

Chapter 9

Conflict and Displacement: A Leading Social Problem in Sri Lanka A Study of Two Communities in Anuradhapura District

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9.1 Introduction

The root causes of displacement and their impact on a society may vary from place to place and community to community according to their socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental identity. But generally, as a result of, or in order to avoid the effect of one or more of these causes, such as political conflicts, natural or human-made disasters and development projects, people have been forced to leave their habitual residence and preferred life, as well as their customs and norms. People who are subjected to displacement experience physical dislocation, separation from habitual environments, social disruption and material dispossession. When this occurs within the border of a country, it is called ‘internal displacement’ and the people who experience this are referred to as ‘internally displaced persons’ (IDPs). They retain IDP status until they are resettled which can be in one of three locations, namely a) in the place of origin; b) at an authority determined destination; or c) at a place which they have chosen by themselves and if they could re-enter into the social, economic, cultural and political fabric of their original community or the new community where they are resettled (IDMC 2005). Conflict and displacement not only disrupt the lives of the individuals and families concerned, but their entire communities and societies. Both the areas they leave behind and the areas to which the displaced are relocated often suffer from extensive damage. In many cases, socioeconomic systems and community structures break down, impeding reconstruction and social development for decades. Therefore conflict-induced internal displacement has come to the fore as one of the most pressing social problems facing the global community.

Sri Lanka is experiencing deferent types of population displacements due to three main reasons: armed conflict, natural disasters and development projects. Conflict-induced displacement has become prominent among the other displacements in the country during the last

few decades. The 25 year long armed conflict in Sri Lanka is, essentially, a story of bitter struggle between two factions; one a group of Tamil separatists called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (commonly known as *Tigers*) are demanding an independent state in Sri Lanka fighting for a separate state in the north and east, and the other the Government of Sri Lanka. On the one hand Tamil tigers have been undertaking the frequent human right violations such as arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, forced expulsion, ethnic cleansing, forced recruitment of women and children, claymore attacks to the public transports, bomb explosion in public places and suicide bomb attacks, on the other hand Government is confronting this situation in fighting against them with sever operations, artillery firing, aerial bombing, establishing high security zones so and so forth. Altogether this situation has caused mass movement of people from their places of origin as well as human suffering and damage in almost all spheres of life. The conflict gained greater momentum since the 1983, escalating in violent confrontations between the state military and the Tamil tigers. It has killed around 70 000 of people, displaced around two million people, belonging to all three ethnic communities – Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims – have been displaced in Sri Lanka. Most of them have been languishing in IDP camps for several years anticipating a return to their original villages. A large number of people have lost their habitual residence either due to being directly victimised by the armed conflict or as a result of fear of attacks. In addition, there are many conflict-affected people in war-torn and border or threaten areas who have not been physically displaced but have been socially displaced that no longer make them to maintain existing social structure, and networks due to different vulnerabilities. The degree of militarisation of rural society has been accompanied by a disruption to the social network. As the community's interaction with the outside world has been restricted, the behavioural space of people living in such areas continues to diminish. Those villages make relations with the areas where social relationships can be maintained under relatively safe conditions. The displaced people in Sri Lanka are sometimes called by non-displaced as *anathayo* which means destitute or helpless people. This includes people who are powerless and marginalised and who cannot subsist on their own. It seems that the problem of internal displacement has become a disaster enveloping the whole of Sri Lankan society, having caused a huge disturbance and social conflicts.

9.2 Methodology

9.2.1 Method

In this study, the internal displacement process is considered as a social phenomenon that focuses how internal displacement in Sri Lanka has become a social problem under the theme of mental trauma, victim socialisation and block socialisation of conflict-affected children. Since the study attempts to use the interpretative approach to understand the conflict-affected communities and their social and cultural context, a qualitative approach which is not one completely devoid of quantitative analysis has been used in the study. In order to collect the qualitative data, the method of event recording, which is still rarely used in social research, was very successful in obtaining correct information in respect to both the situation and the time. In addition, in-depth interviews, recording of life histories and direct observations were also used to collect information. In addition to the above methods, a short questionnaire was also used in the study. It was very important part of the research method recording lived experiences of IDPs and other conflict-affected non-displaced people and present them as short stories. The selected focus group of the study comprised conflict-affected communities and IDPs of Sinhala origin in North Central Sri Lanka because most of the studies to date had dealt with IDPs of Tamil origin in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

