GTZ involvement in the basic education sector in Sri Lanka, begun in 1986.

The project had five goals:

- To strengthen educational institutions engaged with the primary level
- To develop, test and introduce needs-oriented curricula and teaching and learning materials for pre-service training, internship and in-service training of primary teachers nationwide as part of the ongoing education reform
- To improve teacher pre-service and in-service training for the primary level
- To develop, test and introduce M+E models for primary level teacher training
- To improve basic education for children and youths with special learning needs, with special consideration given to building psychosocial counseling capacities (establishment of a school psychological service)

The program underwent a major adjustment after achievement of the "peace accord" which brought an additional sub-component, the Vanni Education Rehabilitation Project (VERP), into being. At present BESP consists of the following five main components:

- Material Development and Training Unit (MDTU), located at the NIE. The MDTU consists of a bi-cultural team including 9 staff members and support staff.
- TIP, located in two pilot provinces (North East Province (NEP) and Central Province (CP), with six coordinating centers in six further provinces.
- BECAre, located in Vavuniya, consists of the Psychosocial Counseling and the Catch-up Programs.
- Vanni Education Rehabilitation Project (VERP II), located in Killinochchi.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (M+E), located at the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Colombo.

These components cooperate closely with the National Ministry of Education (MoE), the provincial MoEs and their Zonal Offices and the National Institute for Education (NIE).

3.2. Achievements

BESP's achievements are impressive:

- The MDTU took on the responsibility for the conceptualization, preparation, layout and printing of manuals, handbooks and guides, all in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

The books produced include a wide variety of teachers' manuals, internship training handbooks, internship manuals for resource persons, internship guidelines, language resource books, school-based action research, a handbook of multi-grade activities for intellectually able learners who are at a level lower than age-appropriate, school health and nutrition, annual reports, anthologies in Sinhala and Tamil, environment-related activities and an impact study on counsellor training. In addition, the MDTU supports the planning of the curriculum and training of master trainers (MT) in CP and NEP.

- TIP developed a needs-based curriculum in which conflict prevention and conflict management, human rights and basic child rights and living and working together were brought into teacher training through manuals and workshops, and thereby into the schools. The five manuals developed were: *Joyful Learning*, *Induction Training*, *School Based Education Development*, *School Health and Nutrition* and *School Based Action Research*. The TIP cascade system of in-service training was implemented in order to reach as many teaching staff as possible. It involves four stages: first, Master Trainers are trained, who in turn train In-service Advisers (ISAs) and Divisional Directors. The latter then train Head Plus Ones (HPOs – principals plus one senior staff member), who then conduct in-house training for their own school families.
- BECAre trained so-called befrienders (originally referred to as screeners) and counselors at differing levels to identify and counsel children affected by the war or other socio-economic factors. The emphasis is on health and mental health; two special manuals, *Joyful Living* and *Child Mental Health*, were developed for training the befrienders. The Catch-up program aims to bring children who have missed time in school up to age-appropriate learning levels. It involves developing teaching and learning materials, training teachers in this special area and reimbursing them for working extra hours.
- VERP II consists of similar elements to the BECAre program. It concentrates its efforts on the Vanni / Tamil Eelam region and gives special attention to training teachers to give instruction in English.
- The central M+E unit at the MoE serves to monitor the BESP projects and evaluate their impact. The provincial M+E officers have provided the program management with basic data for analysis and decision-making.

According to various impact studies carried out by the program on the effectiveness of its interventions, significant improvements in quality have been achieved. BESP teaching/learning materials for pre- and in-service teacher education are now integrated into

the national curriculum which is being implemented in all provinces. It is expected that the teaching/learning materials developed by the program will become compulsory for the national education system. Internships for future primary level teachers have been successfully introduced into the Sri Lankan education system as a model and the internship training manuals are the basis for the teacher-training year in 12 National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) and in 180 schools where the internships are carried out. So far, 75 to 80 percent of all primary teachers in the two pilot provinces have been trained. BESP, therefore, contributed significantly to an improvement in the quality of both in-service and pre-service training.

Although not originally planned as a PACT program, BESP contributed not only to the improvement of the quality of the education system, but also to the peace process by supporting the national policy of "Triple R" (Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation), with cross-cutting issues like peace building, human rights and child rights. In this context the trilingual classroom approach has been further developed to reduce conflict via language and in order to signal mutual acceptance.

BESP has worked in very close co-operation with other donors and implementing agencies including the WB, UNICEF, UNESCO and others. Due to its convincing strategies and the high quality of its implementation, BESP played a leading role in the improvement of the quality of the education sector in Sri Lanka. This was stated by government officials as well as by most other co-operating partners. High-ranking government members and officers at the central, regional and local levels have reiterated that BESP became the government's leading education partner in Sri Lanka.

3.3. Further plans

After BESP is phased out in May 2005, a new project is planned directly under the auspices of PACT. This project will focus on "Education for Social Cohesion". The four pillars of the project crystallized out of the BESP experience and would not have been possible without it.

They are:

1. *2nd National Languages*
2. *Values Education*
3. *Psychosocial Intervention*
4. *Remedial Education.*

In Chapter 8 I will go deeper into the plans for the new program. At this point I would like to examine BESP's contribution to PACT/crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion.

4. Crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion in the BESP context

Peace promotion was and is vitally important in a country which has experienced on-going violent conflict for several decades. While the main focus of BESP was not on peace education or conflict resolution, the relationship between quality basic education and ethnic conflict was established from the outset:

“Foundations must be put down here which include education for peace, recognition of the cultural identity and language of the various Sri Lankan social groupings, mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation. The curricula lack development-oriented treatment of such themes as multi-ethnic education, the significance of mother-tongue education and especially that of the second national language, the importance and usefulness of English as a third language to mediate between the two national languages, or the participation of Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems, and Christians in social decision-making processes oriented to achieving consensus.” (GTZ Offer)

The BESP program was initiated and carried out during a crucial period when it had become clear that education could play an important role in the process of overcoming violent conflict and building a peaceful society. The goal of the program was to equip primary school children “to propel peace and harmony in a pluralistic society” by imparting positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups, religions and cultures. It was recognized from the outset that the key to reaching children is to motivate teachers to change their behavior on the basis of newly gained knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, enabling them to resolve conflicts peacefully and contribute to the creation of peaceful conditions in Sri Lanka. Peace education concerns were addressed in that

- a needs-based curriculum integrating cross-sectoral themes was developed, in which conflict resolution, human rights and basic children’s rights and living and working together were introduced into teacher training and thereby into the schools (TIP)
- teaching and learning materials emphasizing the importance of the national languages in promoting peace were developed, piloted and introduced on a wide scale (MDTU)
- basic education for affected children and youth was improved through special emphasis on reintegrating students who had missed time in school and therefore fallen behind in the system, and capacities for psychosocial support were integrated into the school system (BECare).

These steps were taken in the context of the education reforms and designed to fit into the National Framework for Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. They came at a time when the Sri Lankan government had recognized the importance of peace education as a meaningful crosscutting issue. The fact that the GTZ was active in the North and East long before the cease-fire gave the organization credibility. In the context of VERP, BESP was able to establish a working relationship with high-ranking representatives of the LTTE. The program reacted promptly to the cease-fire agreement in 2002 by adding a further relief

component (VERP II) in Vanni. Quality education, then, is of common interest to both sides and thus a connecting factor.

The components of BESP that can justifiably be categorized as measures of peace promotion are:

- *Promoting intercultural communication and creating understanding*
- *Creating a culture of learning to live together at the classroom level and beyond*
- *Rehabilitation in NEP*

4.1. Promoting intercultural communication and creating understanding

In order to live together in peace, students and teachers must be able and willing to communicate with each other and seek a common understanding of similarities and differences in background, experience and views on life. They must, of course, have a common language, but it is also necessary for them to be interested in and curious about one another.

