

VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA

CASE STUDY

for

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF VOLUNTEERISM (IYV)

Initiated by

The United Nations Development Programme – Sri Lanka

Conducted by

The Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID)

September – November 2001

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) considers it a privilege to have been entrusted with the study on volunteerism in Sri Lanka, as an activity to be accomplished in commemoration of the International Year for Volunteerism by the Sri Lanka National Steering Committee and the UNV, UNDP Colombo.

This study, in all probability, the only study to cover from the past experiences to the current scenario with recommendations for the future was conducted in accordance with a set of comprehensive Terms of Reference. It enabled a documentary study, interviews with a cross section of personalities knowledgeable and relevant and a collective participatory consultation process carried out at a workshop with a group of volunteer organisations. One of the outcomes of the workshop was the interest shown and translated into action by the participants towards establishment of a Network of Volunteer Organisations for furtherance of volunteerism.

The IPID had in Dr.W M K Wijetunga, a resourceful principal Researcher to carry out the research work.

Accordingly we consider this report to be a product of a collective effort at documenting the volunteer scenario in Sri Lanka and are pleased to present it hoping that it will contribute to widen the horizons of volunteerism in the country.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study of volunteerism in Sri Lanka was guided by the parameters set by the Terms of Reference given for the study. The time made available for the study was two calendar months. Dr.W M K Wijetunga was the Principal Researcher of the study.

The methods adopted for generating information for the study included Desk Studies, Personal interviews and Consultation Workshops.

The desk study involved the perusal of a considerable amount of printed material incidental to the research. But writings on volunteering / volunteerism in Sri Lanka itself were extremely few. (see **Bibliography Annex I**). Within this limitation the first two chapters on the historical overview and the evolution and types of volunteerism in Sri Lanka were compiled.

Personal interviews were conducted using an interview guide (see **Annex II**) with selected individuals representing the State, NGOs, Private Business Sector, and Media Organisations. (see **Annex III**) The purpose of such inter personal interactions is to elicit perceptions / attitudes and experiences of this diverse groups of persons in respect of their involvement and contributions. Responses were positive and encouraging. Second half of September and much of October were taken up by the interviews. Duration of each interview ranged from 30-50 minutes.

Representatives from the state, NGOs, private business sector, academia and media organisations including members of the national steering committee were facilitated to participate in a consultation workshop for identifying potential and constraints for promoting volunteerism as well as measures to be adopted for its strengthening. This workshop was held on 16 October 2001 at the Ceylon Continental Hotel. About 40 participants representing the different sectors attended the workshop (see **Annex IV**) . The workshop began with a presentation by Dr.W M K Wijetunga, Principle Researcher of his findings on the Historical Evolution of Volunteerism, its different forms and current situation (see **Annex V**). Thereafter, using SWOT Analysis, participants were facilitated to reflect and identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats associated with volunteerism in Sri Lanka

and the proposals / suggestions for strengthening volunteerism. This was carried out in the form of group exercises (**see Annex VI**). A synthesis of the workshop outcome along with a summary of different perceptions elicited through personal interviews and literature study is presented in Chapter 5 on the “Current Situation”.

The workshop summary, literature study and the interviews also provided much of the inputs into the chapter on Factors Impeding Promotion and Facilitation of Volunteerism. (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 is a summary of the recommendations for future action.

SRI LANKA COUNTRY PROFILE
(1999 / 2000)

1.	Total surface area	65,610 sq.km
2.	Population	19,043,000 (est)
	By Ethnicity:	
	Sinhalese	13,810,644 - 81.3%
	Tamil	1,592,372 - 9.5%
	Muslim	1,397,403 - 8.3%
	Others	45,415 - 0.6%
	By Religion:	
	Buddhists	12,936,704 - 76.7%
	Hindus	1,329,020 - 7.9%
	Muslims	1,431,044 - 8.5%
	Christians	1,158,683 - 6.9%
	By Sex: (in 18 districts)	
	Male	8,343,964
	Female	8,520,580
	Births	17.5 per 1000
	Deaths	6.0 per 1000
	Life expectancy at birth – female	75.4%
	Male	70.7%
	Society	
3	Government expenditure on social welfare	0.7% GDP 2.6% Govt. budget
	Literacy	90.7% (1997)
	Male	94.0%
	Female	87.6%
	Disabled / Handicapped	900,000 (8%)
	Those receiving care – aged	6,000
	- disabled	2,000
	Disabled in employment	10%
	GDP per capita	
4		\$829.00
	Total labour force (paid employment)	6,673,000
	Unemployment rate	8.9%
	Employment in Voluntary sector	NA

HISTORY AND CULTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA, AN OVERVIEW

3.1 The Early Beginnings

Volunteerism in Sri Lanka would go back to very early times, such as the early human settlements of the Pre-Christian era (6th Century B.C), as narrated in the early Pali Chronicles, *Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa* of Sri Lankan origin, while the legend of prince Vijaya and his entourage who drifted from India by sea and arrived in the North-Western part of Sri Lanka may be credited with the establishment of a nucleus of a principality in the new found land. However other evidence seems to suggest the presence of even earlier human settlements of both indigenous and Indian origin, the history of which is shrouded in myth and legend. Not long after the consecration of Vijaya as the ruler of Sri Lanka other migrant groups had also arrived in Sri Lanka from India among whom were representatives of various trades and skills as practised in the sub-continent at the time. They could be credited with the pioneering task of laying the foundations of an organized society, while at the same time passing on their skills to new generations to follow. Transfer of knowledge and skills has remained to this day an important aspect of volunteerism, both individual and organized.