9.2.2 Research sites

This study was conducted with the objective of examining internal displacement as a social problem in Sri Lanka with particular reference to Anuradhapura district in the North Central Province (NCP) which borders the Northern and the Eastern provinces (NEP) that have been seriously affected by the armed conflict. The district hosts IDPs from both within and outside its borders. In addition, there are a large number of conflict-affected people in border villages in the district. Two villages were selected as the research sites to depict two stages of internal displacement process: Dutuwewa and Morakewa located in the Divisional Secretarial Division (DSD) of Horowpothana belonging to the Anuradhapura district. In the first village the people were vulnerable because of their location on the border of the conflict area in the Eastern Province. The village has faced several brutal attacks by the LTTE since 1989. Another village that could be identified as a one of the survival destinations of Sinhala IDPs from the Trincomalee District was selected for the study as well (figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 Research Locations

9.2.3 Problems and limitations

- Though the displacement process can be viewed from different perspectives, the present study was focused within a limited theoretical and conceptual framework. Hence, in this study the focus is only on the social context of internal displacement from a problem-oriented aspect. Due to the expansive nature of the study, even definitional delimitations had to be adapted. People gain various types of experience at the individual and community level in the process of displacement. In inquiring about sensitive information the researcher as well as the respondent found themselves on uneasy ground and on such occasions the researcher had to make judgmental decisions. The main problem that occurred in event recording was the verification of events or incidents reported by the respondents. Since the study was in part conducted during the harvesting season, there were difficulties in spending time with some respondents to the extent desirable. At the initial stage it became a problem to access respondents not only as an outsider, but also as a Buddhist monk. As a Buddhist monk has a revered position in Sri Lankan culture, at the beginning, the respondents were not ready to accept someone who occupies such a position in the role of researcher. The IDPs were somewhat ashamed to explain certain experiences that they had had because they held the monk reverence in which a monk is held. They also found it uncomfortable as they thought it is against the culture to discuss such matters, while sitting face to face with a Buddhist monk. But in time the researcher was able to win over their confidence and obtain more information with 100% certainty because of the advantages the monk offered to the respondents in terms of confidentiality,

leadership, ability to offer mental and spiritual consolation and impartiality. As a result within a short time the respondents opened their heart and soul to the researcher. However, the parents and elders did not allow the IDP children to be interviewed because they (the parents) feared that they would be too outspoken. In addition, another problem was how to correctly estimate the time involved in carrying out the research according to the chosen methodology. The needed time had been underestimated and it was not possible to stick to the original schedule.

9.3 Defining social problems

Straying away from accepted social norms and ideals can be defined as a social problem that causes disruption of the social order by either neglecting or transgressing the existing social standards (Rathnapala 1986). In other words it is the emergence of a system of activities that is not accepted by society. In return, this emerging system of activities affects social activities negatively because the behaviour is not socially accepted. Thus social problems are only one side of the coin of anti-social behaviour, which can be seen in a disorganised society. But a social problem does not arise every time that there is opposition to the accepted social system. Hence, when one or two people engage in an anti-social activity in isolation, it does not directly affect the overall activities of the society. Therefore a social problem is one that is felt by the society itself. According to one point of view, a social problem is a sequence of dynamic events that badly affect the entire society and is recognised as such by the majority of people who have a desire to change such events for the better (Donnell 1985). In this definition, several characteristic features of a social problem are made evident. These include the social problems affecting not only a single person but the society as a whole, emergence of social problems through social forces, unfavourable consequences of social problems on society, collective awareness of the majority of people in the society of social problems and a need on the part of the majority of people in the society to solve the social problem. According to the functionalists social problems originate because of the destruction of essential values that had been formed with social approval (Amarasekara 1990). The break-up of essential values may be caused by social, economic, cultural or psychological factors.

Scarpitti (1977) distinguishes three approaches to the identification and definition of social problems. Firstly, linking social problems directly to individual opinions concerning what represents a problematic social condition. This is not a very successful approach because collective awareness is one of the key components characterising a social problem. Secondly, correctable conditions define social problems as conditions that decision makers view as undesirable and that they think can be ameliorated by social action. Conditions that are believed to resist corrective measures are therefore not identified as social problems. When compared to the previous approach, this perspective also largely ignores the fact that some opinions have greater weight than others: i.e. power relations. Actually it is the more influential opinions that determine whether an ameliorative social action is feasible. A more useful approach for identifying social problems would therefore be independent of the opinions and actions of powerful social interests. Finally, social problems with a negative impact have an adverse impact on individual and collective social well being. In this approach, the conflicting opinions and beliefs regarding social problems form a topic for investigation. Buddhism analyses social problems by considering them as basic human problems. According to Buddhism social problems are caused by basic human nature supported by social opportunities rather than on the social environment alone (Gnanathilake 1992). Many psychological concepts such as depression, aversion and perversion that are obsessed in the human mind are found in the Buddhist teachings as *Asawa* (mental stress). In the discourse of *Sabbasawa sutta*, *Asawa* is described as destructive and consuming. Buddhism that teaches seven ways to get rid of *Asawa* shows meditation as one of them (Gnanarama 1995). As many social problems are a result of mental conditions, Buddhism shows the way to avoid these by means of psychological analysis and very methodically and correctly providing answers to these basic human abnormalities.

