

# WORKSHOP

ON

## EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Venue

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### KEY CONCERNS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF NEP

Paper presented

on behalf of

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Director General,  
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KEY CONCERNS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF NEP.....200.....

(Paper presented on behalf of V. Ilankumaran Esq.,

Director General, Education Council of Tamil Eelam)

The LTTE Education Council wishes to place on record our past experiences in the field of Education in the North East Province.

We have raised our voice at every forum with International, National and Provincial Agencies to redress our grievances.

It is very unfortunate that we have not received appropriate help to restore the depleted state of Education in our region. Everybody is well informed about the conditions and needs of Education in this area.

International Agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, UNHCR and the GTZ have made number of studies, collected relevant data and proposed programmes in the past. The problems in the field of Education are well known to all from the Government to the Provincial Administration. We, too, not only have extended our cooperation to all these authorities without any reservation, but also tried to build the gap. We have rendered assistance towards recruiting volunteer helpers, and to put up semi-permanent buildings. We have also looked into the grievances of teachers, developed appropriate manuals and provided training to teachers. However, we feel it is the duty of the Government to provide equal educational facilities to our children and teachers.

The whole world is now speaking about education for all, compulsory basic education, achieving the target of Universal Primary Education by 2015, about the importance of English, Computer Literacy, and so forth.

Sri Lanka also has signed the world convention on Child's Rights. However the education achievement rate is very low in our area due to deprivation, the calculated damage and destruction of Education system.

The education structure consists of the pre-schools, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary in general. In particular, it can mean both the infrastructure facilities and educational facilities. To deal in depth with

both these aspects of the entire Education sector will need a lengthy discussion. Let me, therefore, confine our observations to Educational development only.

Infrastructure facilities and Educational development are two sides of the same coin of Education. The Central Government, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the GTZ, the UN related NGO and the Provincial Council are involved in building infrastructure facilities. However, for speedy action more funds and better coordination are required. According to the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, Education is more a devolved subject. Schools other than National Schools come under the administration of the Provincial Councils. But in practice they are more under the control of the Centre than under the provinces. Moreover circulars and instructions are issued contradicting the constitutional functions. We feel that only in this country circulars are superceding the Constitution. This practice should be stopped. Provinces should be allowed to exercise the powers given under the Constitution and fulfil the responsibilities without anybody's interference.

Educational Development as far as North-East Province is concerned can be divided into two:

1. Education for normal children
2. Education for affected children

#### I. EDUCATION FOR NORMAL CHILDREN

##### a) CLOSED AND DISPLACED SCHOOLS

There are 144 schools uprooted and functioning in different locations and another 156 Schools are permanently closed. (Please refer Annex. - 1)

Any Educationist will accept that a child will develop only in a congenial environment he/she is used to. Uprooting children from their original places not only affects the educational development but also affects them mentally. Therefore, it is very essential to re-open the closed schools and transfer them to their original locations. A survey has to be carried out and appropriate plans have to be drawn up.

Now I would like to touch upon a very sensitive issue, yet most urgent, that of the children in schools in the High Security Zones, and of the schools in the vicinity of these zones and those surrounded by army camps. Out of 40 schools that were in the High Security Zones in the North, 17 are closed, the rest (23)

are functioning temporarily in other distant areas. There are about 20 other schools that are surrounded by army camps. The children in these schools are placed in an unimaginable situation of fear and anxiety as they move in and out of schools and during school hours – Some prominent schools, such as Hartley College and Methodist Mission School in Point Pedro, Union College and Thanthai Selva Primary School, to mention a few, are undergoing untold hardships and the children are having traumatic experiences due to the presence of the Army and their behaviour and activities. Creation and continuation of such a situation is a gross violation of the fundamental human rights of children. We earnestly request the International Agencies and other authorities to take effective measures to have the Army removed from the areas where schools were located in the High Security Zones and from the vicinity of schools, so that they can function in a favourable and peaceful atmosphere.

