

## Social Integration and it's Importance in National Security and Development

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Thank you very much, I intended this paper to look at different areas in which Social integration can be promoted and also the manner in which institutions like KDU can contribute. I do this because it is clear that reconciliation requires much better social integration than we have, and secondly while those who in my view do not have Sri Lanka's better interest at heart criticize additional responsibilities being entrusted to military personal. I have no doubt that better and most systematic use of the capabilities the military has since last years will certainly contribute to better integration. Unquestioned even by the hostile is the need for greater for minority participation in the armed forces and the police. It has been argued that minorities were deliberately excluded from the armed forces but this was not the case except immediately after the abortive coup of 1962 when there were suspicions not against the minorities but in fact against Sinhalese Christians who did not fit into your paradigm, Sunil. Tamils and Muslims were continued to be recruited and Christians too in smaller numbers.

But by the 90s, the situation changed, because the LTTE discouraged the applications though it is true that following the desertion of a Tamil army officer, the military was more cautious about recruiting Tamils. But those who were in service continued to be deployed in vital positions not ones that exposed them to LTTE violence.

I should add that during the height of the war, the Secretary of Defence instituted a scheme to recruit officers for minority communities to the cadet core to serve as the English teachers. But after just one intake, the ministry of education managed to kill this initiative, this is I'm afraid that an occupational hazard where the ministry of education is concerned, but the failure to press for its continuation suggest the lack of our understanding of how such initiatives can contribute to social integration.

I hope that now there will be active encouragement for Tamil and as well as Muslim youngsters to join the forces at all levels and in particular as officer cadets. For this purpose we should establish cadet corps in schools in north and east and though this has begun I hope the forces at least will not fall prey to the classic Sri Lankan fault of too little, too late.

With regard to the police, the doors were always open but sadly told the LTTE took off Tamil policemen and active discouragement and the threats meant that few joined. Following the successful intake at the Kaladi Training School in 2008, there were not enough applications for second such course. Negative elements claimed this was because the police discriminated but following elimination of LTTE, large numbers applied.

Following these post war intakes, the number of Tamil policemen in the North has increased by leaps and bounds but we need more. The aim shouldn't be that. Not only there but all over the country complaints can be recorded in Tamil and evidence led in court in Tamil when needed. This relates the second area in which we need to fast forward social integration namely through a proactive tri lingual policy, which was explained. We cannot expect everyone to know three lan-

guages. We must ensure all those in school in now know at least two and we must provide mechanisms where opportunities to gain at least speaking competence at second will be readily available to adults.

Government official following the seminal reforms introduced by Minister D.E.W Gunasekara are required to achieve competence in the second official language to be eligible for promotion. But weather the regulation promulgated by the Minister will lead to desired results remained to be seen. Government must clearly make this a priority and provide better language learning mechanisms. This is not difficult to achieve as I noticed in North observing how Sinhala and Tamil policemen working together had begun to learn each others' languages. This concept that of peer learning should be developed more widely because I gather from not only officials but civil society in the form of rural development societies and reconciliation committees in divisional secretariats that there is a great desire to learn Sinhala. The complaint is that there are not enough teachers. But instead of waiting for the Ministry of Education to provide such teachers and enough Tamil teachers for second languages in the south we should develop conversational classes for volunteer facilitators. The police now deployed in north could easily contribute to this. But they should also show themselves the willing to learn Tamil. So that a symbiotic relationship could be developed. Military could also contribute to such initiatives but there is a powerful manner that in which they could take the process forward. I refer to the development of formal qualifications, certificates, diplomas and degrees which are Sri Lankan need to learn anything based on a modular approach.

There are the areas that military can step into easily. Because integration occurs most readily when people work together and learn together and if both task can be combined, so much the better. I hope the KDU, since other no institution will undertake the task should develop vocational courses that will allow other service providers to train while also setting up centers under civilian management that will provide not only training but work experience. The superb housing program that military has commenced in the north, second in sizes only to the Indian effort, and moving much quickly because of your bureaucratic constrains can be expand to include the training and certification for the resettlement. They could work side by side with military personals in providing housing both through funded projects and those who have earned enough to expand the basic shelters which they were provided. And one of the reasons to include soft skills into such training programs is to enhance employability in our context too. I noticed this in a center run by something called AIDT Action in Vawnia where the students were actually enjoying themselves a far cry from the almost deserted vocational training centers I had seen elsewhere in the north which students looking as board as the staff. With AIDT action the self expression was encouraged through cultural and social services activity and their readiness to bring together the students in their various centers from all over the country something that Prof. Dissanayake also suggested that cultural synthesis is an essential part of training. The result is that their products could be employed elsewhere.

