



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Contested Notions of Wellbeing:
Peoples' and Donors' Perceptions In Batticaloa, Sri Lanka**

A Research Paper presented by:

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Sri Lanka

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialisation:
**Women, Gender and Development
(WGD)**

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The Hague, The Netherlands
November, 2008

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To my mother, Sivamalar

Acknowledgements

First, I thank my supervisor Amrita Chhachhi, for her understanding, assistance and continuous support in this research project. Amrita, I'm thankful for the way you have made this research process truly enriching and interesting. A special thanks to Des Gasper, who is my second reader. Des, thank you for your profound comments, which considerably inspired me and the research paper writing.

Besides my supervisor and the second reader, I would like to thank the programme convenor Nahda Younis Shehada for her scholarship and timely motivations and the programme administrator Cisca Vorselman, for her assistance throughout my stay at the Institute of Social Studies. I extend my thanks note to the faculty and colleagues from the Women, Gender and Development programme and the faculty and colleagues from Conflict, Reconstruction and Human Security and Human Rights, Development and Social Justice programmes.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the entire research team involved in this research project, especially the participants. A special thanks to the members of the donor organisations who agreed to be a part of this study.

My gratitude extends:

To my dear friend Vinita Varkey, for her editing skills. Vini, thanks for being there when I needed you the most,

To Hiba, Kaira, Lisa, Nebil, Pedro, Sohpia and Yvette, for their constructive comments,

To Ananda and Sidharthan, for helping to organise my thoughts at the initial phase of the research project,

To the members of the Women's Leadership Scholarship, for the financial assistance to pursue this masters degree,

To Karoline and Lisa, for their love and support throughout,

To the dearest Geert jan, Nura and Trudy, for warmly welcoming me to their home, my second home in the Netherlands, towards the end of my stay,

Sunila and Professors Chitralega, Hettige and Maunaguru, who have no direct link to this research but have played an influential role in my life,

To Parani and Ritika for being a constant support and love,

To my family, for all they have done for me, their good wishes, love and warmth despite distance,

Thank You All!

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures	6
List of Acronyms	7
Abstract	8
Chapter 1	
Introduction	9
Background and statement of the problem	10
1.1 Research objectives and research questions	13
1.2 Research methods, ethical considerations and limitations	13
Chapter 2	17
Conceptual framework and participatory methodologies	
2.1 Review of literature on wellbeing	17
2.2 Participatory research methodologies	21
Chapter 3	28
Components and Providers of Wellbeing	
3.1 Components of wellbeing	28
3.2 Providers of wellbeing	36
Chapter 4	45
Fractures, Contestations and Silences in Conceptions of Wellbeing	
Chapter 5	55
Concluding Remarks	
References	62
Bibliography	65
Annexes	66

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1 Coordination matrix between research objectives, questions and methods	14
Table 2 Data segregated by sex	22
Table 3 Marital status	22
Table 4 Level of education	23
Table 5 Religion	23
Table 6 Level of income	23
Table 7 Chronology of residential movements	24
Table 8 Categories of the data	24
Table 9 Programmes themes supported by Cordaid, Oxfam Novib and Hivos in Sri Lanka	39

List of Acronyms

NGO – Non Government Organisation

LTTE – The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam

G.C.E O/L – General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

G.C.E A/L - General Certificate of Education Advanced Level

GS Division – Grama Sevaka Division

Abstract

Since the mid 1990s, the number of humanitarian initiatives in Sri Lanka has been steadily mounting, especially after the tsunami in 2004. The overwhelming response by locals and international donors to help the people in need, problematises the very idea of humanitarian intervention and calls for deeper understandings of intervention programming in the context of conflict and post disaster situations. This study attempts to understand the very objective of intervention programming, 'wellbeing', since intervention programmes aim to improve the state of wellbeing of people. This study focuses on people's and donor's perceptions of the notion of wellbeing. Qualitative research methods have been used in data collection in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka and in The Hague, The Netherlands. Methods of analysis are discursive. The multiple conceptions of the notion of wellbeing as articulated in the voices of ordinary people challenges standard development interventions which make distinctions between objective and subjective dimensions and emphasise purely economic programs. The findings also illustrate fractures, contestations and silences in people's notions of wellbeing highlighting the intersection of gender, ethnicity and religion. The study also highlights the integral linkages between concepts and participatory research methodologies as crucial in identifying people's perceptions. The study hopes to contribute to the literature on wellbeing and development in a conflict/post disaster context and argues for the importance of rethinking current forms of humanitarian intervention in Sri Lanka through further research sensitive to the context and the concepts and participation of ordinary people.

Keywords

Development, ordinary people, donor organisations and contestations, fractures and silences in the conceptualisations of wellbeing.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Violent conflict¹, political persecution, and catastrophic loss have wrecked Sri Lanka for more than two decades. People have lost loved ones, homes, communities and means of livelihood; leaving a state of precarious living conditions. The past decade has seen a steady growth in the number of initiatives in Sri Lanka that are described as “intervention programmes” focusing on ‘development’, ‘psychosocial’, ‘gender equity’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘reconstruction’, ‘restoring livelihoods’ and ‘mental health’. Such programmes are believed to improve the ‘state of wellbeing’ of people who have experienced adversities. This seems to be the result of an increasing interest in people, both globally and locally, who want to help the ones living in situations of conflict or natural disaster such as in Batticaloa, which is located in the Eastern coastal region of Sri Lanka. Thus international and local institutions have become increasingly involved with ‘intervention’ programming with an overall objective to improve the living conditions of people. The need and aptness of intervention programming has been subjected to a few dissents within the humanitarian sector of Sri Lanka.

But the times are changing. Concerns and debates about the legitimacy and effectiveness of various programmes have recently started to take place at various levels. A few groups of concerned people, such as Mangrove in Batticaloa, have been formed to assess the relevance of intervention programmes, before implementation. On the other hand the notion of ‘humanitarian intervention’ has been questioned by scholars, focused on the geopolitics of ‘humanitarian aid’. Some of the significant questions in the debate are the changing nature of humanitarian intervention and aid since its inception in 1970s and the ways in which it has become securitised and militarised today (Duffield, 2001 & 2005; Chhachhi & Herrera, 2007). This implies that the distinction between military humanitarian intervention and humanitarian aid intervention are becoming blurred. Interventions today (post conflict, post disaster) are seen as radically restructuring society and communities in developing countries and imposing security defined notions of development.

¹ The violent conflict in Sri Lanka has been addressed by different terms in scholarly writings, media, everyday usage of language ect, such as, ethnic conflict and civil war. I want to call it what it is. Therefore I use the term violent conflict.

This study connects to the debate by focussing on the very objective of intervention programmes, that is, wellbeing. It attempts to conceptualise the understanding of the notion of wellbeing, as voiced by the ‘ordinary people’ (I use the term ordinary people deliberately to distinguish from the standard usage in development discourse which addresses people as beneficiaries or victims). The term ‘ordinary people’ also has the element of emphasising everyday lives of people, which is the focus of this study (Das, 2000 & 2006). There are absolutely no other judgemental assumptions regarding my choice of the term “the ordinary”. I use the term ordinary people for people/community members in Batticaloa. They are professionals, workers, housewives, etc, who experience the impact of intervention programmes but are not part of the government or donors. Donors are the other actors included in the study.

Background and Statement of the Problem

Unequal treatments (in terms of employment, education, health and overall policies of ethnic minority communities: Tamils, Muslims and Burghers) since the independence from the colonial rule in 1948 triggered conflicts between ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The July 1983 riots and the State’s involvement in it left most people with ambiguities and uncertainties of lives. The realisation of a significant role played by these actors in atrocities against Tamils contributed to an outburst of full-scale violent conflict between a number of emergent Tamil separatist militant groups and the State armed forces².

By late 1980s, there was a decline in the number of Tamil separatist militant groups due to the power-struggle in terms of politics of representation. Survival of these militant groups was highly at stake due to the political climate of the country. Unsuccessful intervention by the Indian Peace Keeping Force, that promised to resolve the conflict, and the decline of other Tamil militant groups paved ways to the rise of a particular military group, known as, The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE)³.

² Please refer to <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm>, and <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/lktoc.html>, for more description on the historical context of violent conflict in Sri Lanka.

³ The LTTE is a Tamil military group formed in 1972, who has been demanding and fighting for a separate state (North and East of Sri Lanka) for Tamils.

The government and the LTTE came to the negotiation tables in mid 1990s. Other pro-government Tamil parties also played a role in the process. No substantial solution was agreed and the misunderstanding further intensified the violent conflict. A second round of negotiations, in February 2002, led to the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, with Norway as the external facilitator. The post-tsunami (since December 2004) recovery phase gave a new dimension to the existing ceasefire agreement, offering a platform for the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to cooperate in rebuilding the country and to achieve a political solution to its conflicts. The potentials of the ceasefire agreement began to decline since mid 2005 with steadily mounting 'undeclared' war. The ceasefire agreement was 'officially'⁴ withdrawn in January 2008. The conflict situation thus persists.

My area of study is Batticaloa which is in the conflict zone and has a mixed ethnic composition - Burghers, Expatriates Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamils. Both the violent conflict and the tsunami have enormous influence in the everyday lives of people living in Batticaloa. The number of internally displaced people in the region is rapidly escalating. People are subjected to violence generated by various political groups. A state of power struggle between political groups has resulted in uncertainties of everyday lives. It has also influenced the way people think and cope with rapidly changing conditions.

In this context of conflict, studies have been done focusing on different aspects of the effects of this on people's perceptions in Batticaloa. For instance 'Batticaloa discourse' as proposed by Frerks and Klem (2005) illustrate the intertwined socio, cultural, economical and political climates of the region. They argued, *'to large extent, the Batticaloa discourse is a discourse of grievance. Domination by the Sinhala-dominated government and by the Jaffna Tamils and the increasingly independent stance of the Eastern Muslims has left the Batticaloa Tamils in despair'* (2005:20). A combination of authors, a few reside in Batticaloa (section 'part II'), have contributed to bringing out local perspectives of the

⁴ The president of Sri Lanka officially withdrew from the ceasefire agreement. 'Un-cleared' war and other violations were taking place even during the ceasefire period, but no meaning was given to it.

Batticaloa discourse in the book called, *Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict*, edited by the above mentioned authors.

While these are useful studies, there is the need to also extend the analysis to other dimensions of people's lives and perceptions. In the context of reconstruction and development, the conception of wellbeing is crucial. I was exposed to multiple meanings of wellbeing when I was working with a few development projects in Batticaloa during 2005-2006. I was constantly challenged by the gap between the ordinary people's constructions of notions such as reconstruction and development, and what was suggested in development projects. In my opinion, these gaps played a significant role in the sense/state of wellbeing of people. In other words, the gap between what was needed and what was provided. This dilemma actually made me quit my involvement with development projects and focus on research. It may also be because of my stronger belief in activism and activist research. Hence I constantly questioned the use of certain research approaches, as I first started to engage in activist research process in 2000 and continued to engage in research projects that were mainly focused to bring out the voices of people.