#### b) TEACHERS

Schools without teachers are useless. If we are to put this more effectively, schools without trained-teachers are worthless. The teacher cadre in the NEP has never been fully filled. (Annex II) There is a shortage of 4026 teachers in Tamil medium and 158 teachers in Sinhala medium as on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2003. As far as the National Schools are concerned the teacher shortage for Tamil medium is 195 and 41 for Sinhala medium. The teacher vacancy in the NEP has been there since the establishment of the Provincial Council System, and the Provincial Council is unable to recruit teachers and has to wait for instructions from the line Ministry. We are unable to understand why it is so. Annex III indicates the teacher vacancies in a nutshell, Zone wise. Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Thunukkai, Vavuniya North and Mādhu are the worst affected Zones. More than 35% of approved cadre is not filled. If not for the volunteer teachers employed in the area, the Provincial Council may have closed down most of the schools in this area. We wish to ask why there should be shortage in the NEP up to 4000 when there is an excess of 14000 teachers in other Sinhala areas? Can International Agencies accept this state of affairs and justify the action taken by the Government? Why is it that the World Bank and the NGOO close their eyes to this anomaly? Please, open your eyes and bring pressure on the Government and the Provincial Council to rectify this injustice. In fairness to the World Bank it must be said that the World Bank gave the go-ahead to appoint 3000 teachers-1000 graduates, 1000 volunteers, and another 1000 A/L qualified-three years ago, and the cabinet, too, gave its approval then. It was only after two years 1000 graduates were appointed, and volunteer teachers were absorbed only 06 months ago. From the list of volunteer teachers presented, 91 are not accepted yet, 21 on the grounds that they belonged to

National Schools, and other 70 on the grounds that they were appointed as volunteer teachers before, they passed their A/L, although they had completed the A/L 2 or more years before the time the applications were called. We see here some injustice done to these teachers, because, for instance, while a candidate who had completed the A/L in 1996 and was taken in as a volunteer teacher in 1997, has been selected from the list submitted in 2002, a candidate who has been serving as a volunteer teacher from 1993 and had completed the A/L in 1995 has not been accepted. Why can't the latter be considered as serving from at least 1996 or there after and given appointment?

And can you believe that it has taken 03 years less 02 months- i.e. November 2003- to call for applications for A/L qualified teachers, and that, too, setting an age limit of 30. Because of this delay many of those anxiously awaiting these appointments either have sought employment elsewhere, or have already reached the age of 30 now. This age limit should, therefore, be extended to beyond 30. Further more, the Provincial Council, assessing the needs for the teachers in 12 sectors, requested that all 12 sectors be included in the gazette notification calling for applications. But the Central Ministry has called for applications to only 4 sectors, leaving out aesthetics, vocational subjects, P.T, etc. Another curious matter about the advertisement calling for application to fill the vacancies in NEP, is that all the applicants have to sit the competitive exam in a centre in Colombo only. "O tempora, O mores "-Oh! the times and the customs!!

Why should the Centre recruit teachers? Why can't the Centre allow the Provinces to recruit teachers? We feel that the policy of the Government should be changed. They should allow the Provincial Council to fill the vacancies of teachers without further delay. In the recruitment of teachers priority should be given to

1. Primary Teachers
2. English Teachers
3. Teachers to teach science and mathematics in O/L and A/L classes
4. Teachers to teach the subject of marine and inland bio resources technology
5. Physical Education Teachers.

If the vacancies are advertised district-wise and selection done subject-wise, we can get our teachers. Our experience in the past is that the teachers appointed to these mostly affected areas refuse to come or

they influence the authorities to get transferred to areas they prefer. In Vanni, the Students Organization of Liberation Tigers (SOLT), having called in for applications for schools in difficult areas, has recently appointed 28 Science graduates and pays them each Rs. 7500/= per month. We never had any problem in getting adequate number of applications. But there is some mistake in the government system of recruitment since those appointed by the Government to the affected areas refuse to assume duty. Please, correct the system and change the policy immediately.

The reluctance of some to serve in difficult areas is also due to non-availability of living quarters. If putting up quarters for staff in every school is not feasible, a system of having cluster quarters at least in some centres, division-wise, should be considered.