9.4 The mental trauma

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka, has caused destruction and widespread damage to local communities in the rural areas. The social structure is shattered and a strong feeling of fear grips the inhabitants of these areas. They suffer from a terrible fear after seeing with their own eyes, the terrible and pitiful fate faced by their parents, children, grand children and other relatives. This unusual fear, which affects them psychologically, disturbs their daily activities by shattering the tranquillity of their minds from time to time. On 11 February 1989, *Dutuwewa* village was

destroyed by a LTTE attack. This became the main cause of the physical and social displacement of the village's inhabitants. The manner in which a middle-aged woman carried pieces of the dead bodies of 12 members of her family who were burned to death in this attack in a basin is still remembered as symbolising the destruction of the rural social structure. Appendix 1('Flames') represents the physical and psychological stress of a woman in the aftermath of the LTTE attack. The fact that after the attack, not only the villagers but also the army and the police officers who had to come to the village to provide security was the cause of terrible psychological pressure that the victims had to undergo. It shows the intensity of pressures of the post-traumatic stage of the displacement process.

Being subject to hallucinations is another dimension of fear psychosis (appendix 2: 'Hallucination'). Dreams have been found to be more perceptual than conceptual. Sigmund Freud (1980) suggested that a mental process is quite different to that which is found in the waking process dominates the dreaming mind. He described this primary process as characterised by more primitive mechanisms, by rapid shifts in energy and emotions and by a good deal of sexual and aggressive content derived from childhood.

As shown in appendix 2 the personal experiences as well as the mental imagining experienced during thoughts can also be considered to be a form of dreaming. According to Freud such dreams can be experienced because of fear or anxiety. Appendix 2 shows that fuelled dreams is strongly active even in the case of military personnel who are normally conditioned to face such harrowing situations. A problem faced by conflict-affected displaced people is having nightmares and waking up in a state of shock. This is caused by intolerable weakness or anxiety as a result of fear, worry and shock. The thoughts of a person in the midst of such mental stress are irrational. His memory is very weak. He cannot focus attention on anything. Doctors say that even some physical illnesses are the results of such anxiety. These anxieties are reflected in sleepless nights or managing sleep only by fits and starts.

Lack of interest in sexual activities can be stated as another mental problem experienced by conflict-affected displaced people. Many of them have experienced fear of death (or fear for their own lives) while some of them have seen their parents or children massacred in front their own eyes. In some cases they had the experience of been forced to stay in hiding for several days with dead bodies strewn around them. The strong shock resulting from such experiences apparently made some people impotent. A young man whom the researcher met in the field spoke about this

with disappointment:

‘Only I survived among my family members after the tigers (LTTE) attack. I saw how they hacked my parents and two sisters to death. I had to bury them myself. It was done about 40 miles away from the village. By that time I was married and my wife lived in a ‘safe’ village. For about one year I could not sleep without having a light switched on nearby. In addition to that my mind did not allow me to be near my wife. Later I took courage and tried to engage in sexual activities but I could not. As a result of all these now I spend time alone in this IDP camp’.

(Widower, age 37)

Even though IDPs who faced terrifying situations were provided with assistance, protection and welfare services, they did not find satisfaction in them. It was because they were not facing a crisis requiring a rational answer but a problem related to existentialism woven around humanity. The questions faced included ‘What is humanity? What is the meaning of living? Why was I born?’ The conflict affected IDPs think that because of their fate or because of past crimes that they may have committed they have been subjected to these disasters. ‘A sin committed in the past’ they think ‘is causing this suffering’. So they consider themselves to be sinners. They suffer from a guilty conscience as well as from self disappointment. They display physical weakness, lethargy and mutual abhorrence.