The key concern of this research, given the uncertainty of everyday lives due to constantly changing situations in Batticaloa, is the perceptions of wellbeing as understood by the ordinary people. Following Das (Das, 2000 & 2006) who theorised subjective notions of violence, social suffering and pain through everyday language and practices through voices of the ordinary people, the current study aims to understand the notion of wellbeing through the voices of the ordinary people. The underlying rationale is that the voices of the ordinary people in quotidian life are influenced by the kin networks, social networks, livelihood patterns, income levels, religious and cultural beliefs and wider political perceptions in a particular context. The study also attempts to highlight the linkages between concepts and research methodologies. Secondly, given the context of Batticaloa and the debates on the geopolitics of intervention programmes, the study also investigates the notion of wellbeing as articulated by the international donor organisations, which fund projects either in Batticaloa or other parts of Sri Lanka.

1.1 Research objectives and research questions

The main objective is to contribute to the literature on wellbeing and development in a conflict/post disaster context by articulating the voices of ordinary people and the donor organisations and also highlighting the linkages between the concept and research methodology in identifying multiple notions of wellbeing.

The main research question is:

How do differences in notions of wellbeing reflect contextual specificities and axes of differences between people?

Sub-research questions are:

- i) What are the understandings of the notions of wellbeing by:
 - a. Ordinary people from Tamil and Muslim communities (differentiated by gender, age, economic, social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds) living in Batticaloa.
 - b. International donor organisations.
- ii) How are gender differences/genderedness constructed in the narratives?
- iii) What contestation/hierarchies (hegemonic/alternative) and differences emerge in conceptions of wellbeing in the context of Batticaloa?

1.2 Research methods, ethical considerations and limitations

This study uses data from a larger research project. The research consists of primary data which is mainly qualitative, applying the following methods:

- i) Four hundred household surveys and twenty case studies collected in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka:

The research started with review of literature on conceptualisations of wellbeing (secondary source) that was available in Sri Lanka in June 2007. The household surveys (400) were done in July, which was followed by collecting case studies with twenty families until October 2007. The sample selection was purposive. Participatory approaches were used when the case studies were collected. Since the methodology adopted is an integral part of the approach oriented towards articulating people's voices this is elaborated in more detail

in Chapter 2. I'm using part of the data gathered in household surveys and case studies of twenty families from the larger research project. The research team consisted of a researcher (myself), four research assistants and a coordinator. Table 1 provides the linkage between the data and the purposes of the study.

Table 1: Coordination matrix between research objectives, questions and methods

Research Questions	Information set (in relation to the philosophy of this research study)	Data Gathering Methods
1. What are the understandings of the notions of wellbeing by:		
i) Ordinary people from Tamil and Muslim Communities living in Batticaloa.	Views of people-reflecting differences of ethnicity, gender, generation, religion, income	i) Household survey (to map the demographical details and select 20 households in 2 regions) ii) Case studies of twenty families (once a week for three months)
ii) International donor organisations	Views on humanitarian intervention and notions of wellbeing in development language used by donors	Semi-structured interviews with employees (mostly in the programme area) of donor agencies in The Netherlands (Cordaid, Hivos and Oxfam Novib)
2) What hierarchies (hegemonic/subaltern), gendered constructions and differences emerge in these conceptions in the context of 'development and humanitarian interventions'?	Different meanings of wellbeing by different actors: gendered construction and the nexus of wellbeing and intervention programming	Data gathered from the above mentioned sources

ii) Three semi structured interviews with three donor organisations (Cordaid, Hivos and Oxfam Novib) in The Hague, The Netherlands:

These interviews were held in July and September 2008. One programme staff in charge of the programme area in Sri Lanka, from each donor organisation, was interviewed (all women). All three interviews were held in their offices in The Hague. Each interview lasted for an hour. Open ended questions were prepared to facilitate the flow of interviews.

Programme documents and reports produced by the three organisations were also taken into consideration in the analysis (secondary source of data).

The methods of analysis are:

- i) Structural analysis: the main tool used will be intersectionality looking at the linkage between class, gender, age, religion in relation to perceptions of wellbeing by different actors.
- ii) Discursive analysis: this will incorporate metaphors, framing, mapping, narratives and stories.

Ethical considerations:

I have frequently been travelling to Batticaloa from Colombo (almost every month from January 2006 to August 2007) for the purposes of development work (that I quit in April 2006), research projects, and visiting families and friends. I generally meet people through my personal contacts in Batticaloa to ensure trust. Gradually, I became familiar with people and places in Batticaloa and started moving around on my own. I was cautious that my personal location, in terms of where I come from and what I do, must not be harmful to anyone at any point. Given the context of violent conflict, anyone could be a potential threat to the safety of the people who reside in Batticaloa. To avoid such ambiguities, brief explanation on the purpose of the study was given to the participants. I purposely use the term participants to incorporate the people who have contributed their time, effort and perceptions as those who are part of the study. It is their voices that are articulated in the study. I believe that it also reduces the hierarchical structures in the process of the research. Participants were not passive objects that could be looked at. They were autonomous subjects with a right to 'agree' or 'refuse' to share their perceptions. Their willingness/preferences were respected. Participants' choices of time and place for each visit were prioritised throughout the three months interaction with them. The philosophy of this research was maintained till the very end of data collection. Given the constantly fluctuating security situations in Batticaloa, accessibility to participants was a prior concern throughout the study. Researchers were given letters of acknowledgement to justify their movements in relation to the study to assure their safety. Vocabularies that are sensitive

according to cultural or any other beliefs and those that may hurt participants were not used by researchers. They were also not judgemental about the views expressed by the participants. Confidentiality was assured to participants, that their real names will not be disclosed. Codifying changed the real names and only researcher identifies real names of participants. Research assistants were not allowed to use collected data for other purposes. Prior acknowledgement/permission is required if they want to use the data.

Limitations:

I always find it challenging to interpret voices in such studies. I feared the possibilities of manipulation of what they mean in the process of interpretation. The theoretical understandings that I may have acquired in academic trainings may twist people's understandings of the notion of wellbeing. The more I interact with people and academic texts, the more I'm convinced that most of the time their voices are modified in the manner that would support a given paradigm/theory. While taking this as a limitation, I have tried my best not to do the same. Another limitation is the small sample- twenty families participated, which does not amount to much. In most cases, only one member of the family, mostly the woman, has participated throughout the twelve visits to each family. Therefore the research doesn't claim to be 'representative' nor can generalisations be made from this limited sample. Finally, I would like to mention the issue of translation from Tamil to English. I have tried to keep the English translation as close as possible to the actual depth of meaning as expressed in Tamil and for the same reason the translations may not always follow the rules of English grammar.

Chapter 2 Conceptual framework and participatory methodologies

The first section of this chapter provides a review of the notion of wellbeing as theorised by various approaches. These conceptualisations provide a background to the research which adopted a more open ended exploration of how ordinary people and the donor organisations conceptualise wellbeing. The last section elaborates participatory research methodologies which is integrally linked with the conceptual framework used for the study.

2.1 Review of literature on wellbeing

There is a substantial body of literature on 'wellbeing'. In reviewing the literature it is clear that the concept of wellbeing has two apparent implications - 'wellness' and 'being' as the word suggests. The word itself has been written in different fashions- well-being, well being and wellbeing - suggesting different ways of implying the apparent meanings. Discussions usually start from elaborated meaning of wellbeing suggested by Aristotle, where he mentioned that wellbeing cannot be brought down just to happiness. It is much more than that. Apart from philosophical traditions of addressing wellbeing, psychologists, psychiatrists, economists and sociologists have also been investigating the notion of wellbeing. Factors attributed as indicators of the state of wellbeing have usually been classified into the division of subjective and objective wellbeing. The gender dimension in assessing wellbeing within this framework also has been acknowledged (Klasen, 2007). Wellbeing literature suggests measurement of wellbeing as an alternative to the measurement of poverty due to respectful representations of people's lives to inform development policy and practice (Camfield, 2006). While acknowledging that it would be interesting to analyse the textual and contextual backgrounds of different schools of thoughts analysing 'wellbeing', there appears to be a common point of departure which is that wellbeing is a state of 'being' that could be measured in order to analyse the 'wellness' of the 'being'. Investigations have mostly relied on relating the concept of wellbeing to income, well-living, correlation and causation with other factors (like the resources) and welfare.

"... as Gasper (2002), Travers and Richardson (1997) and others point out, the term 'wellbeing' is a concept or abstraction used to refer to whatever is assessed in an evaluation of a person's life situation or 'being'" (McGillivray, 2007: 3).

The works of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and Brooke Ackerly have significantly contributed to the linkages between wellbeing, human rights, development and poverty. They also emphasised the importance of women's contribution in such paradigms through the everyday lives of women, especially the poor women. In other words, their theorisations focused on bringing out voices of women and the poor to understand their everyday lives, which could be used in academic theorisations of wellbeing, human rights, development and poverty. The importance of the voices of the poor, especially women, has been highlighted in recent studies and forms a component of discussions on PRSP's and other anti-poverty policies of wellbeing-human rights-development-poverty (Narayan, 2000). The trend of linking human rights approach to the other three components of the nexus has paved ways to re-think the conceptualisation of human rights itself. Nussbaum brings out narratives of Vasanthi and Jayamma (in Women and Human Development) in the light of giving meanings to the above mentioned nexus from their everyday lives situations (Nussbaum, 2000).

As Okin (2003) points out:

“All three show how the wellbeing, freedom, capacities, functions, and voices of the world's women, especially the poorest, are on the one hand severely short-changed or even completely neglected by standards economic measures and, on the other hand, absolutely crucial to development – especially when understood as human development. Sen and Nussbaum point out that rapid economic change by no means always benefits women or the poor, and that economic growth is by no means simply related to human wellbeing. Sen and Ackerly insist that unless the voices of the world's least advantaged women are heard and attended to, gross injustice on a global scale is likely to continue, and problems such as population growth and environmental degradation will be exacerbated” (Okin, 2003: 4)

The above mentioned nexus has also been questioned, critiqued and de(re)constructed. Gasper (2007b) argued that an ontological analysis is essential to understand and examine the paradoxes of wellbeing. He analysed the categorisation of conceptions of wellbeing proposed by Derek Parfit (1984) along with approaches suggested by Nussbaum, Doyal and

Gough, Sen, Dasgupta and Alkire. Gasper's analysis has contributed to the questioning and de(re)constructing the conceptualisations of wellbeing. However, assessing the state of well-being only by a means of indicators will not be sufficient to address all important factors attached to the very state of well-being. Social and historical contexts of people's lives and their complexities should also be acknowledged (Gasper, 2007b). Gasper (2007b:23-64) further brings out the following that requires attention and analysis:

- Quantity as well as quality of life.
- Time-use patterns; for example, time spent caring for others or commuting.
- Well-becoming (personal growth) and well-dying; we must look at quality of death as part of the quality of life.
- Multiple important spheres in a life. Ordinary people's lists of priorities include both 'material' and 'non-material' aspects (Narayan et al., 2000). As remarked by the Chilean economist Max-Neef (1992), we must speak then of poverties not poverty, for different important things can be lacking: the requisites for survival, health, dignity or flourishing, or survival, health, etc themselves.
- Multiple dimensions of living. Max-Neef specifies dimensions of Having, Doing, and Interacting, as well as 'being', in each of a series of life spheres. Ekins and Max-Neef (1992) link this perspective to wellbeing measurement.
- Many aspects of wellbeing pass outside markets and can be competitive with the market-mediated aspects. Non-market sources —family, friends, health, and recreation — appear more important in general for happiness than are market sources, and amongst the market sources, experiences during work hours or unemployment can be more determinant of personal satisfaction than is the level of income or consumption (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Oswald, 1997; Lane, 1998a, 1998b).