During the next couple of centuries the human settlements grew in leaps and bounds bolstered by further incursions of people from India, as well as through the absorption of indigenous people. The majority of the people later came to be identified as Sinhalese and speaking a language derived from the Indo-Aryan linguistic family. Tamils who spoke a language derived from the Dravidian linguistic family were also among the early migrants to Sri Lanka from the southern part of India. Strategically situated settlements grew into clusters of varying sizes, paving the way for the future growth of urban and metropolitan centres. Anuradhapura which became the first capital of the Sinhalese and occasional Tamil kings was one such metropolitan centre.

3.2 Agriculture and Irrigation

Rice was the staple food of the people and was cultivated extensively with rain water brought down by the monsoons and cascading down a wide network of large and small

rivers. With increasing population, rain-fed water alone proved to be insufficient for cultivation, and with the initiative of the kings, and with paid and voluntary labour of the people reservoirs and canals were built dotting the landscape of the areas under human settlement. The maintenance of this highly sophisticated and technologically futuristic water- management system, also required a large number of state functionaries as well as volunteers, sometimes based on kinship.

3.3 Buddhism

Buddhism founded by Gauthama, the Buddha in the 6th century, B.C, in India, was formally introduced to Sri Lanka in the time of Indian Emperor Ashoka (3rd century, B.C). The contemporary ruler in Sri Lanka Devanampiya Tissa (307-267 B.C) along with the royal household and ministers had embraced Buddhism. This was an important turning point in the history of Sri Lanka, and with time Buddhism and Buddhist culture have left an indelible impression on the Sinhalese and the country as a whole. Buddhism has moulded and tempered the attitudes and the way of life of the Sinhalese, and remains to this day a crucial factor to be reckoned with in all matters, including volunteerism.

The practice of Buddhism provided many opportunities for Volunteerism. The Buddhist bhikkus (monks) have committed their entire life to the observance of the various vows and precepts specified for them according to rank, and have also not to deal in any form of currency. Since all their material needs were met by the lay people, they had no need to engage in any paid work. Like the Brahmins in India, they were also the repositories of knowledge which they voluntarily imparted to fellow bhikkus, as well as to lay people of all ages. Some of the bhikkus were versed in some mundane skills such as astrology, medicine, and even economics, which were also shared in the same manner with those seeking such knowledge and skills. The bhikku's role as a counselor and mediator was also important and was accessible to all irrespective of rank and position. Thousands of years later it still remains an important factor in Sinhala- Buddhist society. The voluntary services of the bhikkus were invariably sought at the time of the birth of a child, during illness and at death. The bhikku was the embodiment of genuine volunteerism, following the shining example of the compassionate Buddha.

**“Sabba danam dhamma danam
jinati”. *Dhammapada.***

**Of all gifts the gift of wisdom is the
most supreme.**

The female order of Bhikkuni, though never as numerically strong as their male counterparts, were nevertheless equally devoted to voluntary service, particularly to the female devotees, while being committed to the pursuit of their spiritual advancement.

The spread of Buddhism with the unstinted patronage of the royalty and the lesser nobility resulted in an unprecedented upsurge of constructional activity of various buildings and other adjuncts associated with religious worship, including shelter for the bhikkus and bhikkunis. The most conspicuous among the buildings has been the dome-like stupas, with tiers at the lower part and with tapering spires pointing towards the sky. While much of this building activity was completed with hired labour, there was also much volunteering both by the bhikku-bhikkuni, and the lay devotees. **Such labour was considered to accrue merit beneficial in this life, and the lives to follow.** When building the Mahathupa or Runanveliseya in Anuradhapura under the direction of King Dutugemunu (161-131 B.C) well knowing the strong desire of the people to engage in volunteerism, the King had decreed that all labour should be monetarily and materially compensated and had kept open many *danasalas* (eating and gift houses) which provided free meals and other material things required by the many thousands of bhikku-bhikkuni who were present in the capital during that period. Many kings and other dignitaries who came even long after Dutugemunu had continued this practice. The practice of conducting *danasala* or *dansal* with the voluntary contributions of time, skills, money and materials during important religious festivals has survived to this day and is a common sight all over the country. The other religions have some times emulated the practice as well. This type of well-organized charity would enable many people to engage in religious activities without worrying about their daily meals during such festive times.

When the king (Dutugemunu) heard this, glad at heart, he began work on the *thupa*. And he made it known: 'Work shall not be done here without wage'. At every gate he commanded to place sixteen hundred thousand *kahapanas*, very many garments, different ornaments, solid and liquid foods and drink withal, fragrant flowers, sugar and so forth, as well as the five perfumes for the mouth.

'Let them take of these as they will when they have laboured, as they will'

Mahavamsa – xxx 17-20

In addition to the religious constructions undertaken by the Kings and other nobility in the large population centers there was much activity in the rural areas, accomplished largely with voluntary effort under community leadership, and perhaps with very limited paid labour. **In such voluntary activities the women have proved themselves to be more resourceful than men, in management and human resource mobilization.** Thousands of temples with a complex of buildings in good state of repair in all parts of the country up to this day, bear testimony to both individual and organized volunteerism in that respect. Today these responsibilities are borne by a council of elders of both sexes, as members of the temple *Dayaka Sabha*, and assisted by the resident bhikkus.