It is essential that courses are provided in fields with relevance to future income generation. There is, therefore, a need to concentrate on the teaching of technical vocational subjects in schools of NEP, as this Province has been the most affected one job-opportunity-wise. All schools workshops are damaged along with the equipments. Teachers have not been given proper training in new job areas.

There is much emphasis on the teaching of Information Technology in schools. But even if some necessary equipments are provided or purchased, in places where there is no electricity supply, generators have to be given at least to all the IAB, IC schools.

The value and importance of reading habit among the students has to be promoted and stressed in schools. Non-availability and lack of relevant supplementary books for light reading, electronic materials, reference materials, equipments and library furniture prevail in school libraries. There are not enough trained library staff, and a library cadre has not been approved by the cadre committee. Through the GEP II project only 568 schools out of 1951 in NEP are identified for library development under IDA- Funds for library buildings are allocated to 284 schools only, keeping almost to the same ratio as in other Provinces, not taking into consideration that NEP is the biggest Province in the country, next to Western Province, with most number of schools and school children. Hence, in the distribution of funds these factors should be taken into account. The Ministry should take necessary action to provide school library buildings and the necessary staff to other schools too.

We wish to point out that, due to the protracted war, almost all the prestigious schools in NEP, unlike the schools in Colombo, function in the same old buildings, some dilapidated, with no modern facilities, such as gymnasium, vocational training centre, swimming pool. No planned programmes to modernize these have been undertaken in a just and equitable manner.

Without the required number of teachers, it is not possible to administer a school effectively. It is, therefore, necessary to take emergency relief measures to safeguard a generation of children, instead of having recourse to the excuse that appointment of 'teacher assistants' would create unmanageable expectations of permanent appointments to the teaching cadre. Until such time the government fills the teacher vacancies, in the interest of the children in affected areas, the Volunteer Teacher system should be revitalized at least for a further period of three years on a yearly contract basis, out of the funds from the Tokyo basket (aid promised at the Tokyo conference) under the umbrella of ADB. The recruitment of volunteer teachers should be made Zonal-wise, for which the approval and appointment must be sought from the Provincial Ministry. We earnestly request the ADB and the NGOO to assist us to recruit teachers and pay them Rs. 4000/- per month till such time the Government pays them, as is done in some countries like China and Bangladesh, where ADB is financing such projects.

#### c) TEACHERS' TRAINING

Teacher Education is an important area. In the North East Province there are more teachers untrained than in other provinces. Here the GTZ has done a good job in the training of teachers in the form of In-service training. The GTZ stepped up to assist the government in the implementation of the Educational reforms. They took up Primary Education and all their activities of Pre-service Training and In-service Training are for primary teachers, but the newly recruited teachers are left out

#### d) PRINCIPALS

Principals' cadre must be separated from the teachers' cadre. In the recruitment and promotion of Principals, Provinces must be left alone to act. The Centre should not interfere into it. In the case of National Schools, the Centre can have a say but even that should be reconsidered. We feel that it is better to do away with National Schools. This system of National Schools creates a disparity. The clauses for the National Schools are being relaxed day by day and all big schools are being taken over

by the Centre. This is another way of taking over by the Centre the decentralized power of provincial administration. That should stop and all schools should be given to the provinces.

In 2003, principals were promoted. The statistics are as follows:

Grade 1	200	198 Sinhalese 01 Tamils 01 Muslims
Grade 2	500	470 Sinhalese 19 Tamils 11 Muslims
Grade 3	500	487 Sinhalese 03 Tamils 10 Muslims

These figures tell you what is happening in this country. Central Government must stop this and allow the Provinces to give promotion to principals and also allow them to do the posting, with the INGOO looking into any discriminatory practices.