Focussing on language teaching furthered intercultural communication significantly. The importance of language (in particular Sinhalese and Tamil as 2nd national languages and English as a link language) as an integrating factor was recognized and addressed. To this end, activity-based teaching materials for the pre-service sector were developed and are in use. Training on how to use the manuals increased their effectiveness. The program progress review mission carried out in May 2004 was impressed by the surprising willingness and fun experienced by students in learning the second national language. This stands in contrast to the often-stated argument that Tamils and Sinhalese have no interest in learning the other language.

In addition, more than 2000 students from NCoEs have benefited from peace link activities, notably:

- a literary competition on the subject of “Peace and Conflict Transformation”
- the resulting production of a “Peace Book”, which was the first pre-service teaching aid ever published in all three languages
- exchange programs between the NCoEs in Ruhuna (in the South) and Jaffna (in the North), including school visits on both ends
- organization of a large-scale cross-community Peace Event in Batticaloa (East)
- filming of these events and repeated showing on national television, including a presentation in the TV series “The no war zone” in three languages
- International Peace Event at the Pasdunrata National College of Education (South) in November 2004 with participants from Sri Lanka, India, South Korea, Japan and the Maldives in cooperation with UNESCO.

In addition, some of the content from the Peace Book was later integrated into the language materials. The literary competition and Peace Link activities received international recognition in that the senior adviser was invited by the UNESCO International Bureau of

Education to participate in a seminar on “Education for learning to live together” in December 2003. Consequently, the film on the literary competition and Peace Events was selected as the only Asian entry to be shown and reviewed in the context of the 47th International Conference on Education in 2004 in Geneva.

In my view, such programs run the danger of remaining somewhat superficial. It is therefore significant that the last two events in Batticaloa and Pasdunrata have increasingly addressed challenging aspects and that monitoring and evaluation have been extended and improved. While it is important to celebrate similarities and share cultural traditions, participants must also face up to prejudice and negative images of each other, thus overcoming stereotypes in a meaningful way. (In one evaluation report students expressed their dissatisfaction that a workshop leader had acted in an intolerant and biased manner – it is a positive sign that they were able to voice this grievance.) This process has begun, but should be intensified by organizing the activities in an even more interactive manner, allowing cultural groups to mix more. Also, students must be given opportunities to reflect on these experiences following the events. Only students with a sufficient knowledge of English should be allowed to participate in the events or translation must be provided.

4.2. Creating a culture of learning to live together at the classroom level and beyond

In order to be effective, peace education should encompass the immediate learning environment of the child. If teachers and children interact positively on a day-to-day basis, treating each other with mutual respect and solving conflicts constructively in a cooperative atmosphere, values such as peace, harmony and non-violence will not seem abstract, but rather become part of their experience and thus of their psychological make-up. Realizing this goal has constituted one of the main focal points of BESP.

In an effort to reform teaching methods by overcoming harsh discipline and fear, teachers are encouraged to emphasize personality development in the individual child. Active pupil involvement and the promotion of self-sufficiency through group work have replaced teacher-centered instruction. Teachers learned to reflect upon and alter their own destructive behavior, thus vastly improving the quality of teacher-student relationships.

The Teacher In-service Project (TIP) and the teaching materials it developed had a tremendous impact on creating a positive learning atmosphere in primary schools. Studies show that 80% of the teachers trained apply the child-centered/activity-based methods they learned. The Joyful Learning program in particular enabled teachers to reflect critically upon and change their attitudes and behavior: They learned to understand children better by recognizing their needs, and – as a result – teacher-student relationships improved. The program effectively addresses the gap between educational theory and practice. The

message conveyed to teachers is: “it’s o.k. to have problems.” This takes pressure off the teachers and enables them to seek practical solutions that are mutually beneficial to all concerned. The positive climate thus established in countless schools creates a basis for mutual understanding beyond the level of the individual classroom. Because of its experiential nature, the program has helped teachers share with each other as well.

In the course of both my visits to Sri Lanka in May and October 2004, teachers, befrienders, teacher trainers and master trainers related their overwhelmingly positive experiences with the manuals – first and foremost with the Joyful Learning program. The unit on conflict resolution directly relevant to peace education, but even more so the units on understanding the child, the lively class and affected children (including a section on child rights), seem to have touched a nerve in the teachers involved. During our discussions, several teachers admitted to having physically abused children and emphasised that the training they received made them realize how they had added to the children’s stress rather than relieving it. Most significantly, these educators are now in a position to help children in need – whether with a learning or a personal or emotional problem in the home or at school. Some trained teachers are even consulted by their colleagues, principals and/or parents as to how to deal with difficult situations – a clear sign that they are able to integrate what they have learned in such a way that many in their immediate environment benefit.

At the school level the programs of Joyful Learning and Joyful Living proved to be an overwhelming success in the primary schools affected by these programs. Teacher attitudes have been positively affected and the atmosphere in the classroom and between parents and teachers has been significantly improved. Difficulties and conflict at all levels in schools, i.e., those between children and teachers, among children, between teachers and parents, and children and parents, as well as those among staff members or between staff and principal are being dealt with more constructively. In this sense, the NIE strategy of promoting peace by integrating “themes and behaviours that foster conflict prevention into all subjects and school levels and into teacher training as cross-sectoral themes” was implemented in the context of BESP in a highly effective manner.

The results of two impact studies conducted on in-service training in the North East and Central pilot provinces showed that teacher attitudes had changed with regard to child orientation and the child-friendly school, so that the achievements of the reforms can be ensured and sustained. However, such an encompassing program is very cost intensive and sustainability can only be ensured if the national and provincial departments provide the necessary funds to finance the cascade model. Some training programs ran into problems because participants were not (in their own view) paid sufficiently for the training or not reimbursed for transport and board costs. Also, the fact that the training program does not

result in certification that qualifies teachers for a salary upgrade has meant that it competes with other courses that do offer this benefit.

The biggest general problem was that the program was restricted to the primary level (1st to 5th grade). Both the GoSL and the GTZ agree that on the basis of BESP's overwhelming success the next step is to carry the contents and approach over to the junior secondary level, especially since there have been reports of a break there – children go from the “joyful classroom” to one in which subject matter is of utmost importance and their individual needs count for little. This intention to extend social learning to the junior secondary level coincides with the growing concern of both major communities over declining values in a changing society and the growing need for civic and value education. Another problem has been that the Joyful Learning content and approach have not yet been integrated into the NCoE system. In order to do this it will be necessary to train the lecturers – which may prove to be more of a challenge than training the teachers.

4.3. Rehabilitation in NEP

In the North and East, where families have been displaced and homes and schools damaged and destroyed, crisis prevention in the area of education is vitally important. Here, a significant number of teachers as well as pupils have been traumatized; both must function under difficult teaching and learning conditions.

During program implementation, the cease-fire agreement came into effect and made it possible to work in the affected areas. In July 2002 BESP responded promptly to this situation and allocated additional resources from the “conflict resolution fund” to create the VERP II program. This showed flexible planning and a willingness to adjust to new conditions and meet the demand for especially urgent needs, as well as the courage to provide immediate relief and promote peacemaking in an appropriate and meaningful manner. Now, two years later, catch-up programs are operating effectively in the North and East: 30% of the children in need of making up time lost at school as a result of displacement have been brought up to grade level. The catch-up program focuses on regular curriculum content, i.e., subject matter rather than on education for peace and the creation of peaceful and nonviolent community life as originally planned. This reflects the immediate needs of the children and teachers alike.

In addition, a system of psychosocial counseling initiated through BECAre has helped integrate traumatized students back into school and family life. 1000 teachers were trained as “befrienders” to recognize affected children and 65 as counselors capable of treating those in need (an additional 34 counselors are still in training). As it turns out, some children with special needs indirectly related to the war also benefit from both programs. The example was given of a girl who stole from other children and was jealous of her teacher giving attention to other students. It came to light that the girl had had no contact with her

mother, who had worked abroad for many years. Through the intervention of the befriender, contact was established between the girl and her mother and as a result her behavior in school improved. A boy who had hit other children and repeatedly threatened to knock out the teeth of a girl in his class was upset because his father had left the family and married another woman. By talking to the boy and his parents, the befriender was able to influence the situation positively to the extent that the boy stopped hitting and threatening other students. In such instances counseling is a viable and – in the spirit of peace promotion – much-preferred alternative to punishment.