Those able to write or inscribe were expected to maintain a *Pin-Potha* or record of good actions which when read to a dying person would help that person during his/her long sojourn in *Samsara*, or the cycle of birth and death. According to the

Mahavamsa (XX11-25) King Dutugemunu had his *Pin-Potha* read to him by the bhikkus, as he was nearing his death “ And rejoicing he (the King) forthwith commanded that the book of meritorious deeds be brought and he bade the scribe to read it aloud...”

3.4 Economic and Social life

There was also much spontaneous volunteerism in the domestic sphere in the early times. The practice of agriculture which was the mainstay of the people's economy required much sharing within the extended family circles, as well as with the immediate community. Land clearance and preparation of sowing, crop protection, water management, harvesting, and storage were important stages in the agricultural cycle, all of which required human resources beyond the capacity of immediate family and therefore had to be found through mutual sharing of labour, draft animals and agricultural implements.

An essential item in peoples lives was shelter which also required much sharing of labour, skills and materials. During the various stages of construction and upkeep thereafter, such as site preparation, construction, procurement of timber and roofing materials required both paid professional assistance as well as voluntary labour. The state as well as local communities built and maintained way-side shelters or *ambalam* to be used as resting places by wayfarers. Drinking water was also provided at the site in a clay pot or *Panthaliya*. Some of these *ambalams* have survived to this day both as relics of a bygone era and as a shelter for vagrants.

The people's occupations and life styles were such that there was both ample free time and free labour, and communal food for reciprocal mutual assistance. Village life in itself was a strong network of mutual support systems, generated through the natural

impulses of inter-dependence and sharing at all times. Some of these cooperative practices have survived to this day, in spite of the compulsions of a fast disintegrating rural social system. Among such practices, *Kayiya* meaning communal work and eating has shown the greatest resilience in terms of traditional rural communities.

3.5 Governance

In the wide field of statecraft the kings and the princes were dependent on a wide variety of officials and their retinues, most of whom were suitably compensated by the state. However in the day to day administration, particularly in some areas, volunteerism was inevitable. For example in maintaining law and order the people beyond the immediate reach of law enforcement and judicial officials had to fall back on their own human resources and devices, such as the *gamsabhava*, on a voluntary basis. Since such volunteerism carried with it both recognition and social status, like the unpaid “Justices of Peace and Unofficial Magistrates” of today, volunteers with some social and economic standing would not have been difficult to come by. Those early practices also survived for many centuries till new practices were introduced by the colonial administration. (Ratnayake, 1993, 71-73)

Gamsabhava

In Kandyan times the *gamsabhava* or village council, consisted of an assembly of the principal and experienced men of the village, who met at an *ambalama*, under a shady tree, or other convenient place. A *gamsabhava* was commonly convened to arbitrate in disputes, debts and petty delicts. ... In the case of public delicts the *gamsabhava* would commit the case for trial before a superior court after preliminary inquiry

(Pieris, 1956, 149)

A cardinal duty of the rulers was the protection of the people from both internal and external threats. This necessitated the maintenance of sufficient armed services on both land and sea. On land the rulers maintained a four-fold military establishment (*chaturanga senava*) which included regular infantry and mercenaries, while arrangements were also in place to call to arms able bodied men, as volunteers, during emergencies (*ratthavasika sena*). The people's voluntary participation in the affairs of the state at the level they operated, was perceived as an obligation on the part of the people in return for the king's protection of the country.

3.6 Hinduism

While the Sinhalese society had developed a strong foundation for both individual and organized volunteerism in all spheres of life, the Tamil settlers, because of their religion, had imbibed the influence of Hinduism, and the forms of volunteerism nurtured by the ancient *Sastras* and indigenous practices. The *Bagavatgita* in particular extolled the virtues of performing right action, without any consideration for any returns to the doer. The spirit of self-support based on reciprocity would be common to both communities, with the spirit of *danam* not unfamiliar to the Tamils.

3.7 Islam

By the end of the first millennium a new ethnic element had found its way to Sri Lanka carrying with it Islam in its wake. The Arabs as well as Indian converts to Islam came to Sri Lanka by sea as traders, and with its strategic location would have found the island a congenial place for their expanding maritime trade. With their coming a new element of volunteerism was introduced as required by *Sharia*, in the form of *Zakat* or a compulsory regular contribution to charity. This could be a germinal form of a revolving fund as known among Development NGO circles today. *Zakat* remains the bedrock of Muslim charity even at present, and supplemented with substantial foreign donations of similar origin. Friday in particular is a day for charitable activities.

3.8 Coming of the Europeans

(i) Portuguese

Except for occasional internal political upheavals, some times joined by South Indian intruders, there were no great tumultuous developments till the arrival of the Europeans, commencing with the Portuguese in 1506. Beginning with a trading post near the present-day Colombo, they did not take long to dig their heels and acquire political patronage of the local rulers, and thereby consolidate their political and spiritual hegemony over most of the coastal areas.