The discussions on wellbeing reviewed, above all emphasise the contextualised and historicised understandings of wellbeing; and this is what this study attempts to do, i.e. to unpack the notion of wellbeing as constructed by different actors, ordinary people and the

donor organisations, in relation to development in a specific context. Voices of people can be interpreted in different ways. While drawing insights from the above mentioned theorisations, the philosophy of this research study goes beyond framing the voices in dichotomies such as, subjective or objective, influences or components, feelings or conditions and material or non-material aspects of wellbeing. Therefore the interpretation of the study attempts to avoid such dichotomised frames. Instead it tries to unpack the notion of wellbeing as lived and expressed by the ordinary people and as framed by the people from the donor organisations, who try to make a difference in the lives of the ordinary people.

The approach used in this study draws on R. Chambers' contributions in the development field where he has questioned the hierarchies in the field of development through participatory methodologies. He argued, 'I have chosen, though, a different focus. This starts with 'us', with development professionals. It asks about failures, errors and learning, about what we do and do not do, and how we can do better. The argument is that we are much of the problem, that it is through changes in us that much of the solution must be sought. As earlier book (Chambers, 1983) was subtitled 'Putting the Last First'. But to put the last first is the easier half. Putting the first last is harder. For it means that those who are powerful have to step down, sit, listen, and learn from and empower those who are weak and last' (Chambers, 1997:2).

The methodology applied in the study has been influenced by Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA). PRAs⁵ have been debated in relation to development research since early 1980s. In its early days, PRA seemed to be largely organised commonsense. During the 1980s, though, creative ingenuity was applied and more methods were borrowed, adapted and invented, many with a more participatory mode. PRA principle of 'use your own best judgement at all times' permits and encourages creativity' (Chambers, 1997: 116). 'PRA and PRA methods have been classified as visualised analyses; methods for interviewing and sampling; and methods for group and team dynamics' (Cornwall *et al.*,

⁵ A few suggestions for further information on PRA: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip> and http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-85051-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

1993: 22 quoted by Chambers, 1997: 116). A few PRA methods as pointed out Chambers are, handing over the stick, do-it-yourself, local analysis of secondary sources, mapping and modelling, time lines and trend and change analysis, seasonal calendars, daily time-use analysis, linkage diagrams and drama and participatory video making (Chambers, 1997). In this study similar participatory methodologies were used.

2.2 Participatory research methodologies

This section describes the participatory methodologies used in this study. The study began with the first phase of literature review and discussions with a few academics about the practicality and sample selection in the context of Batticaloa. This led to the formulation of a household survey by the end of June 2007. Two Tamil (Koolavadi and Iruthayapuram) and two Muslim (Iyankerny and New Kathankudy) Grama Sevaka, GS, divisions (the local government administrative system in Sri Lanka) were selected. This selection was made on the basis of accessibility to get multiple voices in terms of axes of differences. Practicality of the household survey was examined through a pilot study (maximum of 10 households in Batticaloa) household survey.

One research assistant from each of these DS divisions was selected (four in total; two male and two female). Due to the political situation in Batticaloa (state of uncertainty as a result of the violent conflict that restricted movements of people within Batticaloa) researchers selected 100 households that are in their neighbourhood in each division. This also had made it easy for their movements for the rest of the research period. 100 households from each division, making a total of 400 households were completed. Data from twenty families is used for this study.

The Household surveys were conducted to map the structural locations and demographic details of participants, such as:

- Characteristics of the household members (number of members, age, gender, economical background, kind of income generating activities involved and marital status)
- Chronology of their movements over the past years (multiple displacements) and reasons for such movements

- Social life and religious and other beliefs (not just beliefs but also information on practicing beliefs)
- External assistance receiving from state or/and non-state organisations

A structural analysis of the information gathered was used to select 20 families for case studies. The selection was purposive based on economical, socio-cultural, and religious concerns and practices and priority were given to select families with different and unique characteristics (such as multiple displacements and members with special physical and mental needs), and gender balance. Researchers’ observations also played a significant role in the selection. Members of households were given the choice to decide their participation in the study. In the pilot study participants did not want to talk about the external assistance they were receiving from state or/and non-state organisations. That category was removed as a result. Demographic details of twenty families are as follows:

The age varied between 27 and 80 with an average of 45 years.

Table 2: Data segregated by sex

Number of males	5
Number of females	15
Total	20

Although gender balance was sought to be maintained at the time of selecting twenty families, male participants in 5 families said that they will not have time to participate in a regular weekly interaction. They replaced their participation by either their wives or mothers. While the methodology has given the opportunity to accommodate more women in the study, it has meant that men’s voices were fewer.

Table 3: Marital status

Married	12
Widow	5
Separated	2
Unmarried	1
Total	20

The participants were predominantly married. There were widows but no widower. One woman was unmarried and two women who were separated from their husbands.

Table 4: Level of education

Up to grade 5	5
Up to grade 8	3
Up to grade 11	11
No schooling	1
Total	20

Most participants have studied up to grade 11. One among twenty did not go to school.

Table 5: Religion

Muslims	10
Roman Catholics	3
Christians	4
Hindus	3
Total	20

The sample contained participants who were predominantly Muslims. People make a distinction between Christians and those who identify themselves explicitly as Roman Catholics so that distinction has been maintained in classifying the data. All participants engage in religious practices, according to the religion that they follow, on a regular basis.

Table 6: Level of income

Above poverty line	7
Below poverty line	4
No income	6
Not available	3
Total	20

Table 6 shows that participants are scattered in terms of the level of income. The poverty line, as a standard indicator, is applied to show the income levels of the participants. National poverty line in August 2008 is Rs 2,936 (source: Department of Census &

Statistics - Sri Lanka⁶). The sources of income were; government jobs, working abroad, small business, working at an NGO, home based business, handicraft work at home, and minor employment at the mosque.

Table 7: Chronology of residential movements

Once	11
Twice	1
More than twice	1
Never	7
Total	20

More than fifty percent of the sample have moved from their initial homes at least once. There are also multiple movements in two families, where they have either moved twice or more. The predominant reason for these movements is the violent conflict (11 out of 13).

Case studies were collected over a period of three months, August- October 2007. A maximum of four visits per month (one per week) with each family were completed (in total 12 visits per family). Semi structured questions were used. Researchers were cautious not to use or initiate terminologies related to ‘wellbeing’ that could be imposed on the participants. Each visit had a theme and different participatory methods were used. Table 8 shows the categories of data collected and methods used.

Table 8: Categorisation of the data

Categories	Methods
Signifying past events (Not directly about wellbeing)	Life histories
Perceptions on families, social networks and other institutions	Mapping the social network and institutionalised help, like government, non government, kin networks and religious institutions
What is the understanding of wellbeing? (what they value as assuring their wellbeing)	Semi- structured interviews and role plays

⁶ http://www.statistics.gov.lk/poverty/monthly_poverty/index.htm

What do they perceive as wellbeing of others? Also reflects on this study (is it needed) and ideas that may help to improve such studies	Role-play (reversed roles too)
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The date and time of each visit was decided according to participants' preferences. The life history method was chosen for the first visit to help the participants and researchers build rapport. Participants were requested to share events that they think were significant since their childhood. Five year range since birth was given to facilitate to remember events, like 0-5, 5-10. Participants were also told that all visits were going to be interactive. The second visit extended the method of life history, as people wanted to talk more about the significant events. The third visit started by mapping social networks. First the participants were requested to draw their homes on a flip chart, which was followed by mapping social networks in terms of offering or receiving help, special occasions/functions and other kinds of interactions. Only a few participants actually drew by themselves. Most of them didn't like to write or draw. Though the education levels of participants show (table 2) that they can write, they said that it has been a long time since they did anything like this. Most of them related this to their school activities and said '*school days are gone*'. Researchers took note of how they mapped their social networks. The fourth visit was extended to elaborate the nature and process of interactions with social networks. This was done with questions like, whom they reach for help in times of need/crisis and who comes to help, are there everyday interactions, when they are likely to interact/meet and what kinds of occasions and who participate.

The fifth visit focused on the role played by different institutions, like the state, non-state, family and religion in the lives of the participants. It was an open ended dialogue where participants shared the kind of help/assistance that they have received from the above mentioned institutions. Some of them also spoke about the nature and purposes of these institutions. All of them mentioned culture when speaking about religious institutions. As a result sixth and seventh visits focused on cultural meanings associated in their everyday lives, cultural practices (to move beyond just beliefs) and what these cultural meanings and practices mean to their wellbeing. The component of wellbeing was directly mentioned at this point, which was followed by what is their understanding of wellbeing (with the help of open-ended questions) in the eighth visit.

The role play method started in the ninth visit where participants were given hypothetical storylines of a family with multiple characters. They were supposed to pretend to be one of the characters in the story and act/share what the character would do in a given situation along with the researcher. The stories were related to how the sense of wellbeing can be felt/achieved in adverse situations. Participants were engaged in reversed role plays in the tenth visit. They exchanged their roles with the researcher where they interviewed the researcher to understand what may assure the sense of wellbeing of families in the hypothetical storylines. The eleventh visit continued to explore how else participants would express the notions of wellbeing. This was again an open ended dialogue. The last visit was participants' reflections on the study. They spoke about what they thought about the study, what they liked and did not like, how they would change the methods, should there be more studies like this. All visits were held at participants' homes as they preferred it. Each visit lasted for about two hours. All participants were given a token of appreciation⁷ for their time and effort to be a part of this study.

The participatory aspect of the research mostly relied on giving participants the space for creativity. A combination of interests was expressed by the participants. Since some of them didn't prefer to write or draw, proposed role plays and reversed role plays were conducted. There were ambiguities expressed at the beginning of such activities, mostly that participants were not sure how well they could do. Yet, they did try.

Although this methodology was effective there were also limitations. Participatory approaches have been criticised from multiple perspectives. Authors who have contributed articles in the book called, *Participation: The New Tyranny*, edited by Cooke & Kothari (2001), have questioned and analysed participation from developmental, psychological, anthropological and management perspectives. Cooke & Kothari identify their works as contributing to the constant methodological revisionism and move beyond an identification of technocratic limitations (2001: 7). Feminists have argued that the participatory approaches do not challenge the existing social relations of power in societies and thus

⁷ Silver mugs; there are used by all ethnicities and religions in Batticaloa.

provides less space for emancipation. In their view, participatory approaches didn't help much to bring social changes that are gender sensitive (Cornwall, 2000 & Cornwall and Pratt, 2003). Most of the critiques were directed towards participatory development and not participatory methodologies in research per se. This is precisely what I have tried to do in my study- without valorising participatory methodologies as necessarily making a difference or a positive change, I have focused on its effectiveness in identifying multiple notions of wellbeing.