While I was very much impressed by the deep dedication of the befrienders and counselors I met in Vavuniya and Jaffna, there are significant weaknesses in this program: First of all, far too few counselors have been trained in relation to the overall need. But more significantly, psychosocial counseling has not yet been institutionalized. Many of the teachers trained do not receive sufficient support to take on the important task of treating children and thus must do this on their own free time – in addition to a full teaching schedule – or not at all. One counselor, for instance, was able to help 12 children, seeing a big improvement in nine and needing more sessions with three. So far, this teacher has had 10 out of 30 periods a week for her work. Starting in January she will be completely freed from her teaching duties, responsible for supporting a student body of 650, 100 of whom are absent and 200 of whom are late every day.

When I asked befrienders and counselors what percentage of children they were actually able to help, the answer was sobering: One teacher said 20 – 25%, several other said less than 10%. While these are not official statistics, I do feel that they are probably a realistic estimate – at least from the point of view of those who are aware of the problems and would be in a position to help more if given the right conditions.

The counseling staff need more support at the school level, e.g. principals should make announcements to teachers, students and parents that this work is important, who would in turn take it more seriously. Some principals give moral support but not the necessary reduction in teaching load or even the necessary space or procedural support. One problem some support staff run into is a breach in confidentiality. The example was cited of a principal who wanted to break confidentiality, a vice principal who interrupts the counseling sessions regularly and teachers who are curious as to which experiences children have related. One way to relate the content and value of their work that was suggested would be to discuss the work regularly at staff meetings, giving examples of how children have been helped without naming names. Also, special workshops should be conducted for principals and zonal directors. In the end, what will really convince others of the value of this work is seeing the positive results of counseling – happier children.

In addition, steps must be taken to provide the befrienders and counselors with an official mandate and thus enable them to put the skills and knowledge they have gained into effective practice. Only recently did the PMoE release a circular supporting counseling in schools – a step program advocates struggled three years to achieve.

The needs-based approach employed by BESP meant that teachers, principals and teacher-trainers identified with the program personally and professionally to the extent that it quickly became “their” program and not something imposed on them. BESP’s credibility was further strengthened by the fact that it cooperated well with the MoE and NIE as well as the Provincial MoE and the LTTE Education Council in NEP.

5. Assessment of the impact

In reference to the focus of this report BESP operates on three levels:

1. Crisis prevention and rehabilitation for the short term. This level involves rehabilitation not just in a physical but also in a psychological sense. After a prolonged armed conflict the school system must be brought back to “normal” operation and all children in affected areas must be given the opportunity to achieve an age-appropriate learning level. By nature, of course, educational measures can only serve to prevent future crises to a very limited extent.
2. Conflict resolution for the medium term. Conflict resolution involves promoting a culture of learning to live together at the classroom level, which in turn means becoming more aware of interpersonal interaction and facing up to conflicts between children, between children and teachers, between teachers and parents and among staff. Such positive models of conflict resolution can carry over to influence community life. The most effective way to implement these measures is through in-service training.
3. Peace promotion for the long term. This level involves measures that support the peace process and promote institution building for the creation of a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual society. Examples of this are integrating a 2nd national language curriculum and elements of psychosocial intervention and remedial learning into initial teacher training. Peace events and cultural exchanges also serve to affect individual attitudes positively.

At this point I would like to assess BESP’s impact in relation to these three levels. What were the intended and unintended, expected and unexpected results? Which positive and negative effects can be observed and what is the relevance of development policy?

5.1. Crisis prevention and rehabilitation for the short term

While the catch-up program and psychosocial counseling did reach the intended target group of children directly affected by the war, it turned out that others not or only indirectly affected also benefited from it. These were, for instance, children with special learning needs and children whose parents were absent because of working abroad. During a school visit in Kilinochchi a child who had been born deaf was introduced to us as a participant in the catch-up program. In this sense, the measures undertaken in the context of crisis prevention and rehabilitation unexpectedly called attention to the secondary effects of war and poverty and the greater need for remedial learning and the institutionalization of psychosocial intervention all over the country. As there is no comparable publication in Sinhala, the *Child Mental Health* manual has recently been translated into Sinhala. The affective approach it advocates can be expected to add impetus to the move towards integrating counseling into

the school system island-wide and broadening its focus to include more than just career counseling.

On the negative side:

- One problem that has arisen is that of stigmatization. In a culture in which individuals only reluctantly admit that they have problems or conflicts, it is difficult for people to ask for or accept help. On a number of occasions, counselors or befrienders have offered parents to help their children and have been refused permission. Parents sometimes misunderstand such offers of support as a statement that something is wrong with their child. The teachers do not need permission to counsel children but do need it for carrying out Narrative Exposure Therapy. Counselors and befrienders reported, however, that stigmatization is decreasing as counseling becomes more prevalent.
- The fact that the befriender and especially the counselor training has had such a tremendous personal and professional impact on the participants in the program led to a periodic feeling of isolation for some. Through their experience in the intensive training course, these teachers become acutely aware of the unmet needs of children and teachers alike. This is a blessing, in that they are motivated and able to help others, but also at times a curse, since they are themselves burdened with problems and do not always have the emotional energy to struggle for the necessary attitudinal and organizational changes needed to optimize their work. Sometimes, other teachers are jealous because the counselors become the most popular teachers in their schools.
- The counselor trainers themselves are faced with the almost impossible task of counseling course participants during the training sessions. As the training exposes the traumas the participants themselves have experienced, they seek individual support, which means that the trainers end up doing counseling sessions for several hours every evening – in addition to the training load. While this need could not have been anticipated originally, it is now apparent and should be met by professional counselors not involved in the training. Also, there is a need to screen participants more effectively to ensure that no one with a psychosis is accepted as a participant. The work of the counselors and befrienders must be institutionalized and a reliable component of “helping the helpers” needs to be built into the system: The counselors can only work effectively on a long-term basis if they are provided with the appropriate conditions (e.g. secondment for at least 10 hours a week) and the necessary emotional support. Regular support groups must meet on a regional basis. The original plan that the counselors meet with befrienders one day a month for supervision turned out to be unrealistic. Where such groups do function they are a godsend for those involved – an opportunity to play, act, share and cry together, as participants reported. One woman said that if she

didn't have the group she would go to the leader's house personally; the leader herself disclosed that she also needs the group to talk about her own problems.

Although confronted with almost insurmountable obstacles, the PSC program in particular has achieved important pioneer work in a country where there are no school psychologists and in which the universities have yet to develop psychology as a regular degree course. There is no question that this work must continue. Still, there remains the dilemma over whether it is better to help a few intensively or many superficially. Here I am referring to the fact that overall the befriender program could be conceived of being more effective than the counseling program. The 45-day counseling training course touches the lives of significantly fewer children – albeit in a therapeutic rather than solely in an educational manner – than the 8-day befriender training course. The counselors and benders themselves reported that the befriender training leads to significant attitudinal changes and to the establishment of more honest and sincere relationships, while the counselor training enables participants to work with children in need at a deeper level

5.2. Conflict resolution for the medium term

While the aim of curriculum development in the context of BESP was to improve the quality of primary education, in part by shifting the focus away from traditional, teacher-centered to innovative pupil-centered learning, no one could have foreseen the overwhelming success enjoyed by the Joyful Learning approach. By all accounts, its impact has been much larger than expected. In my opinion, the “secret” of Joyful Learning is that it recognizes the importance of the affective aspects of teaching and learning and integrates these into the educational process. These aspects have, up to now, been largely neglected in the context of pre- and in-service teacher training. Developed in cooperation with teachers and teacher trainers, this seemingly simple approach relays a double message: On the one hand, that children and teachers alike have legitimate needs and, on the other hand, that problems are normal occurrences and are there to be solved.