#### SLEAS STAFF

NEP has a shortage of 235 SLEAS staff in the approved cadre. In NEP, there are 24 Zonal Offices. But staff allocation is made for only 20 Zones. If staff allocation is made to all 24 zones this shortage will increase, and will be still more had the agreed cadre been put into force. Why this anomaly for NEP only? Is it not an injustice? Why are INGOO blind to this injustice? Please, open your eyes and see. Why is the Provincial Ministry silent about it? Examinations are held to recruit SLEAS staff but results are not published. Only in NEP there is SLEAS staff shortage. In all other Provinces there is more staff. In Sri Lanka the National cadre for SLEAS staff is 2400. But there are 11400 in SLEAS staff. How is it? And why is it? In NEP, the SLEAS approved cadre is 370. The available SLEAS staff is only 124. Why is this discrimination? Are the INGOO blind to this state of affairs? Now and then the Government quotes the circular No.15 of 1990. The Supreme Court rejected this circular. That rejection is also quoted by the Government when it suits them. Discrimination on ethnic front is



practiced by the Government in various ways. The approved SLEAS class I cadre for NEP is 29, the available number is 01 and the shortage is 28. Yet NEP staff is not given promotion.

We would like to draw your attention to the plight of some performing SLEAS staff, specially the ADE's, who have been serving in an acting capacity for a long time. They have to be made permanent.

It was agreed by the line Ministry to appoint 41 SLEAS staff who had been discontinued after serving for one year in accordance with the ruling of the Supreme Court. On the instruction of the Minister, acting appointments were given to these officers in the early part of 2000, and up to date they haven't been made permanent. Why the delay?

#### F) OTHER OFFICERS

A. In our Zonal and other Education offices, at a time when urgent infrastructural work is undertaken, there is a great shortage of Engineers and Technical staff. There is only 01 Engineer in Jaffna and 01 in Vavuniya, and 01 senior Technical officer in Mannar, and none in Vanni; in the East, 01 in Trincomalee, 01 in Kalmunai, 01 in Amparai, and none in Batticaloa. That is why even if money is available through various sources, infrastructure work cannot be done fully and the quality of the work without these officers suffers.

B. In schools we don't have the required number of minor employees. There is an acute shortage of sanitary employees, watchers, and others, without whom a healthy environment in schools cannot be maintained, leading to health hazards for children. But even the appointment of employees on a casual basis is not allowed. These vacancies should be filled. Creation of a new cadre for these officers is a must, as the present cadre that is followed is the one that was in operation in 1952 and the same approved by the Finance Ministry in 1998.

Speaking about cadres, it is sad to note that out of 1200 officers working in the Line Ministry, there are 1150 Sinhalese, and only 20 Tamils and 30 Muslims. We also wish that there be much more transparency in the allocations of funds, policies and activities of the Line Ministry.

In PSC (Public Service Commission) there is not a single Tamil officer. In the National school Unit, out of 38 officers working there, there is no Tamil officer at all.

Why all these discriminations? Education is a human right. It is a birthright. To achieve the target of Education to all there must be teachers and other staff. (Annex IV)

#### G) COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

We in NEP have four Colleges of Education. All 4 Colleges of Education in NEP must first look after the needs of NEP. They don't do so. While the need is for Primary and English Teachers, they produce commerce and wood work Teachers. There is absolutely no coordination. The requirement of the Province is not at all taken into consideration in the intake of pupils for training. In setting up of courses again, no consideration is given to the requirement of the Province. Some Colleges of Education introduce certain courses of training, and later these courses are withdrawn. The required number of teacher Educators in these Colleges of Education is not there. There is utter confusion in the recruitment of students, courses of studies, and in administration. Only in Colleges of Education in North East Province there is this state of affairs. The intake of pupils and the appointment of teachers graduated from the Colleges of Education should be made on the recommendation of the Provincial Ministry.

#### H) NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

The NIE is too rigid an institution. It is overdoing certain activities and not doing much. Like the Indian System, all Provinces must have Provincial Institutes of Education. In which case, most work could be decentralized and many problems could be avoided. The LTTE Education Council is of opinion that the NEP must have its own PIE so that designing of Curriculum can be done to suit the Province, of course, if need be, under the guidelines given by NIE. In other words, NIE must be an advisory body and most part of the implementation should be done by the Province. That will improve Education in the Province in particular and Education in general of the country. Then and then alone can there be a multiplicity of textbooks as is expected by the education reforms. At present textbooks are distributed late and are often full of language and factual mistakes. With the ADB aid, many A/L books in science have been printed in Singhala and circulated in schools. But no Tamil books are available in Tamil medium schools for over 06 years. Over 90 video cassettes have been prepared for O/L and A/L students in Singhala, but in