It is possible that a considerable number of displaced people commit suicide out of sheer desperation, however statistics are not available. The shock and anxiety caused by displacement could sometimes end in suicide. Among the families that took part in the study, in 22 per cent of the families, at least one person had committed suicide or had attempted to commit suicide. Some of these people lost their possessions such as houses, lands, animals and also family members. They also had to put up with an unfamiliar living environment following these traumas. Living in IDP camps has proven to be a big challenge. Due to the disorganisation of the society at the local or national level, social cohesion at the local and family level has suffered. Hopes about the future slowly disappear. The resulting frustration strongly affects the decision to commit suicide.

9.5 Challenges to the socialisation process

UNHCR (2004) reports that lack of socialisation of children in displaced families has become the greatest challenge to the IDPs in Sri Lanka. Indeed it has emerged as a social problem of its own. Socialisation simply stated is the process by which the young learn acceptable norms of behaviour for a given environment or the process involved in young children of becoming aware of society and learning how they are expected to behave (Durkheim 1956). Sociologists who have conducted empirical studies on socialisation have formulated four basic rules: (1) the person should have learned the rules of the collective, (2) he/she should follow the accepted norms of the collective, (3) get an education on crafts essential for the culture and (4) he/she must clearly identify the role he/she has to play. The earliest stage of socialisation is childhood. A small child is tempted to gradually learn about everything from his family and the surrounding society. The family acts as the main agent in the process of socialisation while schools, institutions and peer groups help in secondary socialisation. According to Freud the experience gathered during infancy and childhood directly influences personality development. Therefore, the socialisation of children is an essential and a very important social requirement for any given society.

The challenge to socialisation that is faced in internally displaced communities can be further analysed with reference to two important concepts (Parsell 1990). The first one is called re-socialisation. It means getting accustomed to a new environment by completely discarding the old environment where one had previously lived. This is one of the problems faced by displaced people. When people leave their usual environment and settle down in one that they are unaccustomed to, say in a destitute community, the socialisation process of their children is deeply affected. The local community (host community) may discriminate against them and this may have a lasting impact on young people. The 'victim socialisation' is another issue arising from such a background of discrimination. This concept concerns socialisation not being properly carried out. Because of 'negative' socialisation conflict-affected displaced people entertain pessimistic thoughts such as 'we are *anathayo* (displaced persons)' and 'nobody helps us'. In contrast to the local community, the displaced community has to face the challenges of re-socialisation and as a result of this challenge they are subject to victim socialisation. Since they self-identify as victims, a specific dimension of the social problem that is associated with the socialisation process of the displaced can be identified.

9.6 Victim socialisation

In Sri Lankan society parents and elder siblings of the family as well as relatives and religious leaders play a vital role for the socialisation of children. The confusion ensues from the undermining of social foundations is instrumental in disrupting the process of socialisation. The children of displaced families whose basic needs are not satisfied and who are living in temporary shelters without adequate assistance have become used to comparing their fate with the children of non-displaced families. In a considerable number of IDP families studied the father or the mother had died in attacks, had disappeared or had abandoned the families and fled. In the IDP camps, relatives care much less about children than would usually be the case in a traditional village. Displacement has changed the collective rationality that existed in the traditional society to one of individual rationality.

Where the family is dominant in socialisation, there are five pre-conditions that need to be fulfilled in the personality development of the child (Maslow 1967). In the IDP camps the fulfilment of the prerequisites of socialisation such as physiological needs, safety, recognition and love, esteem and self actualisation is only a dream, because these preconditions cannot be met in the displaced families. The IDP children do not know the exact situation that led to their displacement. The children come to know about their position from their parents. Children of a similar age group who did not belong to IDP families have labelled these displaced children as *Anathayo*. This makes these children think of themselves as being destitute and displaced. The family atmosphere is another factor that increases this feeling in IDP children. When the elders regularly speak and act with the feeling that they have become victims of internal displacement, the children also tend to develop the very same attitudes. When visitors come to the camp, children regularly follow them and open their arms for begging something and when they asked some questions about anything, they immediately claim to be destitute rather than giving a precise answer.

As sports play an important role in the socialisation of children, some equipment is distributed to IDP camps by the government institutions and by NGOs. But it can be seen in selected camps this equipment is not being properly utilised. In one of the IDP camps at Horowpothana three carom boards were being used in the production of bricks while two chess boards were placed on the roof. This atmosphere mars the development of a child's self confidence and expectations. In terms of psychology it can be explained as 'learned helplessness'

(Zanden 1987). The children who feel destitute or helpless show lapses in their personality. This causes abnormal personality development in children. It may lead to lethargy and criminal disposition in the future. Displaced children have become used to staying away from school, bathing places and other public places. Various incidents (food being offered by children from non-displaced families at school) impose a sense of destitution in the minds of IDP children.