What I have tried to do in this study is to apply participatory methodologies to bring out voices of people on the notion of wellbeing. I have tried to highlight the linkages between the concept and research methodology in identifying multiple notions of wellbeing, especially in the context of Batticaloa. In previous studies done in Batticaloa, for example the Batticaloa grievances discourse (Frerks and Klem, 2005), in the research approach violent conflict and tsunami are predetermined and questions framed to focus and emphasise specific adversities and their consequences. Rather than preconditioning the link between conflict and disaster as determining people's notions of wellbeing, I tried to apply participatory methodologies, where the creativeness was left to the participants and the links or lack of link with conflict/natural disaster were made by them. Their adverse conditions were not assumed by the researcher though the researcher was familiar with the local settings to a greater extent. The study attempts to understand the social relations of power, knowledge production, gender relations, geopolitics of humanitarian intervention and hierarchies as they exist and influence the everyday lives of the ordinary people along with the politics of participatory research methodologies.

Chapter 3 Components and Providers of Wellbeing

The first section of this chapter focuses on the components of wellbeing that emerged as articulated by the ordinary people. The next section further builds up the arguments towards the perceived providers of wellbeing as articulated by the ordinary people and the members of donor organisations. The components of well being are presented as perceptions of wellbeing along with themes identified by analysis. The analysis was based on how the notion of wellbeing is expressed in categories, framing, focalisations, sequencing, and presence and absence of images/concepts. Use of words, ways of describing realities, concepts that were frequently highlighted (frequency), recurrent concepts and interlocked/interconnected aspects were also applied in the method of analysis. As I mentioned in chapter 2, I'm not trying to frame the voices of people in any dichotomies. Instead I have tried to present them in the manner that people have framed them. I acknowledge that the voices themselves are not innocent and the space where these voices are produced is highly politicised and complicated. Positioning of me as the researcher has also influenced the interpretation and proposed frames as a result. Having said that, what I have tried to do is to minimise the extent of dichotomous categorisation of the meaning as articulated by the participants of the study.

3.1 Components of wellbeing

Nannillai, the equivalent for wellbeing in Tamil, has been associated with different aspects of everyday lives of people, by the ordinary people. Components range between being independent and mutually inter-dependent is elaborated below.

Education as wellbeing

Education is seen as one of the key factors influencing the wellbeing of people. It has been perceived as the key to obtain a respected job (by the society) in the future. 53 year old Ismail, who is a father of 8 and a Muslim, said, *'I want my children to study well. Education is important for their futures. My elder son didn't study much. The income I was bringing home wasn't enough and he started working at a small age. I feel sad that he had to stop schooling'*.

'Students must be provided the right environment to continue their studies. I want my children to study well and have a happy life with their husbands, when they get married'.

Christina, 29 year old Christian, mother of three

The value of education was acknowledged even by those who had not finished their own schooling.

'My father got the school admission for me when I was 5 year old. I didn't like studying. I didn't understand what the teacher was teaching. Yet I studied until I turned 10 yrs old'

'I want my children to be happy in their future. They must study well'

Arafath, 47 year old Muslim, living with his second wife and three sons

A number of people had to stop school due to financial reasons.

'I studied till grade 2. I couldn't continue my education; my father couldn't afford it'

Hisbullah, 55 year old Muslim, living with his wife, two daughters and a son

'I studied till grade 10. Couldn't continue as I didn't get good results and family couldn't afford it'

Thanuja, 45 year old Roman Catholic, mother of two

Education is perceived as prerequisite for decent jobs. It was associated with parents' responsibility to educate their children and provide right environment to children to continue their studies. A strong sense of guilt expressed by parents when they couldn't provide adequate facilities to their children to be able to go to school or when the children had to stop schooling due lack of income.

Gendered constructions emerge in the notion that it is a father's responsibility to provide education to his children, especially sons. For women, marriage is seen as an alternative to education. For women dropping out of school was sometimes linked with gender roles in the household and demands of the care economy as Amirthini states:

'I studied till grade 8. My mother got pregnant during that time and I had to stay at home to help her with household work'

Amirthini, 38 year old widow, Christian, has a son

However what is interesting is that most women were encouraged to study and regretted the circumstances (father's death, financial pressure etc) which meant they had to stop.

'I was sad when I stopped schooling. My mother used to teach me something at home. Now my happiness relies on my sons. I will have to educate them even without a husband'

Nurmaan, 34 year old Christian, mother of two sons, separated from her husband

'Our father wanted us to study well. I went to school until I was 18 years old. My brothers and sisters also studied. But we had to stop schooling when our father fell sick and everything we had was spent on his treatment'

Mumthaj, 57 year old Muslim, living with her daughter and son in law

'I always wanted to study and become a big person in life. But I couldn't do that. I liked mathematics. That was my favourite subject. But I didn't pass O/L⁸'

Noorsath, 42 year old Muslim, mother of two

'I studied at the Batticaloa Anaipanthi School (girls only) till grade 11. Couldn't continue as I didn't pass grade 11. My father died at that time. I would have studied if my father was alive'

Ambikai, 42 year old Hindu, mother of two daughters and a son

Only one Hindu participant mentioned that she was not encouraged:

'My favourite subject at school was English. I received prizes for English language related competitions. But I didn't get good results in grade 11. Therefore I couldn't continue my education. Most importantly I was afraid that my friends will make fun of my results. Nobody at home ever encouraged me to continue my education'

Vathani, 28 year old Hindu, mother of two sons

The importance of schooling was not restricted only to literary education:

⁸ According to the Sri Lankan education system, Ordinary Level (O/L) is the first level high school examination

'I liked to go to school with my siblings. I never wanted to go alone. I had a close friend called Regina'

Gnanam, 69 year old Hindu, living with her 29 year old son

As pointed out by Anthony, 68 years old Roman catholic, living with his second wife and daughter, *'I studied till grade 10. I stopped schooling because those days that was big. My father was a teacher. He studied only till grade 5. He told me that I have studied enough when I was in grade 10'*, perceived meanings and values associated to the level of education have changed over time. Participants have mentioned that school provides space for interactions across communities, ethnicities, class, caste and other differences. I think it is important to acknowledge that the limitations or challenges for creating or maintaining spaces for interactions across communities, such as the violent conflict, were silenced. Most schools in Batticaloa are cross-ethnic, with varying percentages of the representations of different ethnic groups. The recurring interwoven themes are happy life, personal responsibilities and interconnectedness. The link between level of education, decent jobs and happiness was made both at individual and family levels.

Wellbeing as secure jobs

Adequate permanent income was perceived as another key factor influencing the wellbeing of people. Again it was not just something that enables wellbeing but was also seen as intrinsically linked and closely associated with the dignity and respect of the family. The word limit of this paper does not allow me to present all the voices of participants in each component as I have done in the above component. Therefore, I have selected a few to support the claims as emerging from the voices. The notion of secure jobs was perceived in terms of good/ decent jobs, secured source to get adequate income, happiness, job satisfaction, challenges, and dignity of families and to be respected by the community. Interestingly, it went beyond just the standard of living in monetary values. Instead participants desire to have jobs that are generally respected by the community, which contributes to the respect of the family. Multiple needs for secured jobs were also spoken about.

'I need money. I have to repay the loans I have taken. I have to look after my children and provide a good life for them. Have to fulfil their needs. My life is over. But my children have to live a happy life and people must respect them'

Vathanitha, 45 years old widow, Hindu, mother of four

Concerns about positive and negative working environments (especially abroad), accessibility of work place, having consistency in adequate income, having started working at a young age and migration for employment purposes were expressed.

'I started to work as servant in a household when I was 9 yrs old. Our family income wasn't enough and I had to work. I worked there for 3 years. I used to have lot of lice in my hair. They shaved my hair. I was like that for a long time and everyone called me bald headed. I used to cry a lot and complain about it to god'
'I went abroad 15 days after I got my first periods. First time I went to Kuwait. It was a newly wedded couple's household. I was there for 2 years. I came back to Sri Lanka. Then after 3 months I went to Dubai where I stayed for 9 months. The work was difficult. In 1991 I went again to Kuwait. This time also the work was difficult and not proper food too. Everyday I ate rotti and tomatoes'

Vaitha, 37 years old Muslim, mother of three daughters

'I went to Kuwait when I was 17 years old. The family I was working for was very nice. They treated me like their own family. I didn't earn much. Second time I went again to Kuwait. The work was tough this time. But the salary was better'

Rifaya, 32 years old Muslim, mother of one

The above shows that while work itself was not experienced in a positive way, yet the income did allow for personal interests and available choices, especially for women. The recurring themes emerging from the combination of secured jobs and wellbeing, especially in terms of sequencing, are necessity and aspirations as seen in the statement by Matheena, *'I didn't want to go abroad. But I had to due to the family situation. I was scared. But it felt nice when I sent money back home'*. The gendered aspects of secured jobs is seen in the statements which say i) girls stopped schooling to help their mothers at home, ii) the social norm that women must have 'decent' jobs and they shouldn't behave in any manner that

could bring bad name to them, which obviously was seen as a bad name to the family, and iii) that the main avenue for employment for girls and women was going abroad to work as house maids.

Love and wellbeing

An element of wellbeing identified by the participants was love. People's perceptions linked the notion love and wellbeing in a manner that the feeling of love influences the wellbeing of people. This indicates that wellbeing does not focus only on material resources. Love was seen as so important that even the family could be abandoned for it.

'I met the man when I was 18 yrs old. We met at the neighbours place and fell in love. I didn't know anything about him. Not his religion, place of origin. Nobody accepted our love. He took me with him'

Amirthini

'I needed love and care more than I needed money. I wanted someone who will love me forever and he didn't have to be rich. I found that person in him. He said that he will live with me or die. We lived together for 20 years. Our life was the example of a perfect love life'

Vathanitha

'I fell in love with a Sinhala woman. Her parents didn't agree to our marriage. I brought her home. My parents arranged for our registration'

Anthony

Vathanitha's perception brings out the comparison between love and monetary aspects of wellbeing and she prefers love over comforts that money could bring in her life. The highlighting aspects are, appropriateness in terms of age, ethnicity and religion, weddings without parents' approval, committing to someone that you hardly know about, the kind of wedding ceremony, dowry, who supported love marriages and who was involved. The emerging common patterns include ambiguities, courage to face challenges, integration of ethnicities and religions, coinciding beliefs and expectations. These narratives indicate a different view of conflict- rather than polarised communities there appear to be many cross ethnic relationships.

Margaret Trawick did an extensive ethnographic study called, 'Notes on Love in a Tamil family' in Southern India (Trawick, 1992). She unpacked properties of love as described, experienced and lived in specific contexts. My study doesn't go into depths of the notion of love. But the findings do emphasise the properties of love that Trawick has unpacked, such as 'containment, simplicity, humility and opposition & reversal' (Trawick, 1992: 93-116). Notions of love can also be politicised and used in civil society movements. One such example is the Mothers' Committee mobilised in Zagreb, which was referred by Zarkov as 'one of the best-organised wartime committees' (Zarkov, 2007: 44). 'The Wall of Love was an action organised by the Committee of Mothers for the Returns of Soldiers' (ibid). Mothers, known as Mothers Front, in Batticaloa also have been active to voice for the children in Batticaloa. The findings of my study in the context of Batticaloa calls for deeper understandings of the notion of love that is perceived as influencing the wellbeing of people in quotidian life.