Tamil, though only 11 had been prepared, even those are not available at present. Although the printing of text books was permitted at the regional level long time ago, due to want of incentives and personnel nothing has been done. There is much need for research to be done to produce books in certain fields, suitable to the local conditions and situation, such as books in agriculture and marine bio resource technology. Hence there is the need for research centres at provincial level, if not at district level. To avoid such shabby treatment provincial education institutes will be the best solution. In NIE academic staff consists of 300. Out of 300, Muslims and Tamils are only 24. There is, besides, 300 nonacademic staff. Of this Muslims and Tamils are only 06. These are some more reasons why there must be a Provincial Institute of Education in NEP.

### 1) TERTIARY EDUCATION

Though Tertiary Education, particularly University Education and Technical Colleges of Education don't come under the purview of the Department of Education, we must express our opinion on this important sector of Education, since the World Bank representatives are here. I must tell you that the LTTE Education Council is quite dissatisfied both with the Universities and the Technical Colleges in NEP. We turn out unemployable graduates and Technicians. That is because these institutions have not given adequate thought towards the work market both in and outside NEP and also abroad. In NEP, because work market is yet to open out and abroad perhaps of travel restrictions. A lot of changes are expected in the study courses in both institutions. We are sorry and quite perturbed that the Trincomalee Campus is not looked after by the UGC inspite of the fact that quite a number of Sinhalese students are studying in the Campus.

### 2. EDUCATION FOR AFFECTED CHILDREN

a. In the sphere of Education for affected children, we are quite thankful to the GTZ for the Education Projects they have sponsored in Vavuniya and Vanni. In Vavuniya the BECAre (Basic Education for Children in Affected Areas) is doing catch-up and Counselling programs. The GTZ in Vanni has done a crash programme in Education Rehabilitation in 2002 and is continuing same now for two years. A good work indeed.

I must mention that UNICEF and other NGOO are also doing catch-up programme in Vanni and other areas. The UNICEF is also trying to do Counselling for children in higher forms.

The LTTE Education Council wants more in the field of Education for affected children in NEP to be done. That is because, quite a lot of children in NEP have been affected by displacement and have dropped out completely and are without proper jobs. They need profession-based vocational Education.

Basing ourselves on past experience, we want the GTZ to put up a vocational training centre at Kilinochchi. We expect the German Government to set up two institutes.

- One in the East and
- One in the North

for children with learning difficulties. Children with learning difficulties can develop themselves in these institutes. The World Bank, ADB, and UNICEF and other INGOO too can come forward to set up these institutes in NEP or can come forward to assist GTZ to set up these in the NEP.

What GTZ has done and is doing is in the Primary Section only. It would be ideal if the activities of GTZ are extended to the Lower Secondary Section as well. Otherwise, what is achieved in the Primary Sector will be lost when the children come to the Lower Secondary Sector. Hence all these activities:

1. BECAre
2. VERP
3. TIP

will have to be continued in the Lower Secondary as well up to 2009. We are told that the BESP activities would cease to exist in May 2005. Because of the shortage of teachers, we wish these useful activities be continued for some more time till at least 2009. Already the Sri Lankan Government has started to drag the peace issue. We do not know how long they will continue to drag it on, thus making NEP suffer all the more.

We have shown you here and there the utter discriminatory practices practiced by the Sri Lankan Government. Till such time the utter discriminatory practices continue the INGOO must be there to partly safeguard the NEP. That is one main reason why we want the GTZ to continue its good work in the fields of TIP, BECAre and VERP. Yet another cogent reason is that GTZ has successfully developed a unique approach which is very pragmatic and pedagogical, with its well-equipped staff of

experienced and knowledgeable personnel in the field of Education. We, therefore, earnestly request the GTZ to continue and extend its activities in Vanni to the entire North and East- all areas Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese.

We must put on record the wonderful work UNICEF is doing in areas affected by the conflict. Their assistance in various forms towards the catch-up programme, the purchase of vehicles, putting up buildings for diverse and essential purposes, Teacher-Training, compulsory attendance of pupils, erection of non-formal centres, etc. is very much appreciated and to be praised. We are sure that they will continue their activities and extend them to other fields as well in the future -- in consultation with the Provincial Ministry of Education, so as to avoid overlapping of activities by different agencies.