One impact study cites four types of impact chains:

- increased attendance because of positive changes in the learning environment in the individual classroom
- positive influence on the school environment, e.g. teachers influencing each other
- schools in the school families influencing each other to adopt the Joyful Learning approach
- schools influencing the community (Impact Study. Primary Teacher In-service Activities. A Synopsis. Monitoring & Evaluation Unit, GTZ/BESP/TIP/NEP November 2003).

Here are two examples of the empowering effect of Joyful Learning that went well beyond the classroom:

An HPO trainer from Paddirippu (NEP) came to the conclusion that it was not right to continue isolating four children in his class on account of their caste. Having gained the support of his principal and knowing that integrating the children would cause an outcry in the majority community, a meeting with temple trustees and other local leaders was arranged for the purpose of gaining support.

“A week later, on a Sunday afternoon, a village level meeting presided by the chief trustee was held. In that meeting a child from my class spoke to the people. ‘We are fighting for equality with the Sinhalese. We feel justified. However, we refuse equality for our brothers and sisters in our school. Are we justified?’

This put an end to all arguments and the issue was resolved.” (ibid. p. 5)

Another principal and HPO trainer from Thunukkai (also NEP) reported that changing the atmosphere in the school for the better and getting pupils, teachers and parents more involved in running and improving the school motivated them to seek a solution for a practical problem: The attendance of 25 children was irregular as they had to walk 6 km through a jungle area infested with wild animals to get to school. With the help of an NGO and two bulls provided by the Vanni Education Council a cart was assembled and the children are now brought to school and provided with a daily meal. (ibid. p. 14)

These examples illustrate the potential of educational measures to change a society negatively influenced by poverty and ethnic strife in a small but meaningful way.

5.3. Peace promotion for the long term

In relation to the five languages, teacher pre-service training is taking place on a wide scale basis at the 12 NCoEs involved in training primary teachers as planned. It is significant that a bi-cultural team of curriculum experts at the MDTU developed the language materials. In this way, the interests of all parties concerned could be met – this sets an example and sends an important signal to those who will be putting the materials into use over the next years. It also provides a model for future projects.

The NCoE exchange program and Peace Link activities turned out to be much more successful than expected and gained national and even international media attention. The short-term positive effect was that initial contact between students from the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities in the North and South was established. In the long term, those students who participated have been sensitized to cross-cultural issues and a foundation has thus been laid for further cooperative activities. In addition, all involved will pass on their newly gained experiences and attitudes to their own students in the future.

Again, an unexpected synergizing effect was created between the program components in that some of the content from the literary competition and Peace Link activities was

integrated into the language teaching materials. All in all, learning processes were initiated at the affective as well as at the cognitive level.

One negative result of the exchange and language programs may be that the political dimension of the conflict is left out. In order to counteract this risk, future exchange programs should strive to integrate elements of trauma and reconciliation work, motivating students to share their personal experiences with the ethnic conflict, i.e., how they have been negatively affected or hurt by discrimination, ethnic strife, the armed conflict or its wide ranging effects. Such programs should be integrated into the regular NCoE course of studies and be extended to the school level. It is worth considering the organization of longer-term exchange programs to allow Singhalese and Tamils to teach their mother tongues for an extended period of time. Though such a plan may meet with resistance, it could even help to temporarily alleviate the problem of finding qualified language teachers.

6. Relevance for the Situation in Sri Lanka

The challenge facing conflict resolution and peace promotion in the current Sri Lankan context is twofold. First, it must be made relevant to the day-to-day interests and needs of teachers and students on both sides of the conflict, i.e., to those who have experienced violence, displacement and destruction directly and over an extended period of time, as well as to those for whom the war was relevant but far away. Second, it must also be made politically acceptable to all parties.

On the surface, all Sri Lankans desire peace, but the question as to what constitutes peace and how it is to be achieved is a sensitive and controversial one. In particular, the major conflicting parties have vastly different views as to the role of structural factors and the relationship between peace and justice. Even at the grassroots level, teachers do not want to be told that they need to implement peaceful practices – as they do not feel that they are the ones who caused war. In their view, they should not be made responsible for finding solutions to problems they have not caused but rather expect solutions to be found at the political level. Especially those in the North are sensitive to this issue, emphasizing again and again that peace and conflict should be made an issue all over the country – not only in the North and East, where the war actually took place. In short: They do not view themselves as “the problem” and do not want to be seen by outsiders as such.

Peace promotion through education is a long-term undertaking that cannot in and of itself overcome the structural causes of conflict. It can, however, help bridge the divide between the major cultural, ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka – a divide that is partially visible in the form of military presence, the remnants of war and human suffering, and partially elusive in that it is invisible to the untrained eye, perhaps even invisible to those who experience it daily because they have come to take it for granted.

Taking a step back to view the goals, context and content of the BESP program more critically, I would like to raise several issues which are not only socially, but also politically sensitive:

- the negative effects of structural problems facing schools
- language as a political and economic issue
- cultural socialization in relation to conflict resolution
- the discrepancy between explicit policy and implicit priorities
- the narrow focus on the Sinhalese-Tamil line of conflict.

6.1. The negative effects of structural problems facing schools

Again and again on both my visits to Sri Lanka, Tamil teachers, teacher trainers, education authorities and LTTE representatives in the North and South emphasized the fact that there is a severe shortage of teachers for the Tamil medium. They view this situation as one

created on purpose by the Sinhalese-dominated central government and education authorities to hinder the social and political development of the Tamil minority. The Government of Sri Lanka, on the other hand, takes deep offence at the very mention of the possibility of such a situation, let alone the idea that it could have been brought about by a conscious strategy. This creates a difficult situation for a cooperation partner like the GTZ, which strives to maintain credibility with both sides and work towards overcoming the root causes of the conflict. The GTZ has acted wisely in that it recognizes the role of the Sri Lankan government and education authorities as its official negotiation and cooperation partner, simultaneously establishing a working relationship and staying on good terms with the LTTE and the provincial education authorities. (In the context of the new project, GTZ will cooperate with the Basic Education Sector Unit (BESU) based at the PMoE in Trincomalee and responsible for education in grades 1 – 9.) Gaining acceptance in such a go-between role has been possible because of BESP's pragmatic approach, seeking to provide island-wide support to the basic education sector and to cater to the special needs of the North and East, where armed conflict raged for 20 years. Still: The fact remains that as long as Tamil-medium schools lack the staff needed to guarantee basic education in the subjects viewed as essential, it will remain difficult to create the capacity needed to teach additional subjects such as Sinhalese as the 2nd national language and to release befrienders and teacher-counselors to fulfill their vitally important tasks.

6.2. Language as a political and economic issue

Language is a highly political issue in Sri Lanka: The current ethnic conflict goes back to the Language Act of 1956, which replaced English as the major medium language with Sinhalese as the only recognized national language. This move was seen by Tamils as a major setback to their role in society, as they had been privileged under British rule and were subsequently subject to discrimination by the Sinhalese majority. In addition, English instruction was largely neglected for many years thereafter – which was bound to have a negative impact on the economic development of the country as a whole. Again and again I met older educationists from both sides of the conflict who had themselves learned in the English medium and deeply regretted the fact that the language issue triggered so much ill-feeling, strife and even armed conflict. Many Sinhalese are little motivated to learn Tamil as they feel they will hardly need it in a world dominated by English. On the other hand, many Tamils and Muslims are hesitant to put much effort into learning a language they feel has been and is being imposed upon them by the dominant majority and the central government. In this sense, any language instruction involving teaching Tamil as a mother tongue, Tamil and Sinhalese as a 2nd national language and English as a link language is political in the sense that it recognizes the importance of all “five” national languages, as the Sri Lankans

put it. But: Are “five” languages necessary and what is it really worth to teach all of them equally? To complicate matters, I was also confronted with the opinion that expecting teachers to teach the 2nd national language is an excessive demand that many of them cannot fulfill and that economically it is more pressing to learn English. While it is no doubt true that English is more important than the other two languages internationally, in the long run it is important that both groups gain at least a basic knowledge of the other language – first and foremost as a recognition that they do, indeed, live in a multicultural society with two major languages. In the short run this will mean that the German-Sri Lankan policy decision to support the 2nd national languages as a major focus of the new PACT education project will probably not initially be viewed favorably by Tamils in the Northeast, who experience their everyday problems of rebuilding the school system in a war-torn zone as more pressing than teaching Sinhalese.