Religion as an element in wellbeing

'Wellbeing is living according to our religion'

Ismail

Religion was perceived as an element/part of wellbeing. Being faithful to religion and religious practices are perceived as wellbeing. Church was perceived as the place where one could get mental peace. Inter-religious aspects and religious identities were also spoken about. For example, Nurmaan said, *'my father was a Muslim and mother is a Christian. They met when my father came to Batticaloa for trading purposes. My father's relatives gave Muslim names to us. But we followed Christianity since our childhood. We couldn't change our names in our birth certificate. But we are Christians. We have never been to the mosque, not even once'*.

Religion was not only part of individual wellbeing but also associated with the sense of helping each other in communities; according to Hisbullah,

'Allah has given importance to poor people. I get 'sagaath'⁹. People give different amounts, like Rs500, 200, or 100. My family survives with that money. We must praise Allah. 'Insha allah' (with god's grace) we will continue to get help from other people (the ones who has got regular income).'

Furthermore cultural practices were perceived as part of religion and vice versa. When talking about wellbeing, Ismail shared that people don't have to fear for anything in life, if they live according to the religious norms. During the reversed role play, Ismail's questions were mostly focused on income, religion and to what extent one/a family tries to live according to their culture. It was not only Ismail who associated religion with culture. Conceptions linking religion and culture as jointly impacting on wellbeing of people seem common. According to Thanuja, *'culture is closely connected to our religion. Therefore we must follow the cultural activities. Be faithful to your religion. Religious belief is important for wellbeing'*

Another aspect that was added to the nexus of religion and culture is society. According to Noorsath;

'Our culture has been influenced by our religion and society'

While most people's perceptions seem to express similar concerns that religious norms are cultural practices, there were also other views that cultural practices are made by people themselves. Culture was perceived as consisting of elements from both religion and society, referred as ancestors by the ordinary people. As a result, cultural practices are those that are mentioned in religion and those that have been introduced by people, but a long time ago. There were varied perceptions regarding what kinds of practices should be followed - all kinds of cultural activities must be followed; what people think is doable and necessary to their wellbeing; don't have to follow what was man made over time and have to follow the man made ones too, because they want to conform to the community and not to be othered by the rest of the community.

⁹ 'Sagaath is defined according to our religion as the contribution from the richer families to the poorer families', said Fosia

Although men and women spoke of religion in the ways elaborated above, women often mentioned how their full participation in religious and cultural practices as a source of support or wellbeing is limited. They could not go to the mosque, for instance. The combination and interconnection between what is religious, cultural and social in people's articulation of these as part of wellbeing shows the importance of seeing these connections.

3.2 Providers of wellbeing

Places of worship and religious representatives as providers of wellbeing

The connection between religion and culture was also emphasised in people's perceptions on places of worship and religious representatives as providers of wellbeing. People have approached churches and mosques to rescue themselves from the natural disasters. The significances of worship places like the mosque, temple and churches go beyond just worshipping and have multiple dimensions.

'We stayed at the mosque for a couple of days after the cyclone. We were given clothes and food. Also when the tsunami hit'

'We get food items from the mosque during festival seasons, including meat. It also provides religious education to the children for free. Mosque community involves in solving fights within and between families. It plays a role as facilitator and carries out investigations when it comes to problems'

Noorsath

'Rev. Fathers gave dry food items and clothes through the church when the cyclone happened'

Anthony

Religion also has provided space for other people to offer support to their community members. Perception of mosques extends as providing employment opportunities. Hisbullah family's only source of income is his salary from the mosque. He said, *'I'm working at the mosque as a minor employee to help them with mosque administration. They pay me Rs1,500'*

A common perception is shared that going to religiously sacred places brings mental peace and relaxes people's minds. They seem to get relieved by prayers and charity work in the name of religion. The gendered constructions also illustrate that the cultural practices should treat men and women equally.

'Rev Father is very helpful in terms of advising us in times of difficulties and providing free religious education and Sunday schools to our children'

Christina

At the same time there were also perceptions that do not necessarily match with the above perceptions. Participants said that Hindu temples do not offer any help such as the one offered by the mosque or church. According to Vathanitha, *'There is no help from the temple. We only donate money to the temple'*. Participants also expressed that they do not always accept advice given by Rev. Fathers. So while people did listen to the religious representatives out of respect, yet they make their own decisions, depending on what they think is good for them.

Perceptions of the government and non government organisations as providers of wellbeing

The perceptions of provision of assistance dealt with two aspects i) the nature of assistance that could be provided by the organisations and ii) to whom. Everyone shared the view that the organisations must help the poor and must not help the people who are not poor. In some cases the understandings of organisational assistance were that organisations offer loans with conditionality and they have to be repaid on time. Issues of trust, honesty, predictability, corruption and dignity related to NGOs and the government were raised. The government's responsibility to regulate the economy and not let the prices in the market go up was emphasised along with a demand to increase the level of income if the living expenses are to be increased. Local government official were given credibility but at the same time, were criticised on the grounds of dishonesty and corruption. Services provided by the government, such as education, electricity, public transportation, road constructions and health facilities were highly criticised while some participants appreciated the services. People mostly spoke about loans they have taken from government bodies (such as

Samurdhi) and non governmental organisations for multiple purposes, mostly to invest in livelihood activities. Hisbullah expressed, *'No organisation has ever helped us. They only help the rich people. Don't speak about NGOs to me. And the government doesn't do their job properly.'*

On one hand the government and NGOs were seen as necessary providers of wellbeing and specific ways in which they could help the everyday lives of people or contribute to their wellbeing were mentioned. On the other hand, there was a lot of criticism of what was being done. People perceive the government as an entity that is obliged to help the people on the basis of citizenship based entitlements. NGOs were perceived as doing a favour but at the same time working according to their own agenda of helping people and mostly not correctly identifying the people in need. For example, elderly people are not taken into consideration by the NGOs. People also said that asking for help from the NGOs is like begging and it is a challenge to their self esteem. Most of the women however did emphasise that vulnerable groups like widows should be helped by NGOs. From this small sample at least the perception that emerges is that people saw providers of wellbeing as giving them what was their right and they did not like being seen as victims or dependants who require help and charity. This perception has implications for how donor organisations view their role which is elaborated in the next section.

Donor agencies' conceptualisations of wellbeing

We move on to conceptualisations of wellbeing as articulated by the donor organisations. The interviews covered the following aspects: the nature of programmes that are being funded in Sri Lanka at present, personal feelings/opinions about the programmes, especially in terms of reaching objectives, context specific practical issues and the notion of wellbeing. The precise order was not necessarily followed in all interviews but the issues were discussed. These organisations work through a network of partner organisations in Sri Lanka. Table 9 provides a summary of what programmes they support in Sri Lanka. This also helps to position the organisations in the context of development programming in Sri Lanka.

Table 9: Programmes themes supported by Cordaid, Oxfam Novib and Hivos in Sri Lanka

Cordaid	Oxfam Novib	Hivos
<p>As of January 1st 2007 the Cordaid organisation is structured around the programme sectors: Participation, Emergency Aid and Reconstruction, Health and Well-being and Entrepreneurship. In the sector Participation, which is the main sector in Sri Lanka, there is a small team for the developing programme of Women and Violence. And in the sector Entrepreneurship there is a fund management team (http://www.cordaid.nl/English/About_Cordaid/Index.aspx?mId=10182)</p>	<p>Oxfam Novib is in a phasing out stage in Sri Lanka. The areas of focus have been; Food and Income Security / livelihoods, labour, trade Saving and Protecting Lives, preparedness MicroFinance Right to be Heard, Gender Equity /gender equality, Food and Income Security / livelihoods, Health, Education Education, Saving and Protecting Lives Conflict Reduction (http://www.oxfamnovib.nl/id.html?id=PROJ_GIDS&lang=EN&action=zoeken&regio=277&land=287&thema=0&term=)</p>	<p>Hivos core activity is giving financial and political support to civil organisations and initiatives. Hivos' basic commitment is to poor and marginalised people - and their organisations. (http://www.hivos.nl/english/english/about_hivos/our_mission_approach_and_core_values) They work on human rights issues, issues related to women in different settings and societies and social development. A detailed list of programmes in Sri Lanka can be found in http://www.hivos.nl/english/partners/search</p>

Respondents requested that their names should not be used along with the corresponding organisation that they represent. It was also emphasised that whatever shared/expressed as their views cannot be generalised as the organisation's point of view. For these reasons, I have coded the interviewees. It is important to mention the power dynamics that I felt during these interviews. Following Foucault, I consider power as exercised, dispersed and productive (Mills, 2003). The aspects of power dynamic were perceptible in the position of me, as coming from Sri Lanka and having worked in Batticaloa, and positions of the employees of the donor organisations, as deciding the nature of programmes that they support in Sri Lanka, having certain expertise in the field of development and travelling to Sri Lanka from the head office. In my view the power dynamics certainly played a role both in the outcome and in the interpretation of the interviews.

Working patterns

Following the kind of development programmes that these organisations fund in Sri Lanka, I'd like to begin with the working patterns as voiced. The working patterns rely on the philosophy of the donor organisations in terms of their notions of development and methods of functions.

Interviewee 1: *'we try to make sure partner organisations bring in ideas and needs of the community. It should be a true reflection of what the community wants. We don't build something on our own and try to implement that, which may not be of any use to the community. Therefore we make sure that the projects are useful to the community. It has to come from down to up'*

The above emphasises on the bottom up approach in identifying the necessary projects for a particular community which as a collective unit must benefit from the projects that they fund. The interviewee also mentioned, *'of course we discuss the possibilities of proposed projects with the partner organisations. But our influences on the proposal are not very big'*. The approach presented was that the employers from the donor organisations only influence project proposals in terms of feasibilities and appropriateness of projects to the overall philosophy of the donor organisation and it is local partners who determine the programs. The usage of 'not very big' makes one wonder, how big is not very big. It can be interpreted differently depending on many factors like, contexts and standpoints. The interviewee continued to give an example, *'for example if we take gender equality, we make sure that there are differences between men and women from the programmes' point view. When partner organisations mention the word gender, we always ask them what they mean and why they are concerned about gender and how do they intend to achieve gender equality'*.

The statement above indicates that the interaction is not so benign. The production of local knowledge is influenced by the expectations of the donor organisations to match their notions of development. For example local people learn to be careful and specific to use terms like gender. Issues related to what is local about the local knowledge, how certain local people have the opportunity to suggest projects and how different axes could play a

role, are not taken into consideration. Local knowledge is not local knowledge anymore. The use of language by the interviewees is another aspect that indicates the power structures exercised in the process of identifying projects.

As another respondent stated it is ultimately the mandates of the donor that matter but the phrasing is in terms of local responsibility.