The Portuguese introduced Christianity (Catholicism) to Sri Lanka along with many elements of Christian culture and civilization, including the practice of Christian charity supported by both compulsory and voluntary contributions collected from the people through the churches, and counseling by the priests. The Christian clergy, like the bhikkus were also committed to a life of volunteerism in looking after the welfare of their flock. With a new missionary spirit they set out to change the social fabric of those converted to their faith. The sense of volunteerism introduced by the church, would have lacked the universalistic character of indigenous forms of volunteerism as it would have benefited only the converts and prospective converts. The institution of charity created by the church has survived to the present, in spite of the restrictive practices of the Dutch and the British missionaries in later times.

(ii) Dutch

The Portuguese were succeeded by the Dutch (Hollanders) in 1656 as the rulers of the territories previously occupied by the former. The latter were more preoccupied with trade than spreading their brand of Christianity- the Dutch Reformed Church. However they were not completely averse to the conversion of the Catholics, Buddhists and Hindus to their own faith through a well-organized network of schools and parishes. As under the Portuguese the Dutch authorities would have resorted to the promotion of Christian charity through the new church authorities.

(iii) British

- (1) In 1796 the British threw the Dutch out and occupied the lowlands, and by 1815 annexed by force the rest of the country, which had hitherto remained under a very fragile independent Kandyan Kingdom. Unlike their two predecessors the British were more systematic and business-like in imposing their colonial rule on the Island. Both directly and indirectly they set out to have a tighter control over the whole country for which they organized both a military and civil administration, instituted a dual-kind of education with English and the two vernacular languages as the media of instruction. Anglican church replaced the other Christian faiths as the official religion of the rulers, while Sinhala and Tamil languages and the other three long-standing religions languished under various colonial restrictions. The most radical changes were brought about in the economy transforming it from a feudal to a market economy with paid labour while large tracts of land belonging to the state as well as individuals were acquired by devious means and given to European planters for economic exploitation. A network of roads and railways was opened primarily to serve the needs of the planters and the new rulers. Indentured labour brought from India to work in the coffee, tea and rubber plantations were settled on the estates, thereby permanently changing the demographic pattern of the country.

The British rulers do not appear to have had an interest in state sponsored volunteerism, but allowed the church to undertake any such activity.

The harshness and the severity of the British rulers was violently shaken up on a number of occasions by the outbreak of widespread armed insurrections by the Sinhalese which eventually forced the rulers to mend their ways and relax their grip. Gradually some sharing at least of legislative power was conceded to the English-educated and land-holding local elite and the European plantation community, towards the turn of the 20th century. That eventually paved the way for further political and social changes.

(2) **Rise of nationalism**

The 20th century in particular heralded many important changes in the country fueled largely by increasing nationalism manifested through Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim revival which challenged the dominant Christian impositions. The proliferation of alcohol by the rulers to earn more revenue as well as to destabilize the society was challenged by a well orchestrated temperance movement, drawing into it both men and women. **The women in particular were in the vanguard of this movement which was organized entirely by volunteers. This may well be the most significant early attempt to organize the civil society for political and social action.** The challenge to Christian schools was equally far reaching, and spurring an unprecedented mobilization of the civil society on a voluntary basis to meet the needs and aspirations of the Non- Christians. These movements along with the nascent nationalist agitation for political reform led to the formation of many voluntary associations, partly inspired by western models. Many of the present day voluntary associations of both men and women have their roots in these vintage civil society organizations. Many of the voluntary sports and professional associations of today are also of the same vintage. The early 1900s was also a time when, many aspiring persons with political ambitions took the ‘voluntary’ route to reach their goal.

(3) **Social legislation**

The proliferation of voluntary societies was further enabled by some of the early social legislation enacted by the state in response to local demands. However in spite of such legal instruments creating a favourable and enabling environment the state was not prepared to take full responsibility for the care and welfare of the most disadvantaged sections of the society, such as the destitute, aged, disabled, illiterate, and others in dire need. This vacuum however was filled to some extent by emerging organizations, such as self-help ‘ Friends in Need ‘ associations, with or without any state assistance. However in absolute numbers the capacity of both the state and voluntary sector to care for the needy has remained extremely limited, even to this day (Jayasuriya 2000) and that in spite of more than half a century of state welfarism.

The outbreak of the global **Great Depression** towards the end of the 1920s also had its toll on large sections of the Sri Lankan population. The situation was further exacerbated by the outbreak of a malaria epidemic in most parts of the country, but for neither of which the state had quick and effective remedies, while the colonial government was slow with its relief efforts. The gap was very effectively filled by young volunteers drawn from politically motivated socialist circles, which in itself proved to be a rude awakening to the colonial administrators.

The opportunity provided for voluntary action during the Depression and the malaria epidemic also provided a platform for political mobilization and articulation to some of those young volunteers in riding a wave of grass-root popularity to seats in the then State Council. Future political and trade union leaders like Dr.N.M.Perera, Philip and Robert Gunawardane, A.E.Gunasinghe and Dr.S.A.Wickremasinghe entered elective politics through this route. Having got that foot-hold they spearheaded a spate of far-reaching social legislation which would help to widen the reach of the social security net to a larger section of the population. This in itself proved to be a bonus for volunteerism. As we reflect today on the need for recognition of volunteerism, we could remind ourselves that back in the 1930s, volunteerism was worth at least a few seats in the State Council, a springboard for national leadership.