6.3. Cultural socialization in relation to conflict resolution

Everywhere I went educators on both sides of the conflict emphasized repeatedly that they harbor no ill feeling against the other ethnic group – in spite of the fact that they have experienced a prolonged armed conflict. It is not easy to comprehend such an open and accepting attitude on the one hand and the fact that the war went on for so long on the other hand. Perhaps this apparent contradiction holds the key to understanding the situation. As one interviewee put it, the vast majority of Sri Lankans are deeply peace-loving people, regardless of their cultural or ethnic socialization. As I stated in Chapter 2, Sri Lankan conflict socialization seems to be characterized by an evasive attitude: “Conflicts are threatening and thus should be avoided.” Personal conflict is regarded as threatening rather than as a natural part of everyday life – or perhaps even a potential for change and growth in relationships. Often conflicts are avoided until they have become severely and covertly escalated. They then erupt into interpersonal violence. In regard to political conflict, too, violence is frequently considered a viable means of voicing and enforcing one’s views. Any work, therefore, on creating a more open and constructive conflict culture is valuable in that it supports people’s ability to overcome their cultural reticence in regard to conflict and allows them to find the courage to face up to differences as well as similarities.

6.4. Policy and priorities

As in any project of its kind, success is largely dependent on the expertise and dedication of the central figures – in this case the teacher trainers and the teachers themselves. While there is no question about their motivation, it is important to ask to what extent the local, regional and national education authorities genuinely believe in and support the approaches being developed and put into practice. In the long term, significant changes in the system

can only be achieved if they are *both* carried by the grassroots *and* sufficiently supported by the political will of the education authorities and elite on both sides of the conflict. Discussion partners in the North emphasized again and again that BESP's credibility is based largely on its needs-based approach. With this standing and as the major partner of the GoSL in the field of education, the GTZ is in a unique position to continue its commitment to promoting peace through educational measures over the next years.

6.5. Concentration on the Sinhalese-Tamil line of conflict

As Thania Pfaffenholz rightly points out in her study *Erfahrungen aus dem ATP Sri Lanka*, the Tamil-Sinhalese line of conflict is only one of five lines of conflict influencing the political and social mood in Sri Lanka. Although this conflict is the most prominent locally and internationally, it would be a mistake to focus exclusive attention on it. Assuming that the GoSL and the LTTE do manage to create a basis for turning the current cease-fire situation into lasting peace, it is probably only a matter of time until other conflicts – which have been politically overshadowed during the past two decades – will again come to the forefront. With this in mind, it is wise to devise and carry out conflict transformation programs that reach out to all ethnic groups and sectors of society, as BESP has done and as the new PACT education project will do.

In conclusion: Education has a major role to play in creating peace and intercultural understanding in Sri Lanka – at an individual, social and finally, at a political level. The way forward will be paved by the continued cooperation between the national and local education authorities, educational institutions at various levels in the North and South, the GTZ and other national and international partners in the formal and non-formal sectors – all seeking to contribute to the ability of children and youth to solve future conflicts creatively and non-violently. The future program in the context of PACT can build on the excellent work done by BESP over the past several years and take advantage of the current political situation, which is characterized by a reduction in tension between the major conflicting parties. It will be up to the politicians to decide whether to use this opportunity to create lasting peace or to fall back into a state of armed conflict. As one of my interview partners put it: “We go on with the new program ... and then the war starts again!” While there is always that risk, it is nevertheless essential to go on with the work at hand and trust that it will benefit those we aim to touch.

7. Promising Practices and their relevance for the region and beyond

The goal of the programs targeted by the GTZ is to promote peace, prevent crises and provide an atmosphere for conflict transformation. So far, several aspects have proved to be promising practices in realizing this goal. Peace education and conflict transformation, Joyful Learning and the catch-up and psychosocial counseling programs have begun to be implemented in Sri Lanka, the latter two exclusively in the conflict regions of the North and East. These components serve as innovative models of what could be applied to other conflict-ridden areas in the region and beyond.

7.1 Joyful Learning

The Teacher In-Service Project “Joyful Learning”, based on the Joyful Learning Training Manual developed in 1999, teaches in-service advisors, principals, zonal education officers and other multipliers how to implement child-centered learning at the primary level. Participants learn to identify the general characteristics of children, to differentiate according to their various backgrounds and environments, to detect special abilities and to influence children’s learning positively. Furthermore, teachers are sensitised to issues of mental health, reintegration and conflict resolution. The teachers involved in this project have been highly motivated and have actively applied their newly acquired knowledge in the classroom. The children as well as the parents have responded extremely well to this impetus. In fact, the only regret is that there is such a harsh transition now from primary to junior secondary levels.

7.2 The catch-up program

The catch-up program serves to bring children who have missed time in school due to armed conflict in their region up to age-appropriate schooling levels. Through testing, children are identified who need to “catch up”, who have learning disabilities and/or who are suffering psychologically. This project has been very effective in the North and East and in Vanni where it has been implemented

WFP has cooperated with BESP by providing these children, who are primarily from impoverished families, with a midday meal, which not only encourages their attendance, but also increases their learning ability.

In the Vanni region special materials have been prepared to help deal with the children who are compensating for lost education. They include: a *Handbook of Worksheets and Activities* for special learning, a Handbook of multi-grade activities for intellectually able learners who are at a level lower than age-appropriate, a trainers' *Manual for Proficiency Course in English* for primary school teachers and a Learners' Book for Proficiency Course in English.

According to the teachers, these materials are very useful and necessary to carry out the catch-up program in an efficient manner.

VERP II has begun to train all 2,000 primary school teachers in the catch-up program in the Vanni area. These teachers will be able to cope with children who have lost years of education, slow learners, children who have been psychologically damaged and children in danger of dropping out.

The catch-up program appears to focus on regular curriculum content, i.e., subject matter rather than on education for peace and the creation of peaceful and non-violent community life as originally planned. This reflects the immediate needs of the children and teachers alike. As it turns out, however, some children with special needs indirectly related to the war also benefit from both programs.

7.3 Psychosocial counseling

Because the children involved in the catch-up programs are also frequently affected by trauma, they have been able to benefit particularly from the presence of teachers with psychosocial training.

In the Sri Lankan context, the development of a psychosocial counseling program is a particularly important complementary aspect of creating the basis for conflict transformation at the grassroots level. Although BECAre is not able to provide counseling facilities to all schools in NEP, it has begun to deal with this urgent need in a meaningful way. Originally the program was instituted to aid children traumatized by war. In the course of the project, the more general need for such a system has become apparent, i.e., for children with “normal” psychological disturbances caused by family problems such as alcoholism, abuse and incest. The Zonal Education Director stated that in particular girls had been helped by the befrienders and counselors. Some girls had been raped by alcoholic fathers, others by members of the security forces and then gone for illegal abortions. Since “Jaffna culture” as the Zonal Director put it prohibits them from talking about such experiences or turning to their families for help, the befrienders take on an important role - there is a need for one befriender per school. (In Jaffna there are 8 counselors and 50 befrienders for 131 schools.) In the course of the project, however, the more general need for such a system has become apparent, i.e., for children with “normal” psychological disturbances caused by family problems such as alcoholism, abuse and incest. In many families, such problems are exacerbated by impoverished living conditions and/or by lack of contact to or even estrangement from close family members, e.g., due to parents working abroad. Such children have benefited and will benefit from the program.

In general, however, there has been no system of school psychology or family counseling and only 1% of all teachers have received additional training in counseling (aside from those

trained by BECAre). Also, there are no schools for children with special needs. The necessity for trained staff is even higher in areas that have been directly affected by armed conflict. In the long run, the MoE can and should learn from the experience gained in NEP in its undertaking to establish a nation-wide system of psychosocial counseling.