Interviewee 2: *'We don't start programmes because we think that is important to Sri Lanka. It also depends on what our partners are suggesting. When they suggest something, we analyse what is going on in Sri Lanka and see the possibilities of projects. We see whether it is fitting with our mandates'*

This approach is seen also in the stage of implementation. According to the interviewee 1, *'I go to Sri Lanka to monitor the projects. I go for meetings with beneficiaries along with the partner organisations. I don't speak much. They have the meeting. But if I feel like I need to say something and something should be handled differently, I talk to our partners when we return to their offices. I don't give any solution in front of the beneficiaries'*.

The above shows that the solutions are given, but not in front of the 'beneficiaries'. This supports the argument that the claim bottom up approaches is euphemised. The analysis done by the donor organisations, especially in order to fit their mandates, shows how power structures are inbuilt in the process of selection and implementation. Projects are thought and written in certain manner in order to be funded by donor organisations. Working philosophy of donor organisations cannot be ignored. The above also shows that projects go through a complex process of identification before it succeed to be funded. Ideas brought forward in initial proposals go through changes. Thus the claim to provide what the community wants is at stake.

The other aspect suggested by the working patterns is the rigid notion of sustainability. Interviewee 3 said, *'with the financial support we also provide support in the field of capacity building. We give multiple year support. That would really help an organisation to develop its strategies for a longer period of time. This also gives you an opportunity to*

make your out put and resource sustainable'. There are clear frameworks put forward by the donor organisations. Project initiatives have to fit in these frameworks to qualify or even to be considered to obtain funds. This was also reflected in people's conceptions of NGOs as providers of wellbeing.

Donor defined notions of wellbeing

Rights based wellbeing

One of the conceptions of wellbeing was perceived as having rights to live with resources. According to interviewee 1, *'our perception of wellbeing often falls under the category of rights to have a good life, good education, good health care, people must have the right to make their choices, gender equality and those kinds of things'*.

Wellbeing at individual and/or community levels

The differences between individual and community wellbeing were brought out in the discussion. The strong sense of wellbeing at the individual level was perceived as something impossible to achieve via development projects. Though the individual desires are heard, it is the needs of a community that is prioritised and incorporated in projects. According to the interviewee 2, *'You always label your wellbeing by things that are not going well in your life, which you don't have in your life. Of course this is related to a person/self. But as a donor, we focus on the wellbeing of a community. We listen to many voices and try to make life better for people as a group'*.

The above shows that the notion of wellbeing at a community level is preferred by projects and this doesn't necessarily mean the wellbeing at a personal level. In other words every need of everyone cannot be fulfilled in order to assure their wellbeing. While this may sound practical, it is contentious in terms of whose voices are heard and whose interpretation of the needs of the community, is reckoned. There is a likelihood that certain members of the community are excluded in the development projects, such as the elderly and disabled.

Wellbeing as feeling

The other conception of wellbeing was that, wellbeing is feeling. Interviewee 3: *'in my personal perspective wellbeing is feeling. What you say and how you feel about it. Wellbeing is a feeling. Feeling of wellbeing'*. There was the patronising assumption that the people of Sri Lanka cannot have this feeling or the capacity for this feeling due to the ongoing violent conflict. *'Wellbeing, I think, it must be extremely difficult to the people in Sri Lanka even come closely to some sort of feeling of wellbeing. With present conflict, I think it is extremely difficult. Security is the main thing'*

Minimum and maximum levels of wellbeing

Participation was perceived as the minimum level of wellbeing in the context of Sri Lanka. The maximum level was left open and to be decided by different factors, which cannot be determined.

'For me the wellbeing concept will be linked to equal participation, which means you have influence on your own wellbeing. It is important to have your own ways of achieving your own wellbeing. This is the first step. Of course what you can do with this, will be another issue. But this is at the minimal level. The minimum which every citizen should have. Opportunities for access will be important. At the maximum level it could vary depending on many different things' - Interviewee 2. Along with participatory citizenship based entitlements, access to resources were also highlighted by interviewee 2. What is important here is who defines the minimum and maximum levels of wellbeing, especially the emphasis was on minimum level of wellbeing.

Wellbeing as positive change

Another common pattern emerged in donor organisations' perception was wellbeing as positive change. Change was perceived as something positive and something that can occur in short and long terms and also at the national level. For example change in feelings, attitudes and capacities. The change was also seen as creating dependency. Peoples' tendency to depend on organisational help was seen as slowing their own initiatives to be responsible. According to Interviewee 1, *'we also must be cautious in the developmental field that we don't make people dependant on us for everything. For example, when I*

visited a school in Sri Lanka that we had helped to rebuild, the principal complaint that the bulb in his office room wasn't working. We had given millions of rupees to them to rebuild the school. But he was still complaining about one bulb. They have to learn to take care of these small things by them selves, instead of waiting for us to bring a bulb'

The donor organisations' perceptions of wellbeing can be summarised as highlighting the following points, i) the importance of organisational philosophy and working patterns, ii) context of conflict and its consequences, and iii) change in terms of wellbeing.

Chapter 4 Fractures, Contestations and Silences in Conceptions of Wellbeing

The descriptive level of analysis in chapters 3 brings out multiple conceptualisations of wellbeing as voiced by the ordinary people and the donor organisations. In this chapter I will analyse some of the fractures, contestations and silences within the conceptualisations presented by ordinary people and the contestations in the conceptions between the people's voices and donors conceptions of well being. These address my third research question - what contestation/hierarchies (hegemonic/alternative) and differences emerge in conceptions of wellbeing in the context of Batticaloa?

Gendered fractures within the conception of family wellbeing

In the last chapter a key aspect of people's perceptions of wellbeing was that it is mostly collective and mutually benefiting and reciprocal. The conceptions strongly articulated collective notions of wellbeing. Wellbeing at the family level was shown through joint efforts and contributions by the family member in livelihood activities to ensure material well being by pooling income and sharing resources.

As Christina describes it- *'I do sewing at home. My mother does all the work and allows me to sew. My sister I share jewellery. We don't buy separately for each of us'*.

In addition many emphasised family activities that contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of all members (like praying to the god for the wellbeing of every member and taking care of the household activities), along with a strong sense of respect of the family (being respected by the society) and interconnections of the wellbeing of belonging to multiple families. As the voices of the ordinary people suggest, by multiple families I mean, family that one was born into, family that one got married into and siblings' families¹⁰. Reciprocity at the family level was perceived as affirmative relationship within family members which included marital and natal families. .

'The last I visited my family in India in 1959. They brought the passport system in 1959 and I couldn't go after that. Before that I went for sisters' weddings and even

¹⁰ I acknowledge that this argument lead to unpack the existing scholarship on the notion of family, particularly in the context of Batticaloa/Sri Lanka. But it is not the focus of my research. Yet it is an potential area of research in the future.

just to see and be with my family. I would like to go again. But don't have enough money and a passport' - Fareeq

According to Fareeq's experiences, multiple families extend even beyond the physical territories of Sri Lanka. Diverse dynamics within and between families have emerged on the basis of needs, financial means, practicing religious and cultural beliefs together, available resources, gendered divisions, educational level and many more everyday life situations.

However while this could project a romanticised notion of the family, from within the testimonies we find another view of the so called reciprocity principle within families which bring out Okin stated the inequalities created within family structures on the basis of gendered differences (Okin, 1989).

'We were living happily until my husband wanted to sell the land we had. I refused to do that. He had beaten me for that. He left me 9 days after our second son was born. Later I got to know that my husband remarried'

Nurmaan

The perceptions on gender roles draw out the gendered divisions of labour. According to Mumthaj, *'men need a job to look after their families. Work hard to look after the family, has to be their aim. Women should be married at the right age and time. Their parents must provide the necessary jewellerys and a house to them'*

Examples of discrimination in terms of childhood, growing up, fantasies and ideologies were also elaborated:

'I used to play with boys when I was young. I played with them until I got my first period. I felt the difference in me when I reached my age (referring to puberty). I didn't play with them after that. They made fun of me, asking, why don't you come to play these days?'

Christina

A conception shared by Vaitha clearly depicts the contestation of wellbeing at a personal level, but yet which can not be attributed as personal/individual as she has made the connection to her family. The personal sense of wellbeing has been over taken by the collective aspect of wellbeing.

'I was quite excited about my first flight. I was amused by the airport it self. I lost my pair of shoes in that excitement and went abroad bare feet. I was quite ashamed of my self. First thing I did when I landed was to buy a pair of shoes. I went abroad for my family. I wanted to look after them well and give all facilities to my family. I wanted to earn a lot for that'

Vaitha

Vaitha also shared that there are differences in beliefs and perceptions among family members, *'my husband believed in black magic. He used to believe that someone had done a black magic to our house and us. I don't believe that. He used to create lot of trouble because of his belief'*-Vaitha.

These emerging parallel conception illustrates that not everything, within and among families, is pleasant and as lovely as people would want them to be. 'The substantial inequalities that continue to exist between the sexes in our society have serious effects on the lives of almost all women and an increasingly large number of children. Underlying all these inequalities is the unequal distribution of the unpaid labour of the family. Feminists who speak out against the traditional, gender structured family are often unfairly attacked for being "anti-family"' (Okin, 1989: 25).

The gendered fractures in the discourse on family wellbeing show how the conceptualisation of wellbeing as expressed by the ordinary people is socially and culturally constructed reflecting and reinforcing already existing social and cultural constructions. Gendered fractures are expressed in relation with associated duties and responsibilities, dos and don'ts within gendered divisions. A deeper intersectional look brings out the dominant construction of men as breadwinners and hence providers of

material wellbeing and women with good moral values as care taker of the family, who obey men and the elderly and are respected by the community. At the same time there were also articulations of the independent needs of women: to have assets such as jewellery and a home, a job and rights to be equal to men. The gender differences therefore are complex and illustrate the importance of deconstructing the reciprocal family discourse.

Gender and ethnic fractures in the conception of community wellbeing

At the community level, a key concern was the importance of being supportive to neighbours, relatives and friends. It is interesting to notice that no one spoke only about their personal or family wellbeing and there was always community aspect interwoven. Communities can be identified with several factors such as ethnicities, religion and means of livelihood. Perceptions shared by the participants highlight support within communities.