The child, who enters the society through the family, has to maintain relationships with various institutions, services and people in order to learn about relationships and the manner and form of greetings that are prevalent in the society. The school, religious school (*Dhaham pasala*) and peer groups can be named as the agents that provide secondary socialisation in the context that was studied. Between the two worlds of family and society, the school fits in well as an intermediate centre. The school contributes towards socialisation by providing scientific as well as social knowledge. The religious school is long fed by Sri Lanka culture and acts as an agent to significantly help to develop the personalities of children.

During the research it was noted that displaced children who are deprived of primary socialisation (because of broken families) are in addition not benefitting from the secondary socialisation provided social institutions such as schools. Even though displacement affects schooling by preventing children from going to school, dropping-out or not considering schooling as a must, one can clearly recognise the direct effects of the family environment that created an obstacle to IDP children who are missing the benefits of secondary socialisation.

There are clear irregularities in the personality development between the children of families in the Morakewa camp and the IDP children who live away from the camp in self determined locations. All children under the age of fifteen from thirteen families, who live away from the camp, go to school. They have also successfully taken part in oratorical contests, drawing contests, etc., winning many prizes in the process. They have certainly developed their creative skills. Two daughters of a displaced family that lives outside the IDP camp got through the Grade Five scholarship examination which proceeds to secondary education with financial assistance of the government. This was the first time such a thing had happened in the history of the Morakewa village. The son of same family, who was selected for university education after he got through the Advanced Level Examination is the only child belonging to a displaced family in Morakewa who reached such a high standard of educational accomplishment. In addition he was well recognised and respected in the village that hosted them. It is thus proven that IDP

children who are living outside camp are better socialised than those who live in the camp.

Persons who live within IDP camps as members of displaced families have access to various benefits from governmental and non-governmental institutions and also from the general public. Answering the question ‘why they had left the camp despite all those benefits’, the parents replied, ‘if we continue living in the camp, we will not be able to bring up our children well’. This answer shows that in the environment of the camp, child socialisation has become a big challenge. In the Morakewa camp 38 percent of the population consists of children under the age of fifteen. The field data show that only 2.38 percent of pre-school age children (4-5 years old) in the Morakewa camp had completed their pre-school education. This means that out of all the children in the camp only one had completed pre-school education. The total of both regular school-attendants and irregular school-attendants at primary level is as low as 47.6 per cent. According to the local educational authority, even regular school attendance means going to school for only two or three days per week. Out of the fourteen children at the Morakewa camp who left school prematurely, nine had done so already in grade four or earlier. These statistics show that the school dropout of IDP children in the camp at the early stage has significantly kept them away from the secondary socialization. It is clear from appendix 3 (‘Schooling under pressure’) that the importance of school as an agent for facilitating secondary socialisation is very great. Apart from the development of creative minds it is unfortunate that not even the school manages to provide a proper environment for protecting the lives of children.

In the Morakewa camp both the children who were attending school and those who had prematurely stopped schooling are instead forced to work for money by their parents and older siblings. For instance, 93 percent of the IDPs in the Morakewa camp make bricks in their own compound and only the children who are younger than four do not work. The work done by children includes drawing water, carrying firewood, trampling the clay and arranging and piling bricks. Children who are in the ten- to fifteen-year age group earn 50 cents for making a raw brick. After baking, the bricks are priced at three rupees and fifty cents. If parents employ their own children, no payments are being made to them. But children who work at other places may earn the above-mentioned rates.

As in many other places the camp leader at Morakewa (a woman) employs a child labourer for brick making in a very inhuman way. For this purpose she uses her influence and authority based on family relationships and on the opportunity to dispense aid received from outside sources.

However, challenges have arisen from within the IDP community itself against the use of child labour. The following is a statement made by Rosy, a sixteen-year-old girl, a representative story of the crisis which faces children in the IDP camps.

‘I am staying at the place of my grandmother who serves as the leader of the camp. My parents died from a LTTE attack when I was only eight. They killed my father while he was cuddling me in bed. He died, but I survived. Now I think that it would have been much better if I had also died with him at that time. Now I realise that my grandmother is not trying to protect us, but that she is actually exploiting us as cheap labour to earn money. Soon it will be time for me to sit for the Ordinary Level examination. But I am allowed to go to school for only two or three days per week. I have to make bricks for my grandmother on all the other days. Otherwise I have to go to pick green chillies. Even though the government package of dry ration is available also for me I have never seen any of it because everything is collected by the grandmother. She says that if I want to eat her food, I must earn money for her. She does not allow us to speak, when donors come into the camp. She chases us away claiming that as girls we should not speak with strangers. When I am away she talks to the donors about my pathetic state to get their sympathy. During those conversations she says that she helps my schooling thanks to the dry rations that she gets, but now it is very difficult to do so. Using this approach she knows that the donors will help her. But I do not get any of that. Even when she gets writing books she gives me only one or two and sells the rest to shops. During the last three months I did not go to school but made about 3000 bricks instead. She did not give me a single cent.