The Master Counselor Program

As part of the BECAre program in NEP, 99 Master Counselors were given extensive training in psychosocial counseling in order to work closely with Befrienders and children in primary schools. This component has already proved highly successful. A study conducted by the MoHRD, E&CA (Feb. 2003) highlighted the following positive aspects of the MC training program.

- Trainees gain confidence in stages
- Theory is related to practice at different levels
- There is continuous assessment by supervisors and peers
- Field experience provides hands-on training
- Materials have been provided, including manuals for the MC
- Case studies were conducted and reports written
- Classical theories were used in the development of the program
- Holistic training and child-centered education was provided and various media and creative arts were used

These aspects are especially important, as they have been lacking in the normal teacher education courses in Sri Lanka. The teachers who have undergone this training are very positive about their capacity to identify traumatized children, understand and care for them, or refer them for further treatment if necessary. They have realized their past treatment of some children aggravated rather than alleviated their situation. Now that they have undergone the course the teachers feel ashamed of the physical punishments they had previously meted out and the damage they caused to the children. They feel that they have emancipated themselves from a situation of ignorance and apathy.

Advanced training for Teacher Counselors in Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)

From June-August 2004, vivo carried out special trauma training for a group of selected Tamil teachers (see Vivo Mission Report Sri Lanka, June 22 – August 8, 2004). The aim was to teach them to identify and deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although the vivo team identified specific areas for improvement, they felt that the program was a significant success, especially in combination with the cascade model, the befrienders and the teacher counselors. The report points out that the Sinhalese, on the one hand, have gained much expertise in implementing peace-building activities at school level and the Tamils, on the other, have gathered significant experience in psychosocial training. Both of these aspects are important keys to conflict transformation at all levels of society.

Participants in the training referred repeatedly to NET as the most useful instrument they

had learned so far for helping traumatized children and even brought several such children and one mother to a discussion on their work.

7.4 Relevance for the region and beyond

Although they were originally developed out of and for the specific situation in Sri Lanka, Joyful Learning, the catch up program and psychosocial counseling in particular can serve as models for countries in the region and beyond. The innovative and effective approaches and materials developed can and should be adapted to fit the specific political conditions and educational framework of countries suffering from similar problems and searching for viable solutions. In this way, others can benefit from the BESP and Sri Lankan experience, aiding the processes of crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion in their own contexts.

At this stage, I would like to present a framework for peace promotion through education. The measures will have to vary depending on the structure of the education system, the sociopolitical situation and the conflict culture of the state in question.

The first goal of peace promotion through education is **violence prevention**, which is a long-term process. Direct violence prevention includes measures such as teaching the social skills, e.g. affirmation, communication and cooperation, necessary to solve conflicts constructively and creatively. It goes without saying that teachers can only teach these skills if they have learned them themselves – and if they are truly convinced that they are important. Indirect violence prevention goes beyond the behavioral level and involves creating conditions under which pupils need not resort to violence when conflicts arise in the long term – examples in the case of Sri Lanka are student exchange programs and teaching the 2nd national languages.

The second goal of peace promotion is **intervention**, which is a short-term process. Intervention involves interrupting violent situations or threats of violence and remedying the immediate effects of violent conflicts. This involves the physical reconstruction of school buildings as well as psychological rehabilitation and providing support for the creation of peaceful structures. An important element of intervention could also be reconciliation, especially in situations in which former enemies live, work and study side by side.

The third goal of peace promotion is **conflict resolution** – a medium-term process. By this I mean creating mechanisms for resolving conflicts peacefully and perhaps even using conflicts as means of developing civil society. On the one hand, it is necessary to empower teachers, parents and children to overcome everyday problems by teaching them the necessary skills. On the other hand, it is essential to do this on the basis of the conflict culture that pervades the given society. This means there can be no “recipe” for installing conflict resolution mechanisms. Instead, we must examine the specific culture and situation

at hand and determine how much and which aspects of our previous conceptual knowledge and experience can be useful and at which points we will have to react flexibly and be open to new paths that can only be developed by cooperating with our partners on a truly equal basis. After all, it is they who will carry on the work on a long-term basis – the goal of development work in this field can only be to explore possible procedures and set up a viable theoretical and practical framework.

8. Recommendations for further action

8.1 The contribution of the new project to PACT

As BESP will end in May 2005, plans are already underway for a follow-up project. In October, representatives of the MoE and BESP agreed on the parameters of the new project and a planning workshop was carried out. Four important elements crystallized out of BESP provide the framework for the new project, which I have called "*Promoting Social Cohesion through Education*":

1. *2nd National Languages*
2. *Values Education*
3. *Psychosocial Intervention*
4. *Remedial Education*

The major focus will be on languages and psychosocial intervention.

8.2 Promoting social cohesion through education: Challenges facing the project

The basis of the cooperation between Germany – funded by the BMZ and implemented with the assistance of the GTZ – and the Government of Sri Lanka is changing: In the new project, the GTZ will take on more of an advisory role and be less involved in direct implementation. Also, more emphasis will be placed on the cooperation with other donors like SIDA and UNICEF in the framework of the Education SWAP under the leadership of the MoE.

Within this context, the new project will undoubtedly face challenges, which can best be overcome if they are anticipated during the initial planning phase.

2nd National Languages

The long-term goal of teaching Sinhalese Tamil and Tamil speakers Sinhalese is to create a basis for day-to-day communication and problem solving between the three ethnic groups. Learning the 2nd National Language as a "partner tongue" can be seen as a form of cultural affirmation. It creates a fundament for understanding and eases access to the culture and mentality of the other ethnic groups and increases sensitivity. The biggest challenge here is creating motivation to learn the other language. While Tamil speakers may show some resistance to learning Sinhalese, Sinhalese may fail to see the necessity of learning a language they feel they will hardly need. My impression is that teaching and learning the 2nd national languages – as compared to English – is low on the list of priorities on both sides. For this reason it will be particularly important to use the competencies already created at the MDTU to develop creative, interactive, child-centered teaching and learning materials for the

junior secondary level, pilot these effectively and develop a system for them to be put into use in the context of teacher pre- and in-service training.

Values Education

Values Education will involve examining common and differing values across ethnic, religious and cultural borders. No doubt there are implicit and explicit values central to Sri Lankan society as a whole. These must be reflected upon, upheld and passed on to the young generation. However, I consider it absolutely essential that one does not shy away from facing up to the differing values between the ethnic groups. This involves formulating these explicitly, discussing them openly and dealing with the positive and negative clichés the various ethnic groups have of one another. Teaching values education involves not only content but above all attitudes. Specifically, values education as I understand it aims at promoting a peaceful conflict culture at the classroom and school level – which will eventually spill over into the community as the students grow older and enter the workforce. Values Education can be viewed as a cross-curricular task but must also be integrated into the appropriate subject matter in order to ensure that it is actually put into practice. The cross-curricular approach involves reviewing curriculum materials in a variety of areas (e.g. from history to language to math) and evaluating them critically for the extent they reflect the values advocated in a nonviolent, multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual society. This process has already been initiated by the Ministry of Education's Peace Unit. It is absolutely essential that such a procedure be carried out by a tri-cultural team of curriculum experts. If materials are found to contradict common values or be offensive to one of the ethnic groups they must be taken out of circulation or revised.

The subject-related approach to values education should be integrated into the teaching of a regular subject, such as social studies or life competency training, which are both taught at the junior secondary level. Considering the overwhelmingly positive response to the Joyful Learning manual and the fact that post-primary children are faced with a learning environment that overemphasizes academics and underemphasizes the social aspects of school life (in the sense of "learning to live together"), it would be highly advisable to adapt the Joyful Learning manual to the junior secondary level. By teaching conflict resolution skills as a mechanism for solving conflicts before they escalate, values education will not remain abstract but will become tangible and relevant to everyday school life. The goal here would be to develop the classroom as a microcosm of peaceful conflict resolution. This would involve carrying out activities centered on the following topics:

- Affirmation of oneself and others
- Communication (listening and speaking, nonverbal communication, feelings)
- Cooperation (working together towards a common goal)
- Gender-based interaction (dynamics of interaction among girls, among boys and between girls and boys, treating each other with respect)
- Creative conflict resolution (possible conflict outcomes, win-win, negotiation, mediation).