‘A society must live in harmony. But nowadays people will eat each other if need be. The world has become cruel. But it must change. Everyone in the society must be treated well and equally’

Vathanitha

‘Guijt and Shah argues that simplistic understandings of ‘communities’ see them as homogeneous, static and harmonious units within which people share common interests and needs. This articulation of the notion of ‘community’, they argue, conceals power relations within ‘communities’ and further masks biases in interests and needs based on, for example, age, class, caste, ethnicity, religion and gender’ (Cooke & Kothari, 2001: 6). ‘Kabeer & Raikes also maintains that communities are not abstract and homogeneous groups of individuals, but rather women, men and children who have different health needs and play different roles in assuring that these needs are met’ (Fortin, 2007:28). People’s perceptions on wellbeing have emphasised the complexed natures of the communities. They also spoke about interactions between and within communities that may not share same values and everyday practices, for example, different ethnic communities. They haven’t limited the concept of community to one that is internally homogeneous. Instead they emphasised that the extent of help must go beyond the apparent differences among communities. Vathanitha, who is a Hindu and lives in a community where the population is

mostly Hindus, shared her interaction with her friend, who is a Muslim and lives 4-5 kilometres away- *'I have a good friend in Kathaankudy. She is a Muslim. But we have good relationship. She would help me regarding anything'*

She also recalled her friendship with Sundaravathani, a Hindu, during her school days, *'people were jealous of the friendship Sundaravathani and I had. We were very close'*. Harmonious interethnic relationship between communities were also expressed:

'1985 riot between the Tamils and Muslims was bad. People were killing each other by setting fire, damaging properties and paddy fields. We were really scared. One of the Tamil families from our neighbourhood helped us. One particular night when the problem was severe, they took us to the jungle and protected us. There are also nice Tamils like them. They didn't worry about their personal security when they helped us' - Rifaya

Participants' perceptions of community broaden the understanding of their wellbeing. Issues focused were, anticipation of being helped (helping others since only then they will help you), a place in heaven (in other words, helping others is in a way contributing to one's own wellbeing, both in this life in the next birth or in heaven), religious requirements, exchange of resources, a platform to live in peace and harmony notwithstanding ethnicities, religions and other differences. There was also mentioning that the helping nature of the community can obliterate the feeling of living in poverty.

However despite articulating these positive aspects the testimonies also bring out a process of 'othering':

'I like to help others. But once I had a bad experience helping a family in our neighbourhood. My mother and sister scolded that I didn't listen to them and tried to help the gipsies. That family is from Jaffna (Northern Sri Lanka). They didn't show any respect for me, at least for the sake of having helped them when they needed the money. I learnt my lesson. Now I don't go to help people like them, gipsies'

Christina

Chhachhi, Truong & Wieringa problematise differences in terms of gendered relations. 'Interlocking effects of multiple hierarchies of oppression/discrimination and deprivation. The gatekeepers of the citadels of global policy formulations, international institutions, national borders, community boundaries and male power and dominance in the household derive a 'patriarchal dividend' as Connell highlights in resisting the opening of borders, boundaries and bedrooms, to reveal the substructure of gender relations (Chhachhi et. al 2006: xxv). I follow their argument to understand people's perceptions and lived experiences of ethnic and gender divisions in harmony as well as conflicts. There was no sense of reciprocity among the members of the community who do not have good relationship with one another. The perceptions on othering bring out i) issues of boundaries of the community, that is, where does the sense of community end, ii) issues of crossing boundaries and their consequences in relation to religion and ethnicity of people.

In her chapter on Gendering Transitional Justice, Abeysekera argued, 'The participation of women in decision-making processes at every level of the post-conflict phase is extremely critical for the success of the reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement exercise as a whole. Social attitudes towards women who have been victims of sexual abuse, or who have been widowed or abandoned in the course of the conflict remain locked within traditional patriarchal moral codes' (Abeysekera, 2006: 30). Her argument can be extended in my study, for example:

'One of our neighbours, a man, helps me. He is a good man. He accompanies me to markets and helps me make a telephone call to my husband. We are like siblings. But his mother in law doesn't like it. She spreads rumours about the two of us. Rumour reached my mother in law, who told my husband about it. Even now I feel a block in my chest as I'm talking about it. My husband's family didn't take it well'

Noorsath

'I got married in 1984. I was 24 yrs old then. My father in law promised to give a house with toilet. But he didn't. He didn't treat me with respect when I asked for the house. I left my wife. She was 4 months pregnant'

Arafath

Women's perceptions on how women, especially divorced, separated and widowed, was perceived and respected in their communities depict wellbeing as social relations of power. This is an example of how social networks and the sense of collective wellbeing are mediated by gender, which women cannot avail without suspicion. Identified fractures in the construction of the notion of wellbeing do highlight the need for analysis done at multiple levels of contextualisation in relation to axes of differences.

Silences: Current tensions and conflict

The consequences of the violent conflict have influenced the wellbeing of people. People referred to violent conflict as either 1990 problem or war. They also referred to ethnic riots between the Muslims and Tamils. They spoke about their experiences related to the violence in the past. They mentioned the impacts of conflict as disappearances, killings, bombardments, displacements and migrations. Requests for peace and harmony were mentioned. Anticipation of peace and the government's responsibility to end the war were also expressed. *But there was hardly any mentioning about the current situation of violent conflict (also between Muslims and Tamils) in Batticaloa.* The politics of insider and outsider has reached to the level where members of the same family can be perceived as outsiders. Nobody knows what are the intentions of others, especially the people who claim to do research and get people talking about diverse issues, everything is politicised. It is true that the very context of conflict has silenced people, refrain them from speaking of it. The mere silence could speak for it self. But the interpretations could go wild. The silence on the current conflict has an important significance, which is often not acknowledged especially by donors showing a contestation in understandings of contexts.

Contestation between people's conceptualisation and donor conceptualisation of wellbeing

Some conceptions are the same while others are contradictory. In contrast to the silence of people donors could speak about the conflict. In fact donors only spoke about the violent conflict as the context. All interviewees linked the notion of wellbeing to the context of violent conflict. Their perceptions on the context of conflict have highlighted; i) the context

influences the lives of the ordinary people, ii) the context thwarts the development programming/space, iii) empathy with the Tamil citizens, and iv) context specific challenges. These four aspects are illustrated in the following titles.

Feeling of insecurity

According to interviewee 1, *'I think the conflict has adverse impacts on the lives of Sri Lankans. Many Sri Lankans give the impression that they have a happy life, except for the aspects of conflict. It is giving them the insecure feeling and that has a big impact on their wellbeing. It is very difficult to feel that your life is going ok when you are not secure where you live.* This shows that the context of conflict has produced the feeling of insecurity in everyday lives of the ordinary people, including in the capital, Colombo. The feeling of happy life is felt among many Sri Lanka despite other problems, but the conflict seems to be creating exceptional situations that people are unable to be positive about happy life in the midst of conflict. Thus their wellbeing is adversely affected. Interviewee 2 said, *'Everyday the situation is worsening and people are not happy and worried about their futures'.*

The people also spoke about the uncertainty of security situation. While talking about their experiences with violent conflict, Sneha said, *'we weren't sure about the security situation'.* Anthony shared his experiences, *'there was heavy shelling during the 1990 problem. We slept in temples in nights. It wasn't safe'.*

The hope

Context of conflict was also related to the sense of hope, especially during the time of ceasefire agreement, and the placement of hope by fear in the current situation. Interviewee 3 illustrates this as, *'with the ceasefire agreement, there was lot of hope in Sri Lanka. Hope for improvement, hope for peace. But that has changed now. I think hope is replaced by fear. Fearing for personal harm, fearing for no future, fearing for educational opportunities, fearing for disappearances, fearing for abuses'.*

The people didn't directly speak about hope. Yet they did mention the need for peace. According Vathani, *peace should be there in the country. Everyone must live in unity*'.

Shrinking space for development

Conflict has hindered the available space for development programming. This was highlighted in terms of movements of development practitioners, scope of continuity and perception of development organisations as supporting the LTTE. While the space for development shrinks, the space for ambiguities and insecurities increase. The need for travelling to the programme areas in Sri Lanka for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation was linked to the difficulties in performing such tasks in the context of conflict where safety measures are to be assured before hand at all times. The following expressed by the Interviewee 2 clearly explains the negativities that the context of conflict has created: *'In Sri Lanka you don't know who your friends are and who your enemies are. The humanitarian space that our pattern organisations need to work is reducing. Even if you use words likes human rights or humanitarian issues, immediately you are linked with the LTTE. Those connections are so easily made. At the beginning, when I started to go to Sri Lanka, there was quite a positive atmosphere for NGOs to work. There was prospective. But now something has been robbed from their space to work'*.

Donors also claimed recognition of their efforts to fund projects in the context of conflict. *'Situation varies from one hour to another, given the situation of Sri Lanka and this will have impacts on the functions of organisations. Travelling get hinders. Coordination becomes problematic but we still do it. But the situation is changing our strategies also keep changing'*, interviewee 3.

Inconsistent to donors' concerns about their own security and space, people didn't share similar concerns about NGOs. Instead people felt that the NGOs could be more effective and criticised NGOs' intervention at present.

The wish of Tamil citizens

Donors recognised that the primary reason for the violent conflict in Sri Lanka is unequal treatments. Over time the demand for equal treatments has turned out to be what it is now, the violent conflict. One of the interviewees empathised with Tamil citizen in terms of their programme areas; social cohesion and equal treatment. *'We think that the root cause of the conflict is the exclusion of certain groups. The wish of the Tamil citizens to be equal is a legitimate one. That is what we are focusing on. In whole Sri Lanka, there should be equal participation for everyone. We are looking at how we can facilitate social cohesion. And we have analysed that many conflict related countries are based on identity issues'*.

The above intention creates a dilemma in terms of where to draw the line between development interventions and support the claims of Tamils in Sri Lanka, which has been militarised in the process. This also supports the arguments on changing natures of development interventions and attempts to radically restructure societies with security defined notions of development (Chhachhi & Herrera, 2007).

Context specific challenges

Shrinking space for development programming due to conflict is perceived as one of the major challenges to the survival of development work in Sri Lanka. Interviewee 1: *'there was a lot of pressure to spend money immediately. Pressures from the media. Even from the donor end, to approve projects quickly. But we tried to do our best to make sure that the money was spent on appropriate projects and areas'*. This shows that apart from the conflict specificities, there were also other challenges like the media and the donors.

This highlights the issue of priorities, which is contrary to people's conceptions of wellbeing, such as secured jobs, love and cultural practices. These have implications for development/humanitarian interventions.

Chapter 5 Concluding Remarks

Whose voice is heard?

From the analysis in previous chapters it was seen that the donor organisations' perceptions highlight the individual and collective notions of wellbeing. '*Minimum of wellbeing would be, should be able to decide for your own self*' brings out a strong sense of individual wellbeing. At the same time the interviewee also added that while the individual wellbeing is emphasised and listened to, it is the wellbeing at the community level that they consider when it comes to the programmes that they fund. This shows that people's voices are listened to at the individual level. But the question for me is whose voice is heard? That is, whose voice is given importance to and interpreted as the wellbeing of the community? In other words whose voice is representative enough? The findings of the study aggress with Chambers' argument that putting the first last is difficult than putting the last first. People's voices have been listened to. Thus last has been put first. Yet they are not always heard, that is, not all of them are included in the programme design and planning. This seems to be the on going challenge that has to be questioned over and over again. This shows the need to question the geopolitics of humanitarian interventions from its inception with emphasis on the particular contexts, such as in Batticaloa.