(4) **World War 11**

The greatest boost to Volunteerism came with the outbreak of the Second World war in 1939. However this phase of volunteerism was largely state-sponsored than spontaneous, but still an early harbinger of the potential of people's participation and partnership building. The immediate circumstances which necessitated this peoples' mobilization was the threat of an imminent Japanese invasion from the air and sea, and the shortages of essential foods and other imported items owing to the disruption of international shipping. Using all forms of propaganda the government mobilized the people on a war footing. Volunteers were trained to build makeshift bunkers, and follow anti-air raid procedures under the direction of designated rural and urban leaders. **The people were also motivated to form themselves into voluntary**

cooperative societies, to undertake the fair distribution of essential food and other items. Volunteers were also enlisted to produce coarse clothes on handlooms with some basic state inputs. “ **Grow More Food** “ campaigns were started overnight to achieve some extent of self-sufficiency in staple agricultural products. The nascent Rural Development Movement was also given a new lease of life and purpose, under new village volunteers to take up community-based development. With many people in paid employment an informal self-help loan scheme or *Seettu* (meaning ‘chits’) was allowed to operate among voluntary groups of men and women. This practice had survived to this day, while being overtaken by more organized rural credit schemes, such as “*Sanasa*”, “ *Seeds*”, “ *Samurdhi*” and others.

At no other time in the recent history of Sri Lanka that the people of all walks of life and through-out the country were almost totally mobilized on a voluntary basis to meet extraordinary challenges of survival at the time. The lessons for the future of this exercise were immense, but unfortunately not being taken advantage of during the currently prevailing national crisis of even greater proportions, particularly with the declaration of a ‘War Footing’ in May 2000.

(5) Post- World War 11

Post- World War 11 Sri Lanka has witnessed many changes of an unprecedented nature. After nearly 450 years of continuous colonial domination, Sri Lanka was granted independence by the British in 1948. A liberal parliamentary type of government has taken over the destiny of the country, and alternating parties in power have administered the country, more with self-interest in view than common good. **However independent Sri Lanka has seen many new forms**

and patterns of volunteerism emerging and taking root. They have done so largely taking the cue from the west and their development models, or as non-violent reactions to self-serving governments, riding to power on the backs of gullible voters, mesmerised by false promises. The thrust of the UN Decades of Development (1960-80) as well as the development models designed by the large international financial agencies also have been important catalysts in the growth of volunteerism. However with the Cold War raging in most parts of the world, foreign sponsored volunteerism was inevitably perceived as a manifestation of a new colonialism, disguised as international benevolence, a perception which has persisted even after the end of the Cold War (Ariyaratne 2001, 382-385). Retiring senior government officials or homebound retiring UN officials with the right connections started some of these voluntary organizations with links to foreign funding. Marga Institute and Uva *Sanwardhana Padanama*, are two such NGOs.

However the restrictive economic and social policies of the Sri Lankan Governments during the 1960s and 70s inhibited the uncontrolled growth of voluntary organizations with foreign links. **But with economic liberalization of the late 1970s there was a new upsurge in such organizations, thereby marking a watershed in volunteerism in Sri Lanka. This proliferation was accompanied by a rush of overseas funding for the organized voluntary sector, which came to be designated as the “Development NGOs”.** (DNGO Directory 2000). Of all the South Asian countries, even as of today, Sri Lanka offers the most liberal and inclusive environment for voluntary organizations to operate with a minimum of state interference and regulation. However what characterises the new DNGOs is not only the link to donor funding, but also the willingness to adopt or adapt the agendas promoted by the donors themselves. At times, with a quick turnover of such agendas the NGOs would find themselves in some awkward situations with conflicting demands from the donors and the beneficiaries. (Ratnayake, 1993)

The Preface to the DNGO Directory (2000) characterises the DNGOs as follows:

With a strong commitment to the ideological position that

- the people are the masters of their own destiny and they alone can transform their environment through their own efforts,
- hand-outs to the poor will not transform their quality of life,
- the poor can improve only by organising themselves to perceive their own problems and work out the solutions,
- a DNGO identifies its own role as being that of facilitating the above process of developments as defined above
(Development NGOs of Sri Lanka, A Directory, 2000,)

The prevailing liberal atmosphere has enabled the voluntary organizations to pursue a vast array of development and welfare programs with considerable geographical spread and degree of success. Mushrooming of voluntary organizations, both large and small, chasing the dollar, has created both positive and negative images of the NGOs. However with diminishing donor funding, the intensity of organized volunteerism has also shown some decline and change in strategies.

The 1980s marked the hey-day of foreign-funded NGOs some of which were able to expand their activities phenomenally. Such ambitious expansion tended to raise the eyebrows of the incumbent political establishment, which perceived that as an emerging parallel government, which could be a threat to its own well being. However after a short and euphoric interlude of flirting between the state and the voluntary sector, parting of the ways came around 1990, in the most acrimonious manner. This was followed up with a high-powered Presidential Commission on the NGOs appointed to probe their activities. While

conceding the need for investigation, most of the NGOs perceived this action as nothing more than a politically motivated witch-hunt intended to control, and if necessary, crush some of the NGOs. However the Commission was not able to conclude its investigations, as it was cut short by tumultuous political developments, in early 1993. With that the Commission came to an abrupt end without releasing a formal report with the anticipated recommendations. With that an important chapter in State-NGO relations also came to an end. Today with a National NGO Secretariat in place and entrusted with registration of NGOs, and occasional investigation and intervention, otherwise the state has adopted a stand –off attitude to the organized voluntary sector.