9.7 Block socialisation of children

Studying the displaced community in Morakewa reveals the children have been deprived of the necessary requirements to develop their minds and themselves more generally as people. Theoretically this deprivation is termed ‘block socialisation’. Under such circumstances children get used to deviant ways of behaviour and transgress accepted social norms. From a criminology perspective these children are considered to belong to broken families. As shown in appendix 4 (‘The Mechanical Child’) the family environment has caused the desperate behavioural pattern in the child. A situation similar to the analysis given by Watson (1986) about the characteristics of a broken family becomes evident. Among the characteristics he noted are:

- family members who become violators of the law, have low moral conduct and become alcoholic;
- the child lives with only a single parent or is separated from both, due to divorce or abandonment;
- shortcomings in parental control due to physical disability of parent, domination of one parent and excessive rudeness.

The father of a young man shown in appendix 4 who manifested such abnormal behaviour had deserted his family and become a womaniser.

Spencer (1980) had categorised deviant families from type A to I. He emphasises a tendency towards block socialisation in these families. The category G explains families where the mother does not have the money necessary to protect the family or to feed the children. It is evident that the mother has to assume extra responsibility when the family is displaced because older males are often at great risk. Internally displaced women are therefore facing intense physical and mental pressure. Jayawathie, the mother mentioned in appendix 4, was not only subject to physical and mental stress because her husband had left but also because she had lost one of her hands when LTTE attacked the village. To take care of the children she does various tasks such as pounding rice, chopping wood and producing bricks for a fee. It is no wonder that the proper socialisation of children became an unachievable goal in her family.

This situation also perfectly fits the category H of Spencer's categorisation, which includes parents who neglect their children. One reason here is that parents are too busy. When faced with the challenge of living in a new environment the IDPs have to find livelihoods for sustenance, at times engaging in activities like brick making even at night.

A 'mechanical child' is defined by sociologists as a product of a broken family. The mechanical child born through the process of block socialisation has certain inherent features (including breaking rules or regulations, regularly running away from school, associating with 'bad' people, non-acceptance of advice, disobeying parents, laziness, hurting ones own self or others and threatening others, keeping away from home without providing reasons, disorderly conduct in public, habitually speaking indecently, visiting brothel houses, visiting gambling dens, loitering as a habit, engaging in illegal money-making activities and smoking excessively. The case of C presented in appendix 4, demonstrated all of the above features.

9.8 Increasing abnormal behaviour as a defence mechanism

As shown in figure 9.2 various factors interlinked with the abnormal behaviour of conflict-affected children in the process of internal displacement. The defence mechanism mechanisms used by IDP children originating due to the internal displacement takes the form of two flows. Various conditions associated with this process directly influence abnormal behaviour. Because the children of displaced families have not being properly socialised, different personality disorders have arisen.

Figure 9.2 Integrated root causes determining abnormal behaviour

These disorders or abnormalities can be identified by recognising the defence mechanism hidden in the personalities of IDP children. These have been named by Freud as projection, suppression, displacement, rationalisation and sublimation. Freud was of the opinion that these conditions arise due to the clashes between the id, the ego and the super ego. Displacement is the attempt to prevent the flow of ideas that one does not like into ones mind. In suppression, stubbornness becomes evident. Rationalisation is justifying a thing that one wants to do. The best example of this is appendix 4 where the child himself gives reasons for his stubbornness. Sublimation is displaying natural aggressiveness in an indirect manner. This condition is demonstrated by the ‘mechanical child’ in the form of throwing away household goods and trying to choke ones own neck.

9.9 Conclusion

The social dimensions of the internal displacement process can be examined through the experiences of those who have completed the displacement cycle. Within this cycle various communities face different problems when they are leaving their places of origin; when they are searching for a new destination; and when they are returning to their places of origin or are resettled at another place. These problems may vary depending on the displaced person’s ethnicity, language, religion, cast and other social factors. Even though issues faced by conflict-affected communities are different in terms of their ethnic and regional background, the mental traumas and socialisation problems are common to all of the conflict-affected children.