We would like to focus your attention here not only to the children affected by the conflict, but also to children handicapped and disabled in institutions such as Nuffield school in Jaffna and others in the NEP. These institutions, too, suffer the same plight as the normal schools without suitable teachers and proper training, and without adequate facilities and modern equipments specially required for these children.

From the survey carried out by GTZ the number of schools having 4 or less teachers in the North is 309 and in the East is 227. The present position in Vanni is alarming as the majority of schools have been functioning with insufficient number of teachers for a long time. So, there are pupils with different abilities, and, hence, at different level of achievement. To cater to children in such schools, multigrade and multilevel teaching is a good solution. Till the teacher vacancies are filled, and even afterwards, there is an urgent need to create a special Unit to give training in multigrade and multilevel teaching to all teachers, ISA's and Education officers involved in the Primary and Secondary sections.

Another sphere that needs the concern of the International Agencies is that of the children with disabilities, such as children below the normal I.Q. As in foreign countries, institutes to cater to such children are a necessity in our area.

### b. Peace Education

In the NEP children are segregated. They know of damages and destruction only. They have experienced the atrocities committed on innocent Tamil people. There are quite a lot of them who have lost their parents and loved ones. They have lost their bread winners and are reduced to poverty level. Many of them beg for their living. Therefore, first they must be given what they have lost, and only then exchanges of children and other means of peace building will interest them. Haphazard acts will make peace building a mockery and meaningless. It can only aggravate hatred instead of peace and harmony. Such activities should not be forced on them. Anything forced can bring about unanticipated results. For instance, introducing a second National Language all at once can bring about bad results. This in course of time will work only after other means are made use of.

The LTTE Education Council will help to conduct peace education if properly introduced. GTZ is introducing peace education in Colleges of Education. The way they do it is haphazard. It must be done more carefully and thoughtfully. It can also be done by other NGOO. Schools can be the best places to start it. But it must be done very thoughtfully.

### SUMMARY

We have touched on certain matters on Educational Development in particular, such as Education for the normal children, and for the affected children. We have laid stress on the following:

1. Repairing & Opening the closed and displaced schools.
2. Introducing a Workable system of filling vacancies of Teachers and their training.
3. Changing the policy of recruitment and promotion of Principals.
4. Filling vacancies of SLEAS staff, and
5. Other Staff.
6. Restructuring the Colleges of Education to meet local needs.
7. Decentralization of National Institute of Education & Creation of a Provincial Institute of Education in NEP, and.
8. Re-orientation of Tertiary Education system.

These are important topics.

In Education for the affected children, we have touched on the services of GTZ in particular and others in general. In this sphere, we have spotlighted the need for an institute in the East and another in the North and one Vocational Centre in Kilinochchi. We have also spoken of the importance of peace Education. We have, of course, left out pre-schools for they do not come under the purview of the Education Department. To the first six matters, special attention must be given. Other areas in Education are also important. In Education one area is complementary to the other though often priorities are given.

It is hoped this august assembly will take into serious consideration all aspects of Education and contribute their mite towards the advancement and development of Education in NEP for which we would be grateful. If tangible results are not achieved through this conference, then all our efforts will be in vain. Hence we should be ready to take courageous decisions and prepare an effective work - plan for immediate implementation." Deeds not words" should be our resolve this day.

While expressing our sincere gratitude to the yeoman services and assistance rendered by the International Agencies, we are very much hopeful that our request will receive favourable consideration and positive response from them, and they will continue to assist us until state of normalcy is restored in the field of Education in the NEP.

We are also confident that the Provincial authority and the Central Government will appeal to International Agencies not to phase out in our region, and will inject some fresh blood into our Education system in NEP.

Our main aim is the restoration of the dilapidated Education of North East Province in a peaceful and free Sri Lanka, for which we earnestly appeal to everyone for their involvement and support.

Thank you.

**V. ILLANKUMARAN**  
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**EDUCATION COUNCIL OF TAMIL EELAM**