4.0 TYPES OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA

Volunteerism as practised in Sri Lanka reveals many forms and types as well as an evolution, responding to historical and political changes and development and diverse societal needs. Global changes also have made some impact on the forms of as well as the behavioral patterns in volunteerism. Some of the voluntary organizations in Sri Lanka are not engaged exclusively in one type of volunteerism, but have spread their wings to take in multiple forms. Sarvodaya Movement and HelpAge Sri Lanka are two such voluntary organizations. All these factors have added value to, and reinforced the richness and the diversity of volunteerism in Sri Lanka.

The culture of volunteerism in Sri Lanka has continued to be influenced largely by religious ideas and practices, also of a diverse nature and of diverse origins. However *dana* or the practice of sharing and giving is the most dominant motivation in volunteerism and remain the bedrock of volunteerism in the country. *Dana* is not only behavioral but also

philosophical, since it liberates one from *tanha* or craving for material and non-material possessions and desires. In the life cycle of any person there are significant ups and downs, birth, sickness and death, joy and pain, victory and defeat, and success and failure. In all such circumstances there is an imperative and compulsive need for mutual support and ‘ getting together ‘. In Sinhalese this is called “ *duka –sepa beda hada geneema*”, meaning sharing of and reflection on adversity and joy. As much as sharing it is also important to see each event in its right perspective specially in terms of *anitya* or impermanence of all things animate and inanimate.

4.1 Individual volunteerism

The **individual** has always been an important link in the chain of volunteerism, particularly in the sphere of mutual aid or self-help. An individual may perform a myriad of things in a spirit of volunteerism but they would remain invisible and least recognized. Such volunteerism is also difficult to assess in quantitative or qualitative terms, posing the greatest impediment to documentation, as well as giving it a name, shape or figure. Individual volunteerism also escapes regulation or registration by any third party such as the state. However individual volunteerism may be described in terms of motivation, such as,

- a sense of self-satisfaction
- a sense of family or community
- arising out of religious motivation
- a sense of sharing or giving on one’s own free will
- a desire to give something back to community/society
- a reluctance to join others in volunteerism

Individual volunteerism also deserves encouragement and recognition for the greater good of many. Venturing into individual action could very well be an entry point into more organized forms of volunteerism, which could result in capacity building and self enrichment through social interaction.

4.2 Mutual Aid or Self-help

In the beginning volunteerism in the form of mutual aid or self-help was largely an individual activity. **But with the passage of time and heightened sense of community it became more and more organized in terms of sharing time, skills, human and physical resources, and reciprocity.** Before the disintegration of rural social organization, and the increase of paid labour “ mutual aid was the dominant system of social and economic support for much of the population”(*Measuring Volunteering: Practical Toolkit 2001,11*). Even today some village communities and coastal fishing communities follow the age-old tradition of ‘*kayiya*’ during the various stages of rice cultivation, *chena* or slash and burn dry land cultivation, house construction and roof repair (thatch roofs), building temples and the drawing ashore of huge fishing nets (*madel paduva*).

People would also resort to *Kayiya* in building and maintaining village tanks, household wells, access roads and paths, and low-cost small bridges. Most of these practices have been taken over either by local authorities or by community-based voluntary organizations, such as *Shramadana* Societies, often with links to large national NGOs. Though the terminology of community-based volunteerism has changed, the spirit has remained undiminished, and waiting to be revitalized for action. An activity, which has drawn much voluntary support, and continued in spite of mechanization of the coastal fishing industry is the pulling of huge nets ashore requiring much labour, which is always forthcoming from the community. People engage in it with much gusto and spirited singing reminding one of a tugger-war between the people and the fish-laden nets.

An important aspect of *Kayiya* and *Shramadana* is the practice of communal eating in order to facilitate greater voluntary effort, to generate a sense of community and light refraction. Free meals and refreshments are provided and partaken in a communal setting. The Sarvodaya moreover has introduced new elements to community based volunteerism, such as interludes of singing, awareness raising and group mobilization, while engaged in infra-structure development and people’s capacity building in meeting basic needs.

§ **Poverty alleviation**

Poverty alleviation has increasingly drawn the attention of the state, the NGOs and the international community. Since the 1980s new strategies have been tried out, with international funding invariably channeled through the state, and intended to reach the most economically weak sectors of the society, while the state has kept much of the control over the operation of these strategies, first through *Janasaviya* during 1989-1994, and since 1995, through *Samurdhi Authority*. Some elements of volunteerism have been integrated to enable some degree of people's participation. Poverty alleviation as a state sponsored voluntary activity is also referred to in the next chapter.

§ **Rural banking**

Sanasa is an island-wide community-based movement of co-operative credit societies engaged in savings, and income and employment generation through rural credit. While Sanasa has made significant strides with its primary objectives, more recently it has ventured into the more competitive commercial banking. **Hambantota Women Development Federation, Seeds (Sarvodaya) and SAP – Sri Lanka** are among others in rural banking.

§ **Cooperatives**

The cooperative movement which started during the Second World War as people's self-help effort has lost much of its voluntary nature, owing to highly competitive party politics. At present it is reduced to the status of a government department with some pretence of people's ownership in cooperative societies.

There are many more community-based organizations operating with or without external funding, and engaged in self-help activities of an economic nature and subscribing to people centred development.

