"What they want and what they receive" on the way of reaching regional development in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *The concept of regional development was rooted in Sri Lanka's development agenda only after 1970s with respect to resolve the problems of unemployment, social unrest, the rising cost of living, declining of local production and the deteriorating of foreign exchange situation. In 1970, Regional Development Division was established and in 1979, District Integrated Rural Development Projects were introduced with the financial assistance of the World Bank. Since 1970's regional development was a compulsory section of every development program and as a result enormous construction programs have been implemented in order to improving the standard of living in the periphery areas. But still there remains a problem of the level of development in periphery regions of the country from the perception of the people who living there. The study moved forward from this situation to identify the level of development/ the benefits of development from the perception of households with special reference to Abhayapuragrama in Trincomalee District, Eastern Province. Five major criteria were applied for evaluating respondents' perception from the answers taken by semi-structured questionnaire. In addition, respondents' awareness and contribution to development projects were taken in to the consideration to clarify the gap between what they need (priorities) and what they receive. The study was mainly a quantitative research in descriptive format that used descriptive statistics for the data analysis. Statistical treatment of the data included the use of (STATA). As per the value of Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the study ranked at 0.713 which expose the high acceptability of the internal reliability of the study. The concise conclusion of findings revealed that most often it is not the lack of resources or development projects in the area but rather than lack of awareness of the outcome of development projects, inefficient of implementing projects, not answering the burning problems by the projects and especially failure to understand their problems in their proper context that impede/ minimize the actual benefits of development. Furthermore it was found that the differences in perception have been major contributory factors to failures and unsustainability of some development projects thereby constrains the regional development.*

Key Words - Perception, Regional Development, Contributory Factors

I. INTRODUCTION

As an emerging economy with tagging the label Middle-Income country, Sri Lanka is performing a dynamic role in Asian region. With the end of 30 year armed conflict period, now the county has been achieved the golden opportunity to utilize its potential capacity by enriching the living standard of its citizens. During the 60 years that have passed since the country gained independence, it has implemented various strategies and policy frameworks to achieve development. The need of regional development has long been identified as a basic approach to development by policy makers in Sri Lanka. It has been proven by literature that through the development of individual regions, the entire economy can be strengthened and better combined into a single viable entity. Also the interrelation of urban and rural development is a crucial factor in driving to the development for any country. Therefore, all successive governments since Independence have given priority to regional development by establishing development projects over these areas. However, even after a long way of development planning and implementation since 1970s, still the county struggle with the problem of regional disparity especially in periphery areas.

The development of North and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka was a long felt need since these areas were heavily damaged during the war period. It is true that conflict has been an additional factor constraining growth. Nevertheless as a result of rehabilitation and reconstruction programs conducted by the government and non-government organizations, mostly the area appears favorable signs of development. Economic development, physical and social infrastructure arewidely spread in thegeographical space in last period.But still the grievances from those regions remain the problem of the success of development programs. Though the motion of development is not possible to capture by

statistics it can be evaluate the path conducting to development, to some extent, through the level of satisfaction and the perception of residences in that area. Move forward on above discussed situation this study was conducted to identify the level of development/ benefits of development from the perception of households with special reference to Abhayapuragrama in Trincomalee district, Eastern province, Sri Lanka.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This was a quantitative research in descriptive format and basically common tools were used to describe, summarize and analyze data. Descriptive statistics and cross tabulation was mainly executed to identify the objective of the study.

B. Data Collection Method and Sampling

Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Semi-structured questionnairesused as the main research instrument to identify the perspective of households (residents). Questionnaires were developed based on the knowledge gained from past studies and applied only the most suitable variables for the Sri Lankan context. When preparing the questions the study was careful of the level of understanding and the convenience of answering of the respondents, considering respondents level of understanding. Sample was consisted of fifty-six respondents who were living in the village for a long time (more than 10). And all these were selected randomly (based on willingness to support and level of understanding) by representing households and it comprised of workers, non-workers and students. The questionnaires included short answer questions and questions on the 5 point likert's scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaires were given to 05 respondents to evaluate under the pilot test stage. Mainly it was done to mitigate uncertainties and maintain the consistency relates to the study. Only few items were adjusted accordingly.

C. Data Analyzing

Description of the sample was done to gain a clear idea about the sample. With respect to clarify the main objective of the study, five major criteria were applied for evaluating respondents' perception from the answers taken by semi-structured questionnaire. In addition to that respondents' awareness and contribution to development projects were taken in to the consideration to clarify the gap between what they need (priorities)

and what they receive.Cronbach's Alpha was used for assessing the reliability of the questionnaire scored with a Likert-type scale. Statistical treatment of the data included of the statistical package STATA 12.0.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the descriptive analysis was to clarify the basic features of the residents in the sample, broken down by Gender, Age, Employment, Educational background. As the initial step, the researcher has used a descriptive analysis, in order to obtain an overall image of the sample.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Variable		Freq.
Gender	Male	38
	Female	18
AgeLess than 30		06
	31-40	24
	41-50	18
	51-60	05
	More than 60	03
EthnicitySinhala		52
	Tamil	02
	Muslim	02
	Other	-
Level of Education		
	Primary	08
	Sat for G.C.E. (O/L)	26
	Sat for G.C.E. (A/L)	18
	Graduate Education	04
	Post Graduate Education	-
Employment Status		
	Public Sector (P)	11
	Private Sector (P)	03
	Public Sector (T)	09
	Private Sector (T)	22
	Self Employed	05
	Not working	06