Another reason for a menu of courses is that we must also provide opportunities for those deprived of higher learning through no fault of their own to resume their way up in educational ladder. The type of certificate I envisage would allow those who did not have ordinary level qualifications to catch upon this and this is very essential in the north. A very sensitive police officer in Mulativ told me that most applicants for laboring jobs did not have the ordinary level certificate required but few had advance level certificate with suitor them for higher positions. That gap is not

uncommon since the youth LTTE while chosen few to go higher studies prevented many from getting even basic qualifications. We should therefore facilitate their catching up but practically not to making them go through the whole gamut of O'level courses. For this purpose I think military will be able to provide streamline courses and some will be able to go on to advance level, diplomas and degrees because we need to get rid of the still rigid divide between academic courses and technical training based on British model of exclusivity with regard to tertiary education that the British have long abandoned. And this reminds me of the fact that when Sabaragamuwa was asked to run a degree course for military many of my colleagues said what nonsense, how can we give degrees to people who are simply doing a profession; while I have to say some in the military said why on earth we should ask for degrees and turn our good soldiers into lazy idiots. I think we managed a decent synthesis and I am happy that even some officers who disapproved the degree course in 2001 told me in 2008 that they found the products of the degree course extremely well motivated. Because in the modern world you need everything, you can't have these rigid divides. Since the vocational University has been slow to work on this principle, I think KDU should take the lead and this will contribute to social integration in rest of the society too, not only in areas affected by the conflict.

The need for such imaginative measures is apparent and reinforced by activities by both the national human rights action plan and the LLRC action plan which have both been adopted by cabinet. But if we wait for the agencies now responsible we will have to wait forever particularly in the case of educational innovation. I can understand the need for the country to have a popular education minister given that much of what is done by the ministry to deal with individual demand about schools admission, and appointments and transfers. But unless we adopt alternative mechanisms for policy changes the excellent systems in the model schools the ministry of education has himself started will not benefit the vast majority of our children. And it is a wonderful school and when we keep saying do it everywhere you say the political fallout will be impossible to deal with. These are schools in which the teachers work all day, they work till four O'clock, they do extracurricular activities, they work in English medium and if that is good enough for Pannipitiya then it should be good enough for our rural areas too. But I am afraid it will not happen if we leave it to populist policies. So taking that model as a starting point and since it is probably impossible given vested interest and need to stay popular of advancing reforms in existing institutions we should allow new schools to be started provided that they carry out to the letter government policies with regard to social integration.

Not only bringing youngsters of different social and ethnic backgrounds together but also ensuring opportunity for social advancement. LLRC action plan suggest the policy encourage ethnically mixed schools and ensuring that schools include programs to provide intercommunity interactions. The human rights action plan draws attention to the variations in the quality of education and inadequate access to quality education at tertiary level while suggesting the need to reduce inter and intra district disparities in the provision of quality technical education. Compensation from these deficiencies has written already in the vast number of private initiatives giving English medium education in rural districts and university collocations through international universities. I see no reason to stop this. But it is tragic that encouragement is not given to non-private sector to start schools while also asking them to charge fees but and provide scholarships to ensure ethnic integration. I know that Catholic Church is more than willing to do this but we should also encourage Maha Bodi society

and the Hindu organizations and the Muslim organizations to do the same. But in all cases the state should insist on such schools in admitting an ethnic mix. This is obviously an area in which the ministry of defence who can help. It has started one school but it can do more throughout the country.

I remember in Diyatalawa I suggested many years ago that the SLMA takeover the management of one of the Diyatalawa schools to ensure quality education to officers who could then be with their families for the children of other ranks as well as for local children. In the midst of other pressing concerns that suggestion could not be taken forward but it should be taken forward now with similar initiatives in the capitals of the districts in the north where the army has a significance presence.

Through the association set up in my reconciliation office for religion, education and peace and pluralism, we have written to various ministers of education concerns for permission and support for our program in which South would develop partnerships. The schools would work with the other schools in the north but also do joint social service projects. Because integration occurs as I said when people work together or learn together. Some schools are already working on this; the Hindu schools already had a meeting a couple of weeks ago to start an initiative. And all these schools that used the best of Colombo Schools would also encourage extracurricular activities because many schools in deprived areas and not only in the north do not have such extracurricular activities. In privilege areas there are clubs for sports and cultural activities and social activities. But smaller schools are without these which is another reason why their products find employment difficult. This is another area in forces can help, I know that in some areas in north they help in sports but they can do much more especially with regard to social service activities, guides, scouts, cadetting, St. Johns Ambulance, disaster management. Such training should incorporate inter regional and inter ethnic teams with training camps for particular skills, responses to flood, draught, tsunami and landslides. Both the LLRC and human rights action plan also mention the need for human rights education for children but I think this should also be taken up in holistic fashion in terms of social interventions on a broader scale. I know I have made several suggestions and I am afraid run over my time but I hope some of these will be taken up by the KDU and the ministry. The achievements of the last few years due to constant training, careful planning, and continues assessment of progress; these are traits the military has developed and they must be introduced into the population at large. The ability to work as a team is something that national has lost in the years since independence and I hope those who have managed to produce excellent work and focus team work will also promote to help social integration we need so badly.