§ **Religion based volunteerism**

Mutual Aid or Self-help type of organized volunteerism is even more evident in the social sector, with a history going back to the pre-independence era, particularly

1930s and 1940s. Some of these organizations had started as ‘ Friends in Need ‘ societies with the objective of taking care of some of the most needy sections of the society such as those with disabilities, destitute, homeless, the ageing and chronically sick. In doing so they were taking advantage of the limited financial support offered by the state for such voluntary efforts. Some of these volunteer organizations have been motivated by religion and inspired by persons like **Mother Theresa**. Among the Buddhist associations the **All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress** has been in the forefront in welfare activities. Church-based efforts, particularly by the nuns were also evident. In recent years many new organizations has sprung up around leading temples, Hindu and Christian institutions, and Mosques. Their voluntary work extend beyond welfarism, and has diversified to cover education, training, skills development, income and employment generation, crisis management, care of refugees and other displaced persons.

§ **Women’s needs**

Among the non-sectarian volunteer organizations, **Lanka Mahila Samiti** has a long history of welfare work, focused on women and girls. Its low-key style of functioning and the slow pace of adjustment to a fast changing world appear to have constrained it from using it’s full potential as a women’s organization.

§ **Ageing / Death**

International voluntary initiatives in coping with the challenge of ageing populations have had their salutary effect on those committed to the welfare of the senior citizens. Within a short span of time **HelpAge-Sri Lanka** has forged ahead with many innovative approaches and strategies in the care of the aged. However HelpAge contends that still much remains to be done for our senior citizens. While many of the aged languish in a state of neglect voluntary “ Death Donation Societies “ or *Maranadhara Samiti* “ have sprung up all over the country to alleviate the financial burden in the disposal of the dead.

HelpAge Sri Lanka (1986-) concentrates on the

formulation of policies and programmes to continue creating awareness with the help of the media-both print and electronic , developing programmes to strengthen and expand Home Care networking activity with Government Agencies, NGOs and International Organizations concerned with ageing.

(*HelpAge Sri Lanka, Review 2000/01*)

§ **Religious education**

With the secular education introduced by the British in the early part of the 19th century moral education imparted by the bhikkus was completely disrupted. There after it took more than a century to revive religious education by a lay Buddhist organization, following the example of Sunday Schools of the Christians. **Young Men's Buddhist Association** (YMBA) took up this challenge in 19 , with classes being conducted mainly in the temple premises. It is estimated that almost half a million girls and boys are benefited by the Dhamma Schools. With some state assistance the YMBA conducts a national level examination to assess the religious knowledge of the students. Similarly Muslims also provide out of school classes in Arabic and Kuranic studies, on a voluntary basis. Other similar organizations include **YMCA, YWCA, YMMA and YMHA**.

4.3 Philanthropy and service to others

Philanthropy like *dana* is a natural impulse with those who find themselves acquiring or inheriting material wealth and comforts. The biblical comparison of a rich person's passage to heaven with a camel's passing through the eye of a needle may be to coax the rich to share their wealth with those less fortunate. Islam has gone further and made it compulsory for those with means to set apart a portion to charity. But in the present world philanthropy is not confined to sharing of one's wealth but also contributing one's time and special skills in the service of others. There are many examples of such volunteerism, at various levels of society today.

§ **School and Youth based**

The School system offers opportunities for providing service to others on a voluntary basis through the **Boy Scouts** and **Girl Guides** Movements. In return those volunteers could develop their leadership and organizational skills. Sarvodaya Movement has mobilized the youth through its ‘ **Shantisena** ‘ or Peace Brigade. Many young persons have come together under the banner of their respective religions, to form separate voluntary associations for men and women. The **Sri Lanka Red Cross, St, John’s Ambulance Service** and **Saukyadana** are among others who make their benevolent presence felt during emergencies and special national occasions where large crowds congregate.

§ **Children**

Among those voluntary organizations caring for the welfare of children made homeless and orphaned by the ongoing war, an outstanding case in point would be the **Vajira Sri Home** for Children in Kotte, a suburb of Colombo.

Eye Donation Society (EDS) of Sri Lanka

EDS is one of the most successful and pioneering efforts in the area of donating frozen cornea for grafting to those with visual impairment. Corneas are surgically removed at the time of death mostly from volunteers who have willed it before death. Thousands of corneas have been used successfully to restore sight of those in Sri Lanka and overseas.

The founder of the Society was Dr.Hudson de Silva

Visiting the sick in hospital, especially those with terminal diseases, has also attracted those with a caring impulse, and is being done in an organized manner.

§ **Persons with disabilities**

Victoria Home for the Physically Disabled in Rajagiriya, and the **Preethipura**

Home for those with mental disabilities in Wattala are two other outstanding cases of service to others. There are many more voluntary associations undertaking similar activities, though not in the same scale in many parts of the country as the Victoria and Preethipura Homes.

§ **Business and professional associations**

The business and the professional communities have banded together to form many social clubs such as the Lions, Rotary and the Jaycees, sometimes with parallel women's clubs to promote philanthropy and service to others. Their activities are well covered and promoted by the media, perhaps due to interlinking commercial and class interests. Their voluntary services also may be perceived as an extension of the private sector. However with increasing urbanization and economic liberalization these clubs are able to broaden their membership base and also the reach of their services.