Survey: 2014

As per the table shows majority of the respondent were male and in between the age group of 31-40 years. This was the only Sinhala village in the area and as a result of that 92.8 per cent of the sample was consisted of Sinhala people and only 7.1 per cent were Tamils and Muslims.When considering the level of education it can be clearly seen a very low participation in high education and twenty six out of the sample which is the majority represented the level 'Sat for G.C.E (O/L)'. None of them were found as fully illiterate but only few were found working in a formal employment in the labor market.

Graduates were included to the sample and three of them are reading for their Bachelors and remain person (lady) is a teacher in the village school. Majority of them were working informal jobs in private sector and some were working out side of the district. Eleven female respondents out of eighteen of the entire representation of the sample were categorized under 'not working' and 'self-employed' category. Nonetheless remain of female respondents represented the permanent employment category.

Reliability analysis allows the researcher to determine the extent to which a scale produces consistent results. In order to find out the scale reliability of the questionnaire the total number of 37 variables was used including questions under four main criteria and question used to check respondents perspective towards the benefits/ usefulness of outcome of the established projects. The overall reliability is given in the Table 02.

Table 2. Overall Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.790	.795	37

According to the rules of thumb provided by George and Mallery (2003), > .7 value of Cronbach's Alpha specify the reliability of the given questionnaire. The Cronbach's value of the study is found as .790 and it realized the acceptability of the questionnaire.

Moving to identify the main research objective, four main criteria were applied under five development areas which were recognized according to ongoing development projects in the province. All the questions were in statement type evaluating their level of agreement regarding the specified development areas under given four criteria named 'Adequacy, Suitability, Usefulness and Satisfaction'.

Figure 1, shows the percentage values of each criterion which were implemented to clarify these respondents level of agreement with the existing development in the village, on the way to identify the gap. It clearly indicates a very low rate for the adequacy of irrigation and water
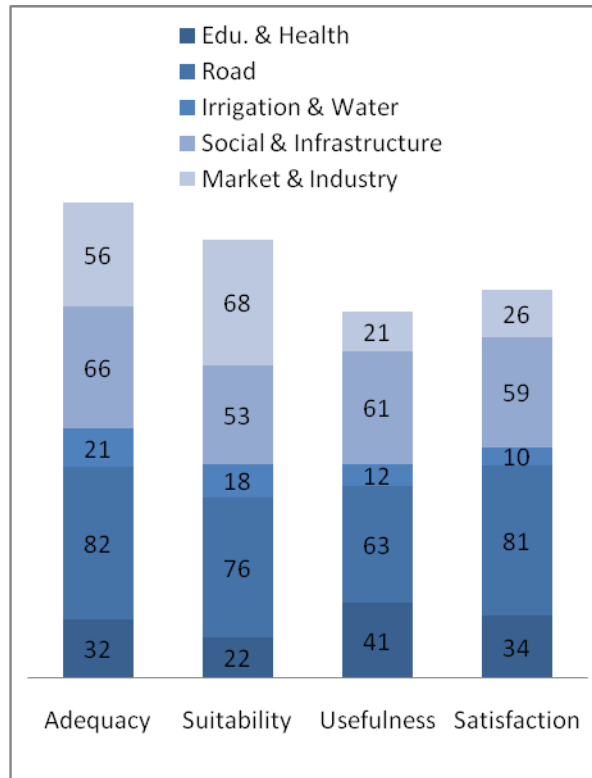

Figure 1. Level of Agreement with the outcome of Development (as a percentage of the sample)
Survey: 2014

ways development whereas the development of roads bears a considerably high value. Suitability of the development in 'Education and Health' and 'Irrigation and Water', accords to the respondents comments, rates 22 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Both criteria for evaluating 'Usefulness and Satisfaction' of development records low percentage values by presenting more close values with respect to the level of development in 'Education and Health', 'Road', 'Irrigation and Water ', 'Social and Infrastructure' and 'Market and Industry' areas. As the figure presents, most of people are struggling with inefficiencies and inadequacies of not having a proper development mechanism on 'Irrigation and Water' and 'Health and education'. Through the casual discussions which were conducted to identify the hidden information regarding the questions, revealed that due to the lack of Sinhala teachers in Village school and lack of extra facilities to learn in Sinhala (Tuition), most of Sinhala students are struggling. Consequently they left schooling and turned to fishery industry or other way and only few are continue their studies. When it comes to 'Market and Industry' the major issue what they have faced is avoiding from available vacancies in running industries. During the post war period there are number of constructions in these areas, especially in

tourism industry, but as per these respondents mentioned they have been rejected. And due to not having suitable job opportunities for the educated people (people who have passed O/L and A/L)in the Village, vulnerability has been rooted. Hencethe ultimate result was directly influenced on the level of satisfaction with respect to development in certain criteria such as 'Education and Health, Irrigation and Water, Market and Industry' which shows low values (less than 40 per cent) of satisfaction level.