In the framework of this “Friendly Classroom” approach, several highly motivated schools could be selected to pilot a (peer) mediation program aimed at supporting the institutionalization of this practical method of third-party intervention which has become popular in many countries.

The first step towards putting the subject-related approach into practice will be to develop and test curriculum materials with a team of practitioners from all three communities. These materials should then be integrated into the initial teacher training system at the NCoEs and models for disseminating them at the in-service level (train the trainers) will need to be developed. It must be clear that the partner takes on responsibility for implementing training and that the GTZ primarily takes on an advisory role.

Psychosocial Intervention

In the context of BESP, psychosocial counseling was implemented in the North and East as a means of helping traumatized children work through the negative psychological effects of armed conflict. As trauma results not only from war, but also from alcoholism, family violence and child abuse – problems which affect children all over Sri Lanka – there is a general need for psychosocial intervention. In the long term, counseling and therapy will need to become institutionalized throughout the country, in schools as well as in independent organizations created to support families.

The work in this area should build on the concepts and materials already in use in the NEP and on the MoE’s initiative to promote “student well-being”. A first step in this direction has been to translate the Child Mental Health manual into Sinhalese. The next challenge will be to adapt the existing teaching materials, content and methodology to the NCoE curriculum. Further steps that need to follow will be integrating interactive training in psychosocial intervention into the psychology course at the NCoEs, making future teachers aware of the special needs of psychologically affected children and giving them strategies for dealing with such children. This involves first training the NCoE psychology lecturers, whereby it will be particularly important to familiarize them with the interactive approach. In the long term, a system

of training for teacher-counselors or school psychologists will need to be developed and implemented country-wide. For the time being, the training model developed and carried out so far in the North and East could be piloted in selected Zonal Education Offices in other parts of the country.

The unknown here is the reaction of the lecturers, who will be expected to change the content as well as the methodology of the existing course: To what extent will they be open to doing this? And will they be willing to adapt an activity-based rather than academic approach? Also, the goal of the course must be specified, as it will certainly be unrealistic to train all future teachers as counselors.

Another challenge will be to create the capacity for meaningful in-service training, especially considering that counselors are trained for 45 days. Connected to this is the dilemma of limited resources. Should they be used to train many teachers (“befrienders”) in such a way that they can reach a larger number of students more superficially or fewer teachers who are able to actually treat a limited number of affected students? Perhaps this dilemma will help bring about a debate on instituting a country-wide system of school psychology.

The final challenge facing psychosocial intervention will be to integrate those trained meaningfully into the school system, i.e., to ensure *ahead of time* that they will be granted the time needed to treat individual children.

Remedial Education

Again, the acute need for catch-up programs in the North and East to support children who have missed out on school because of the conflict point to the larger need for remedial education. After reviewing the range of materials already in use, this approach should also be integrated into initial teacher training at the NCoE level. For this it will probably be necessary to develop new training materials and train the relevant lecturers in their use.

An overall system for identifying children with special needs and catering to these will need to be developed on the basis of the work done up to now in the catch-up program and in general in the area of remedial education. Again, the knowledge and skills involved must be integrated in a meaningful way into teacher pre-service (perhaps also within the psychology course) and in-service training. Certainly it will only make sense to sensitize teachers to children’s special needs if there is a functioning referral system, i.e. if these children can be helped in a meaningful way.

In my opinion, a common approach should be adopted for all four pillars: First, to develop and pilot materials with teams of researchers, teachers, teacher trainers and lecturers from

all ethnic groups. Second, models for effective implementation must be developed in close cooperation with selected NCoEs, Zonal Education Authorities and Teachers' Centers. Time and resources should not be wasted attempting to cooperate with nonfunctioning institutions. Highly motivated and capable In-service Advisors could use the Teachers' Centers as a venue; their work must be supported by the ZEAs. The NCoEs involved in the project must be truly motivated to take on the tasks at hand, which will involve an extra workload in the short term but a meaningful expansion of the curriculum in the long run.

8.3 Cooperation with the partner

The new project is designed in accordance with Sri Lankan national policies, most importantly the Education Reform Initiative of 1997, the Relief, Reconstruction and Reconciliation Plan, the Framework for Poverty Alleviation and the Five Year National Plan for the Development of Secondary Education. Both sides have agreed that the project is to be integrated into the Sector Wide Approach in Education (SWAP), coordinated by the MoE and scheduled officially to begin work in January 2005. Here it is viewed as a measure to improve the quality of education and to promote social cohesion and values education.

Under the auspices of PACT on the German side, the project aims at supporting the transformation of the root causes of conflict and contributing to capacity building with the government, NGOs and civil society (*Recommendations for the New Education Project Framework, 2nd Meeting of the Task Force to finalize the proposal for the framework of the new Sri Lankan-German Education Project, October 20, 2004*).

In keeping with a modern approach to DC, the mode of delivery of technical assistance will change. Instead of the program primarily being run by the GTZ, there will be a German senior advisor, several long-term national experts and a pool of national and international short-term experts who primarily take on an advisory function. The short-term experts can take on the task of developing viable concepts, training multipliers and advising the senior advisor and his or her staff as how to best support program implementation. Baseline studies may need to be done initially, e.g. to determine the real needs of junior secondary teachers before developing concepts and materials.

It will be up to the senior advisor and project director to assist the MoE in developing a system of implementation. The responsibility for implementation will lie with the MoE/NIE. The GoSL will need to approve specific measures before they are implemented, whether at the level of the MoE, the NIE or in the form of a cabinet decision. The new project needs a strategic framework from the outset, e.g. cabinet decision in order to become officially integrated and recognized.

In the past GTZ education programs were much more involved in the implementation process than will be the case in the future. This change in function and role may well turn out

to be a challenge to both sides. Taking on more of an advisory role will mean influencing policy making from the outset, a goal that BESP only partially achieved. The fact that the Sri Lankan authorities will take a more active role should assure higher sustainability of the measures instituted in the long run.

One of the major problems that can be anticipated in cooperation with the partner is that of exaggerated expectations. The GoSL has emphasized repeatedly that it wishes a “country-wide approach” – but this is simply not realistic considering the limited funds that will be available for the new program. Behind this wish is presumably the concern that the South and not only the war-torn North and East benefit from the program. This is a legitimate concern that can be met by initiating measures on a pilot basis in selected provinces in the North and South. The partners at the operational level will be, as planned, the PMoEs, the ZEAs and the NCoEs. Individual measures should be regarded as pilot projects that can be duplicated all over the country if the partner so desires and is willing to allocate the necessary resources. To ensure that each of the three communities will profit equally from the new project, provinces and institutions should be selected on an egalitarian basis. It would be wise to have ZEAs, Teacher Centers (TC) and NCoEs apply for participation in the program, which will involve not only benefits, but also requirements for successful implementation.

Another problem may be that of working with the TCs. The government would like to use the new program to make the Teacher Centers more functional, i.e., to help strengthen their management and better integrate them into the teacher education system. The fact is that many of the TCs are structurally dysfunctional and in my view it should not be the task of the GTZ to reform them. Cooperation with the TCs will only be possible if their infrastructure is developed to the extent that they can take on the responsibility for organizing and carrying out in-service training. Otherwise they can conceivably be used as venues for meetings and training, but neither the GTZ nor the government should depend on them to initiate and implement measures if they are not in a position to do so.

In any case, the experience gained in BESP and the advisors in the new program should be used to advise the National Integration Education Peace Education Unit at the MoE if such support is desired. This body is responsible for integration and exchange programs “Interschool Student Friendship Society” and “Pals from two Cities”.