According to the Buddhist perspective, every social problem is the effect of different mental conditions that are lodged in the human mind and of our individual attempts to establish a personal identity for ourselves internally and to project that identity outwardly for others to recognise and accept. It is appropriate to consider the sophisticated Buddhist teachings when it comes to understanding the mental conditions of most IDPs. Hence, it is very important to identify and analyse internal displacement as a social process. It is clear that the mental trauma suffered by conflict-affected people is very severe and leads to many other issues – such as feelings of helplessness, desolation, anxiety, learned helplessness and suicide – that can arise during any phase of the internal displacement process.

When studying conflict induced internal displacement it is very important to analyse the socialisation process of the younger generation of different IDP communities. This chapter has focused on how internal displacement is an important factor in the block socialisation and abnormal behaviour of displaced children. This research found that the family unit, school and other institutions as well as the host community are strongly interrelated with regard to this issue.

The problem of internal displacement can be singled out as one of the foremost social problems that causes the breakdown of family units, to the creation of mechanical children, to the use of defense mechanisms, and to the block socialisation of children. In addition this study suggests how disorders and abnormalities can be identified by situational analysis of the conflict-affected communities.

Recognising that the problem of internal displacement affects a social context – i.e. physical and mental stress, changes of life path and lifestyles, loss of basic necessities and the breakdown of the family unit – it is more than evident that the displacement of people has become an acute social problem in Sri Lanka, where there are about 500.000 of internally displaced people, that is almost 2.5 percent of the total population.

A proper strategy for providing a rational explanation of the social problem of internal displacement should focus upon different communities who are in various phases of the process

and employ a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. Only in that way is it possible to deeply examine the traits of individuals, and to focus on the specific stories of real people. At issue is the collective memory of a population which has been subjected to the trauma of displacement. It should be stressed that all the collected information was discussed with and agreed upon by the respondents. The technique of recording stories and events revealed quite a lot of information about the impact of the armed conflict from the time of its early beginnings up to the stage of displacement. The overall purpose of the research was to reach a better understanding of how individuals respond to the traumatic situation created by the armed conflict.

Appendix 1:

Flames

Although sever attacks had took place nearby villages, Dutuwewa villagers did not think that the LTTE would cross the Yan oya River and attack their village. One night, after a heavy days work, they went to bed. Facing no resistance from the sleeping villagers was easy for the LTTE to rampage through Dutuwewa, setting the village afire. They burned down the houses and massacred the people at midnight. Soma, a 29-year-old widow had an eighteen month-old baby boy and a six-year-old daughter. Her husband had been abducted by the LTTE one year before. At the time of the attack she was asleep with the children. Awakened by the sound of shooting, she knew immediately that it was an LTTE attack. Waking up her daughter, she told her to run to the scrub behind the house for safety. She cuddled her sleeping infant son and ran into the dark jungle leaving the door locked behind her.

Tamil Tigers shot at the house and set fire to it. Soma was keeping silent behind the bush with the infant. In a few minutes she heard the cry of her daughter from the house. She was helpless. The young innocent girl had apparently once again fallen asleep in complete ignorance of what was happening outside. In the morning when the flames were out Soma was anxious to see the result. Then she thought of her son who was unusually silent. Only then did she discover that she had fled her house not with her little son but with a pillow. Both sister and brother were burnt to death in the fire. Though she is still alive, she recalls the event a hundred times a day with the utmost pain and helplessness.

Appendix 2:

Hallucination

The brutality of the LTTE attack on Dutuwewa, which shocked the whole area, was witnessed by the neighbouring villagers as well as by the Dutuwewa residents themselves. Everyone saw how people brought the bones of burnt bodies in various containers to the village school. Even a few days had passed no action was taken to provide security to the village. As a result of the villagers' demands for security, an army camp was set up in a corner of the village and the partially burned building of the temple was housed to the soldiers. Even the soldiers in the camp were deeply shocked after hearing about the tragedy that befell Dutuwewa.

One day a young soldier who was stationed at the guard room near a boulder, saw a dark shadow coming from the jungle and trying to reach the village. The figure that was approaching gradually appeared to grow to a height of some twelve metres tall. Seeing this apparition in black the soldier continuously shot at it. But it had no effect on the approaching figure. The soldier saw that the figure ran and entered to the ruined building of the burnt temple and disappeared.