The gap between their requirements and existing facilities what they have already consumed were tested then by providing a statement question series to respondents. These were asked under three layers to get to know respondents reaction towards the study objective.

1st layer => for you (personal)
2nd layer => for your family
3rd layer => for your village

These three layers were tested by comparing the consumption level and benefits of development (existing), with the required facilities or requirements what they are asking for. Same development areas were taken named 'Education and Health, Road, Irrigation and Water, Social and Infrastructure, Market and Industry' to raise questions from these three layers.

Table 2. Comparison between benefits of existing development and required areas of development – 1st Layer (from individual perception)

Area	Mean		Median		SD	
	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.
Education & Health	2.82	3.43	3.0	3.0	.535	.582
Road	4.58	2.21	5.0	2.0	.447	.723
Irrigation &Water	2.18	4.53	2.0	5.0	.235	.684
Social &Infrastruc.	3.36	3.21	3.0	3.0	.503	.498
Market & Industry	2.09	4.83.	2.0	5.0	.633	.873

1=Very Low 2=Low 3=Average 4=High 5=Very High

Considering the responses of respondents under 1st layer it was found that majority are consuming the benefits of development in the areas of 'Road, Education and Health, Social and Infrastructure' on and above 'average' level. Required areas of development are identified (for

individuals) as 'Market and Industry, Irrigation and Water'.

Table 3. Comparison between benefits of existing development and required areas of development – 2nd Layer (from a family perception)

Area	Mean		Median		SD	
	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.
Education & Health	2.82	3.43	3.0	3.0	.535	.582
Road	4.58	2.51	5.0	3.0	.447	.723
Irrigation & Water	2.18	4.53	2.0	5.0	.235	.684
Social &Infrastruc.	3.36	3.61	3.0	4.0	.503	.378
Market & Industry	2.37	4.33.	3.0	4.0	.583	.626

1=Very Low 2=Low 3=Average 4=High 5=Very High

Table 3, indicates the analyzed outcome from the family perception. According to the result it can be recognized, except in 'Irrigation and Water', the benefits of existing development at an average and high level form the family consumption perception. Nonetheless the clear gap in 'Irrigation and Water' implies where the burning problem of these households are relates to irrigation and water development.

The 3rd layer of the series was targeted to identify the gap between the benefits of existing development and the requirements, by taking the approach from a villager perception. As respondents answers, considering the development benefits and need for the village where they are living, are analyzed in Table 4. According to the Mean and Median values in the table, under the section which evaluating the usefulness (benefits) of existing development under given development areas, only the areas of 'Irrigation and water' and 'Market and Industry' rated at low values interpreting the benefits are at a low level. With respect to their responses under the 'requirement' category, for the development of the village, they are asking more development in the areas of 'Education and Health', 'Irrigation and Water', 'Social and Infrastructure' and 'Market and Industry'. In addition to that the rates show they are consuming benefits of road development and more development in road development is not a burning requirement for the village. Table 4, shows the above mentioned ratios as follows.

Table 4. Comparison between benefits of existing development and required areas of development – 3rd Layer (from a villager perception)

Area	Mean		Median		SD	
	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.	Exis.	Req.
Education & Health	2.82	4.82	3.0	5.0	.535	.352
Road	4.58	2.21	5.0	2.0	.447	.723
Irrigation & Water	2.18	4.88	2.0	5.0	.235	.564
Social &Infrastruc.	3.21	4.01	3.0	4.0	.531	.620
Market & Industry	2.39	4.33.	2.0	4.0	.598	.873

1=Very Low   2=Low   3=Average   4=High   5=Very High

The summarized ratios of overall it was identified that from all three perceptions respondents are facing a problem in low development in 'Irrigation and Water', 'Education and Health' and 'Market and Industry'. With the low mean values which less than 3, implies low benefits from existing development in respective areas whereas high values imply required development areas.

IV. CONCLUSION

As per the study investigated there can be found number of development programs which have been taken to enhance the living condition of people. Most frequently it is not the lack of resources or development in the areas what they have mentioned as not beneficial but the lack of awareness of the outcome, inefficient of implementing projects by the authorized parties. The gap which the study clearly identified, especially in Education and Health, Water Supply and Market and Industry, is mainly due to not answering the burning problems by the projects and especially failure to understand their problems in their proper context that impede/ minimize the actual benefits of development. Due to the internal migration of educated people who lived in this area the problem of skilled labour is exist and this has made to narrow the market opportunity for remain low skilled labors in industrial zone. However if the economy is stepping towards to the regional development, it should be pay more attention on bridging the gap between the drawbacks of existing development and required facilities for development. Therefore the development strategies should specifically tailor-maid to meet the needs of the region and to tap the potential in the area.

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