Another question that must be clarified is who will be the direct partner in the new project. For strategic reasons it is important to place the program at the highest level possible so that influence can be taken from the very beginning at the policy level. Since the new project will have much fewer staff than BESP, it would be wise to place it directly in the MoE or the NIE. This will make it easier to fill the possible “policy gap” between declared goals and actual support for the program. It will be essential to cooperate with individual partners who view

the project as an important priority and are willing to invest time and energy in supporting it idealistically and politically. At the same time, the project will need to cooperate constructively with BESU in NEP – acting, as BESP did so well, as a go-between. None of the tasks before us will be easy, since here – as in any country – there is always resistance to innovation. As we have seen in the case of the projects up to now, reforms will only take hold when they are instituted at the grassroots (in this case school) level – but they must also have significant policy support from the line ministry. Considering structural factors, it will not be easy to integrate the new policies into the existing school structures, but doing so presents a unique opportunity to improve the quality of education in an approach that is both top-down and bottom-up.

The main focus will be on languages and psychosocial intervention. The goal of furthering social cohesion in schools fits in well with the MoEs striving to convert schools to “living and learning organizations” with principals who have an active knowledge of school-based management. Tara de Mel, Secretary of the Ministry of Education, stated recently that the MoE has school development programs in the North and East on the agenda, which aim at “promoting equal access to good quality school education” (*The challenge of humanizing education*, address at the convocation of the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing held on October 6 and printed in the Daily News on October 16, 2004).

8.4. Cooperation with other donors within the context of the Education SWAP

The Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) is a recent initiative of the MoE aimed at coordinating donor contributions to support reforms in the education sector. It incorporates the school, zonal, provincial and national levels. SWAP will provide a framework for cooperation. Planning meetings are already taking place and work will commence in January 2005. Key areas identified by the World Bank are “Access” and “Equity” or “Quality Improvement”. In this latter area the government wishes to concentrate on “developing core competencies for successful living, decision-making and social skills” as well as curriculum development and teacher training (Minutes of the National Steering Committee Meeting. MoE/GTZ-BESP, October 1st, 2004). The GTZ has been taken on as a member of the SWAP Steering Committee.

As a leading contributor to the education sector the WB commissioned a report entitled *Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka: Restoring Performance, Expanding Opportunities and Enhancing Prospects*, which provides a conceptual framework for DC in the area of education and states priorities. The report goes into several areas that will be covered by the new PACT project and thus points to their relevance regarding the current needs of the country. For example, it states that supporting remedial education is an important priority considering the fact that the 18% of children who fail to complete grade 9

(the last grade of compulsory education) are primarily “drawn from poorer homes, economically disadvantaged geographical regions and the rural hinterland, conflict affected areas and the estate sector, or are disabled and handicapped children. (WB p. /) Add to this the fact that “the poverty rates of households fall sharply as the education level of the household head or principal income earner rises” (p.8). The lack of skills such as teamwork, creativity, flexibility, adaptability and effective communication and problem solving is one factor contributing to the problem of educated youth unemployment, especially among women (p. 9).

The report thus points out the necessity of

- modernizing the school curriculum
- implementing an activity-based curriculum
- improving the quality of university education
- promoting social cohesion through education, e.g. by producing textbooks sensitive to the various cultures, promoting respect for diversity and creating opportunities for children from different ethnic groups to learn together.

Furthermore, it emphasizes the need to promote child-friendly teaching methods. This can be done by improving the professional capabilities and skills of teachers. Academic and administrative support systems should be furthered by strengthening the role of in-service advisors and better coordinating their work with the zonal education offices and provincial education authorities.

Up to now the WB has played an important role in coordinating the donor community in the field of education. Unfortunately, the person in charge of this area – who actually worked for DFID – has left and his replacement is only in the country for 10 weeks a year, so there is currently a gap in coordination.

One of the major actors on the Sri Lankan development scene in the field of education is UNICEF. Over the years, UNICEF has developed materials on peace education, for instance, “Education for Conflict Resolution” but these materials are more theoretical than practical and have not been implemented at the classroom level in a systematic manner. Currently, UNICEF sees psychosocial intervention and remedial learning as important priorities and is planning to cooperate in these areas with the NIE, which is scheduled to allocate funds for catch-up in December 2004. UNICEF is open to cooperating with the new GTZ program. The Asian Development Bank has developed a concept for social cohesion at the upper secondary level – this will also need to be considered during the planning phase of the new PACT project.

The most promising potential for cooperation on the new project is with SIDA, who have long planned and now will finally implement a similar project entitled: *Promoting Peace Building*,

Democratic Values and Citizenship in School Education. The project aims at promoting attitudes of tolerance and mutual understanding within a multicultural society and will adopt a systemic or integrative approach involving a range of institutions and interventions at various levels with emphasis on the schools.

Interestingly, Sweden has undergone a reorientation in the development area over the past few years similar to that in Germany, i.e., away from education and towards promoting peace and good government and economic development. Because of this, Sweden's work in the field of education in Sri Lanka was interrupted for several years, which means that they have lost their contacts in this area and will be forced to reconnect with decision makers and practitioners. Like the GTZ project, the new SIDA program is scheduled to commence in 2005 and is planned for a period of 3 years with a budget of about 1 million € a year. It will probably cooperate directly with the MoE, since there have been conflicts with the NIE in the past. Both the GTZ and SIDA emphasize the importance of strong ownership. While the Swedes are also planning to adopt a needs-based approach, their program will operate closer to the grassroots than the future GTZ project and is not limited to the junior secondary level.

SIDA will focus on five aspects:

1. Institutional coordination, monitoring and evaluation
2. Peace building and citizenship in schools with special emphasis on peace, values, civics and the development of child-friendly schools
3. Curriculum development in the areas of intercultural understanding and citizenship through subject-specific and whole-schools approaches
4. Teacher and principal training for citizenship and peace building at the pre- and in-service levels
5. Textbook and material development to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

The two programs will thus overlap only in the area of value education. Combining the two would present a number of logistical obstacles and is probably not realistic at this point. In any case, though, there should be close cooperation between the two programs from the very start. Having lost direct access to the education field, SIDA can benefit from BESP's recent experience and current contacts to the provinces and from its expertise at effecting change in the classroom, which is one of SIDA's major concerns. A realistic goal could be to develop a common strategic framework and institute parallel structures, ensuring that work is not duplicated and supporting each other at a conceptual and advisory level.

A major challenge to cooperation with other donors is that projects are usually at different stages of conception, development and implementation, which makes it difficult to coordinate. The fact that each organization has its own priorities and wishes to create a distinctive image can get in the way of true cooperation. Also, decisions and policies are

made outside the country and independently of each other. Still, it is essential to work together to spread expertise more effectively and use resources optimally. In the interest of ownership and current DC guidelines, it is a good sign that the GoSL has initiated and taken on the responsibility for SWAP. It remains to be seen how effectively it is able to use this instrument. Although the idea of cooperation is so positive that no one could object to it, there are several pitfalls. For one: Do the cooperation partners operate from an equal position or do the donors use the process to influence national priorities in an inappropriate manner – and does the partner country possibly go along with this in order to reap the benefits of the aid offered? How do major and minor organizations in the donor community cooperate, i.e., how do they deal with problems of domination? In the case of Sri Lanka it is also important to ask what role – official or unofficial – is played by the partners in the NEP. Finally, at what level is cooperation realistic – at the policy or at the implementation stage? Donor cooperation, then, as ideal as it seems, is a difficult process. Since there is the danger that SWAP may remain superficial and thus not fulfill its purpose, it would be advisable for the GoSL to organize expert support in the form of organizational development.

Conclusion

Seen as a long-term undertaking, crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peace promotion through education can be an effective means of helping rebuild a civil society and thus of consolidating peace. By their very nature, education programs reach the vast majority of the population on all sides of a conflict. In order to be implemented successfully, such programs must have the ideological and practical support of all parties from the start. They can earn this by effective work that meets the needs of the pupils, teachers, parents and administrators involved. BESP has proven itself to be a prime example of such a program.

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