

**Background:**

- Formation of a Research Consortium of United Nations Agencies, humanitarian NGOs, and centres of research
- Work organization entrusted to the Social Science Research Council (SSCR) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG)
- Research priorities identified and discussed at the international conference/workshop organized by the SSRC and OSRSG on “Filling the knowledge gaps: A research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children” held in Florence (July 2001)
- Program Statement (May 2002) of the International Research Network on Children and Armed Conflict
- Workshop (New York, May 17-18, 2004) on “Data Collection on the impact of armed-conflict on children: displacement and recruitment of children” (Angola, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo and **Sri Lanka**)

**The Sri Lanka Project** coordinated by Sonali Moonesinghe comprised of:

- Quantitative and qualitative field research conducted in the research site, district of Vavuniya (Sonali Moonesinghe)
- Country Inventory Analysis (Swarna Wijetunge)
- Political and Economic Analysis (Jayadeva Uyangoda)
- Socio-cultural Analysis (Varuni Ganepola)

**Output:**

- Main report by Sonali Moonesinghe.
- Country Inventory Analysis drawing on an annotated bibliography.
- History and Political Economy of the Conflict: Sri Lanka’s Protracted Armed Conflict: Background, Context and Dynamics.
- Social and Cultural Factors that Impact on Children’s Involvement and Participation in Armed Conflict in Vavuniya District.

In the Country Inventory Analysis, my main focus was on:

- Issues and concerns in data-related information on children affected by conflict
- Child-focused interventions
- Child conscription in Sri Lanka
- Internal displacement of children

Some of the issues and concerns I have raised on data collection are:

- Limitations in national population databases
- Inadequate focus on child-specific data collection
- Inadequacy of data on child-specific impacts
- Inadequacy of sector specific data

**Methodology:**

For main study, use of questionnaires (753 household (head of household) and 935 child (each child in household of age between 8-20) questionnaires); 23 interviews including 14 with former participants of the LTTE, 09 Focus Group Interviews (children in the age range of 8-16; youth groups of age 17-20); 9 additional in-depth interviews (including 2 religious leaders, a social-worker, an IDP activist, a psycho-social counselor, a midwife, a child protection officer, an officer in charge (OIC) of the Women's and Children's Bureau Division attached to the police department).

**Research site:**

The district of Vavuniya comprises of four administrative divisions and the population appears to be distributed along ethnic lines; Vavuniya North is comprised of primarily Tamil speaking communities, Vavuniya South is primarily Sinhalese, Vengalcheddikulam has the highest number of Muslim/Moor communities and Vavuniya Central is characterized by a population composition of all three communities\*. This research site was divided into six stratum; the four administrative divisions and two special stratum developed for this study. The special strata consisted of the Internally Displaced Camps (IDP camps) and various villages with special characteristics such as reflecting a high degree of religious and ethnic/community diversity, comprising of newly re-settled communities, border villages, communities with female and/or child-headed households.

Vavuniya district has been under dual rule of the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) for the most part of the conflict. The so-called border between the areas under direct control of the Sri Lankan state and those areas under the LTTE control lies just outside the Vavuniya town. Vavuniya is also the town where large camps of the Sri Lankan armed forces are stationed. During the war when there were restrictions on the movement of civilian population from and to the North, major transit camps for the civilian population had also been located in the government-controlled part of the Vavuniya town. Thus, the recent history of Vavuniya has been intensely linked to Sri Lanka's civil war and its various trajectories. Meanwhile, the economy of Vavuniya has also been shaped by the war. A specific war economy developed in Vavuniya linking itself to the logic of scarcities, economic embargo, smuggling, illegal trade and the presence of large numbers of soldiers as consumers (Uyangoda, p2-3).

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\*Vavuniya Central - Sinhalese 0.89%; Tamil 94.5%; Muslim 4.5%

Vavuniya South - Sinhalese 99.6%; Tamil 0.33%

Vavuniya North – Tamil 99%; Muslim 0.01%

Vengalcheddikulam – Tamil 74%; Muslim 26%

Source: Vavuniya District Statistical Handbook 2004