Desired vs. Institutionalised Development

The study observes clear contestation between what was desired by the people as development and the process of identifying the people in need versus what was being provided to the people, in an institutionalised manner, which seems to have a range of differences depending on the philosophies of donor organisations. Contesting idealisations of the notion of development and development programming was emphasised both by the ordinary people and the donor organisations. Narrowing down to be selective in order to identify the needs of a community as voiced by the donor organisations, brings to the fore issues of participatory development and whose voices are counted and who is eligible to express and take decision. This has been contested by the ordinary people, who elaborated that the development organisations fail to identify the right people and their needs. There are also differences in terms of the components of wellbeing. For example, love is perceived as a component of wellbeing by the ordinary people, where as donor

organisations have not acknowledged it at all. To some extent, the institutionalised development seems to emphasise the platitudes of development. By platitudes of development, I mean that the discourse of development has grown to be accepted and identified with certain obvious categories and categorisations. For example, saying the correct thing to fall under the correct category. The study suggests that it is time to move beyond the platitudes of development.

Importance of an intersectional perspective

An intersectional perspective enabled taking the concerns articulated by the ordinary people to argue that assigned social roles on the basis of gendered differences are also fractured. It not only reproduces the existing social relations of power structures but it also challenges them. My intention is not to de-emphasise the ways in which women's lives are framed within families and communities. On the contrary, my intention is to highlight the different perceptions within the category of women that are influenced by their social, cultural, religious and economical positions. 'The past and present gendered nature of the family, and the ideology that surrounds it, affects virtually all women, whether or not they love or ever lived in traditional families. Recognising this is not to deny or de-emphasised the fact that gender may affect different subgroups of women to a different extent and in different ways' (Okin, 1989: 7). The findings of the study recognises with Susan Moller Okin's argument to acknowledge the differences and not to take any category as homogeneous. This brings us to the point that women also have built their own strategies to deal with inequalities that they experience in their everyday life situations. Their strategies may not correspond with one another within a family or community or the strategies used by women's movements, locally and nationally or may not even fall under the category of radical thinking. The assumptions that families and communities are non-political entities lead to judgements that do not necessarily reflect the realities of everyday lives. I think that it is important that development practitioners of any kind must be flexible to recognise the strategies used by women and not to assume and generalise social realities. Thus gendered assumptions must be contextualised. The fractures highlight seeing the possibilities for women to have control over their lives within the structure and the possibilities to live beyond the structure through changes. The findings of the study contribute to the argument

that meanings given to social and cultural constructions of wellbeing constantly changing and manipulated by the ordinary people for the survival of their everyday lives, especially in the contexts of conflict and post-disaster situations.

Another aspect that could contribute to the social and cultural construction of wellbeing is the nexus of religion-culture-society as elements of wellbeing. The notion of culture is sophisticated. Previous scholarly works critically brings out many components identified with the term 'culture'. In his analysis of critiques of culture, Gasper argued, "'culture' is an umbrella term which is used to highlight a variety of views, including of the shallowness of asocial explanatory models, the importance of human diversity, and the centrality of aspects besides individual consumption which make life meaningful, cultured' (Gasper, 2004: 191). Feminist theorisations critiqued culture as hindering the process of emancipation. My intention is to highlight the relevance of culture in the process of understanding the notion of wellbeing, which should not be ignored. Culture, as a broad category, was brought as a component that affects the wellbeing of being. Participants' perceptions produce a strong connection between cultural and religious practices. At one level culture is perceived as what is mentioned in sacred texts. Yet culture is also perceived as determined by ancestors. This brings out a sense of history. What had happened in the past seems to influence the wellbeing of people at present. Ancestors' anticipation of roles played by men and women in families and societies, the relevance and justification of cultural activities and what it means in the larger context of religion have occupied the thinking on culture as made by religion and as made by ancestors. Thus culture, as articulated by the participants, surely seems to influence the wellbeing of people.

Unpacking the multiple conceptions of wellbeing brought out the sense of responsible wellbeing. 'Responsible well-being recognises obligations to others, both those that are alive and future generations, and to their quality of life. In general, the word 'responsible' has moral force in proportion to wealth and power: the wealthier and more powerful people are, the greater the actual or potential impact of their actions or inactions, and so the greater the need and scope for their well-being to be responsible' (Chambers, 1997:11). The study shows that people feel responsible to educate their children, which assures them decent

jobs. People are responsible to make their choices to follow religious or cultural or both practices and they are responsible for their reciprocated behaviours that contribute to their own wellbeing. There are also external factors like the State, NGO and religious institutions and religious representatives as providers of wellbeing. Then again the notion of responsible wellbeing also could be applied to them in terms of, being responsible as providers, to consider for those who live now and those of the future generations. Hence it challenges the idea of people as victims or dependant beneficiaries- more as right holders.

Driven by critical issues raised within the humanitarian sector of Sri Lanka, the study attempted to contextualise and explore the very objective, conceptualisation and perception of wellbeing, through multiple voices. Intersectional perspectives and analysis elicited components of wellbeing as articulated by the ordinary people and the donor organisations. Within these voices we also highlighted fractures, contestations and silences and hegemonic and alternative concepts within and between the people and donors.

Limitations of participatory methodology

The study provides insights for rethinking the applicability and usefulness of particular research methods and approaches in the context of conflict and/or natural disaster. One of the criticisms of participatory methodologies is that it silences the vulnerable groups and women are perceived to be part of the vulnerable groups. Cornwall (Cornwall, 2003) elaborated, ‘with their emphasis on consensus, the institutions created as part of participatory development initiatives – whether committees, user groups, community action planning groups and so on – can exacerbate existing forms of exclusion, silencing dissidence and masking dissent (Mosse, 1995; Mouffe, 1992)’ quoted by Cornwall (2003: 1328). The experience of the study actually suggests the opposite that due to the participatory methodologies, women had greater chances to be part of the study. Thus the participatory methodologies used in the study have silenced men, the group, otherwise perceived as dominating participatory approaches.

‘An important aspect that research investigators should bear in minds is that members of a society may hold contesting, and conflicting views about social

reality, and each one of the is affected by the social position that the respondents occupy' (Srivastava, 2005)

The study has followed the thinking of Srivastava to highlight the contestations and conflicts of perceptions expressed by the ordinary people and the donor organisations in the notion of wellbeing. The participatory methodologies have highlighted the linkages between the concept and research methodology in identifying multiple notions of wellbeing. Sarah White and Jethro Pettit argued:

'... perhaps the most obvious contribution of participatory research to the understanding of well-being is in its capacity to draw out culture, location and social group specific understandings of the dimensions of well-being' (White & Pettit, 2007)

The politics of participatory methodologies is also challenging. On the one hand the application of participatory methodologies to evoke creativity is difficult and time consuming. The need for researchers with appropriate training was felt by the research team. On the other hand there was the tendency to claim for true representations of people's voices. I mentioned politics of knowledge production and epistemological concerns in various forms through out the study. The section on contentious aspects of participatory methodologies highlights these aspects. Quoting Wolf, 1996a, Amrita Chhachhi explains:

'... reflections on the research process itself, which inevitably involves dealing with issues of power stemming from the location and identity of the research, inequalities in the research process and the questions of accountability' (Chhachhi, 2004: 29).

Chhachhi's extensive reflection on the research process itself unpacks epistemological standpoints and the production of knowledge. Following Chhachhi, I have tried to make my standpoint as the researcher doing research in Batticaloa, clear. By contentious I mean that issues related to participatory methodologies can be argued in terms of politics of knowledge production and issues of epistemological concerns.

As mentioned in section 3.1 and several other times, voices of people and my analysis are not isolated from existing social relations of power structures. By highlighting the linkage between the concept and the methodology used, I argue that peoples' voices and research analyses are significantly politicised. This brings me to the other challenge, the method of writing participatory researches. What I have tried to do is maintain a balance between peoples' voices (both the ordinary and the employees of donor organisations) as they were articulated and what I have done with those voices. Doing so made me realise the importance not to curtail any aspect in the writing participatory researches and it is a challenge. Finally it is important to theoretically differentiate between participatory research methodologies and participatory development. This raises the need to rethink the question of participatory methodologies that is free from assumptions and generalisation and is contextualised.

I'd like to conclude this paper by highlighting a few concerns. Firstly, contextualised multiple notions of wellbeing must be recognised in the development agenda. Secondly, local settings are highly politicised. For example, gendered constraints and challenges faced at everyday lives of people. Therefore, analysis of the voices of the ordinary people must go beyond simplicities, general assumptions and generalisations. Thirdly, argue for citizenship based entitlements. Both the ordinary people and the donors emphasised the responsibilities of the State to provide better and safe living conditions without discrimination. Fourthly, everything is related to the context of violent conflict in Sri Lanka. Violent conflict does influence the wellbeing of people. Notwithstanding the impact of conflict, I argue that it is time for critical reflections on strategies that are being used at multiple levels to deal with the context of violent conflict. Look beyond the catastrophes caused by the conflict. For example, the likelihood of ignoring gender based violence in places where intense conflict is on-going. I'm not offering solutions for the violent conflict. Instead what I emphasise is that initiatives for social change must go beyond the context of conflict, which can contribute to discover other aspects of everyday lives of people, which may or may not be interconnected with the violent conflict. Critical intersectional perspectives at multiple levels are needed to rethink platitudes of development that could actually contribute to rethink the violent conflict itself, such as redistributive policies on the

basis of axes of differences. Finally, call for further researches to problematise preconditioned notions, such as the notion of love. I end with a quote from Christina, '*there should be more studies like this. Others must know about our life styles and the issues we have here in Batticaloa*'.

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Annexes

Annex 1

The Following should be taken into consideration in terms of the administration of household surveys

1. Should meet the Grama Niladari (GN), Grama Sevakar (GS) and mark the boundary of that particular GN division.
2. Continue to have good communication with the GN for future purposes too.
3. Good rapport with respondents.
4. Clear communication.
5. Introduce your self (Name and working for University of Colombo for this survey), a brief introduction to the purpose of the survey and how the responses of respondents could contribute to the overall research project.
6. One method of filling the survey.
7. Mark not clear responses or doubtful responses with red colour pen.
8. Make your notes on questions as you administrate them on your daily diary.
9. Should not be judgmental to responses.
10. Should appreciate respondents' time taken for participation and the gift is the token of appreciation.
11. You should not provide them words that they could pick up on.

Annex 2

Emphasis should be given to the following during each visit

1. Date, time, place, duration, household no (could be the roman no) and the series no must be clearly written in all field notes.
2. Date, household no (could be the roman no) and the series no must be clearly written in daily diary.
3. Field notes and daily diary must be written on the same day without further delay.
4. Emphasise should be given to observation in terms of, what goes around in the household as you speak to household members, what changes occur in the person that you speak to and other who are part of the conversation or sit at a distance but yet listen to the conversation.

5. Information shared by household members should be written in their language as they expressed. Try to minimise any additional version to what was actually spoken.
6. No assumption made by the research team about the information shared by household members.
7. Feel free to discuss and argue about any aspect of the study and continue to apply critical thinking in terms of gathering data that closely matches the focus of the study.
8. Doubts on any aspect of the study must be cleared without delay since that may impact the flow of data collection and the understanding among team members.
9. Time must be chosen in a manner that must not disturb participants' daily activities. Participants should not be left in a confused, fragile or disturbed state of mind at the end of each visit.
10. Issues that bring negative impact on the current state of mind of participants must be handled with care and not in a manner that could further damage any aspect of the participants' current being.