On another day two soldiers who were sleeping in the same building woke up, both reporting that they had had a same dream at the different time. One soldier had narrated his dream to another soldier. After going to sleep this soldier had the very same dream and screamed in his sleep. They said that the monk of that temple, who had been killed by LTTE, had pulled them by their legs and had warned them saying 'Tigers have come'. Thus the young soldiers in the army camp were gradually affected by hallucinations, apparently caused by the mental stress of being in the village. As a result of such incidents some soldiers suffered from fever and sometimes had to be hospitalised. In order to rectify these fearful mental experiences in and around the premises and as a psychiatric therapy for the persons who had experienced the hallucinations, eventually a Pirith Chanting Ceremony was conducted. According to the villagers after seven days of the ceremony began everything had become normal.

Appendix 3:

Schooling under pressure

After the Tamil Tiger attack all the activities in the Dutuwewa village were reduced to a very low level for a long period of time. The only school in the village that the local children had was abandoned. The charred bodies of the 34 people that died in the attack were piled up in the school building until their burial. Few months later arrangements were made to reopen the school. Very few children came to the school on the first day. Many children had refrained from going to school because they had witnessed how corpses had been piled up in the classrooms and they were afraid to enter those classrooms. The children suffered unbearably when they remembered their classmates who had died in the attack. The teachers were equally affected by this situation as well. One day I visited the school just before it was due to begin. I saw the teachers coming to school carrying fire arms in a state of alert to meet any possible Tamil Tiger attack.

The school bell rang. It seemed that the children who were lined up for religious prayers still did not feel safe. The teachers observed *Panchaseela* (the five precepts of Buddhism) with the loaded firearms leaning against their bodies. When can these children find an atmosphere conducive to education? The teachers come to classrooms armed with weapons like hunters. The teacher who writes on the black board with a firearm in readiness at arms length has his attention focused not on the children but on the surroundings. On some occasions distant gun shots shatter the silence. Will the children have a free mind conducive to education in such a context?

Appendix 4:

The Mechanical Child

In her twenties Jayawathie faced a brutal attack of Tamil Tigers when she was collecting firewood in the Jungle with her parents. As a result not only she got disabled her left hand but also lost the parents. Now she is 38 years old and the mother of two sons and a daughter, was among the displaced people in the Morakewa IDP camp who fled from a threaten village of Trincomalee district. Two days before she left her original village, her husband had fled to an IDP camp in Trincomalee with another woman. Jayawathie, eight months pregnant at that time came, decided to come to Alapathwewa because she thought she might get help from her parents who were living there at the time. After few months ago she married a bachelor of a displaced family called Siril living in the same place. Within six months an IDP camp was set up by the main road close to Morakewa junction to accommodate the displaced families being housed in the Alapathwewa community hall. The donor groups who came in search of displaced people distributed clothes, dry food and medicine to these people.

Jayawathie had two sons when Siril had started to have an affair with another displaced widow. Even though Siril couldn't get married her legally, after a few months he left the camp with that woman and her children and settled down in a village close by. Since it was very difficult to maintain the family only with dry rations, one hand disabled Jayawathie found an opportunity to work for a farm as a temporary wage labourer. Few months later, an IDP male widow called Dias and his children living in the same camp moved in with her. At this time the local authority decided to shift the IDP camp from the Morakewa junction and put all IDPs on a plot of land at the edge of the Morakewa village close to the jungle. A small shelter build on that land housed to Jayawathie and her family. It was not a good time for Jayawathie because while her elder son was addicting to alcoholism on the one side Dias started his usual life with gambling, alcoholism, loitering and stealing. Both Jayawathie's husband and the elder son started to quarrel with other siblings of the family when they had taken much liquor. The tragic drama of Jayawathie's life again started with Dias leaving with his children for another woman one year later because one day he was thrashed by Jayawathie's elder son. Jayawathie again had to face life alone. Her two

sons have inherited the ruined lives of their parents such as insecurity, loss and abandonment as well as alcoholism and gambling. Elder son became a notorious thief who has been in police custody several times.

None of Jaywathie's children received even a primary school education. Upon further investigation I saw that when visiting the IDP camp and passing Jayawathie's hut, the broken legs of plastic chairs came flying into the yard. The cooking utensils in her hut were crushed and sleeping mats were torn. I made the terrifying discovery that Jayawathie's younger son (aged 15) was trying to strangle himself with a rope around his neck. Jayawathie was crying in a corner and was using her hand to try to stop the rush of blood from a head wound. Jayawathie and her younger son had had an argument over very simple issue and he had assaulted her with a mamoty (a large-bladed garden hoe). Before that he had hit and chased away his elder brother too. The female leader of the camp had come and offered to mediate but she too was threatened. At the request of the camp leader the camp bully entered the scene and physically punished the boy and brought him under control.