§ **War dead and injured**

The ongoing war has caused much human suffering with death and injury to the combatants while little is known regarding the welfare of the bereaved and the injured cadres of the LTTE by the voluntary sector in the north and east. Many new **voluntary organizations have emerged for the welfare of state security services, their bereaved and the maimed.** These services are also being strongly supported by the state. The services include funeral expenses for the dead, and skills training, alternate employment, scholarships, rehabilitation, shelter, health care, financial support and comfort with home visits for the maimed and the bereaved.

§ **Counselling**

With the increasing complexity of life and the disruption of the traditional support systems centered round the family and the temple, **Sri Lanka has experienced an increase in stress-related problems and a phenomenal increase in the incidence of suicide.** With very few opportunities for counseling available through the health-care system, and the church services accessible only to their flock, others were left in the lurch and in a state of despair till the opening of the counseling centres by **Sumithrayo, Sahanaya, Family Planning Association and Women-In-Need (WIN)**. The expansion of such services to match the needs in society has been hampered by the lack of trained personnel. **This remains another challenge for future volunteerism.**

4.4 Campaign and Advocacy

§ **Social change and social justice**

The desire for social change and social justice has been an important catalyst for volunteerism but since they cannot be easily achieved with mere rhetoric some organized demonstrative action is an imperative. Activism would certainly add momentum to any campaigning for social change and social justice. The platform for such action could be local, national, or even international. With so much of inequities, oppression and social exclusion in all societies there are as many opportunities for voluntary action. People's conscience need no permission, but could seek every opportunity for positive action. The voice of the civil society should be heard over the din of self-serving demands and actions of governments and entrenched vested interests. Volunteerism for social change and social justice calls for courage, special skills and leadership, buttressed by a sense of vision and mission.

While self-help and philanthropy are important in volunteerism they have their limitations. Campaigning and advocacy would transcend those limitations and take

volunteerism forward to new frontiers. For example the worldwide campaign for the banning of land mines involved as many as 300 million volunteers in hundred countries, including Sri Lanka, a tragic victim of that man-made blight.

§ **Environment**

Unprecedented economic and scientific developments in some parts of the world while other parts are languishing in public squalor and abject poverty have raised many concerns about the limits to growth, population expansion, sustainable development and quality of life. With globalization, these concerns have assumed even greater significance. This situation has spawned many voluntary organizations concerned with developmental issues. The media is also been used to make the maximum impact in raising public awareness. While the threat to environment and bio-diversity remain formidable there have been some spectacular gains in some critical areas. In a landmark decision in the Supreme Court, the case between the people and a multinational corporation making devious plans to exploit the phosphate deposits in Eppawela was decided in favour of the people.

Similar civil social agitation has blocked indiscriminate location of thermal and coal power generation plants, damming of river basins, tourist development in eco-sensitivity locations, and indiscriminate infrastructure development causing serious disruption to people's lives and properties on a mass scale. All these concerns, and many more have energized the people to form new voluntary organizations or rally round existing ones in campaigning and lobbying for their rights and interests.

§ **Womens' rights**

An issue, which has drawn wide publicity and advocacy at various levels, including the UN, has been the rights of women in society. The third quarter of the 20th century was marked by the women's movement, characterized by the struggle for women's rights and empowerment. Though Sri Lankan NGOs were slow in getting their act together, by the mid-eighties the women's movement in Sri Lanka was in full swing, and moving forward with the others worldwide.

§ Ageing

In the area of lobbying and advocacy for the welfare of the ageing HelpAge- Sri Lanka appears to be extremely resourceful and innovative, and setting an example for others who are engaged in the care of those in need. HelpAge Sri Lanka appears to have achieved spectacular success in building partnerships with the state, other NGOs, academia, and the corporate sector, and by working “ hand in hand with the public and the NGO sector concerned with ageing and lobbying the government and other authorities to adopt the UN principles for older persons “.

4.5 Participation and Self-governance

People’s participation in a voluntary capacity in governance and in the state machinery was extremely limited under feudal administration and during much of colonial rule. Any space for such activity was found only in water management, law and order and in the armed forces, during Sinhalese kings. Towards the latter part of British colonial rule national associations of a very limited membership articulated agitation for self-rule. With some concessions in the form of constitutional reforms granted by the government, the agitation became more broad based. Sections of the organized labour also threw their weight in to the demand for more representative government. Some degree of self-management was permitted at the local government level, from the village level “ Gam Sabba ‘ going up to the Municipalities, all the members of which were on a voluntary basis. At the community level water management continued to attract some voluntary participation in the local committees. Justices of Peace and Official Magistrates, also volunteers but appointed by the government, had some judicial and law enforcement duties.

§ Electoral politics and Civil Society Organizations

With the grant of independence in 1948 political parties, as distinct from the pre-independence national associations, became the determining factor in electoral politics. However the total membership in all the political parties at any given

time would not have exceeded even one tenth of the adult population, and those outside the parties remaining a silent majority. Nearly a half century of democratic government (1948-2001) has convinced the people that the governments are more self-serving and self-perpetuating, with rampant corruption and nepotism, than serving the people. Invariably governments were not even representing a simple majority of the adult population. The desire for self-perpetuation resulted in increasing subversion of the elective process, thereby denying the citizens their right to the free exercise of the vote, while the introduction of proportional representation in 1989 has mitigated some of the shortcomings of the 'first past the post' voting system, though the remedy was found to have worse side-effects. An attempt is now being made to minimize the subversion of the elective system through legislative action, by putting in place a series of high-powered 'independent' Commissions. Agitation by civil societies including the **Organization of Professional Associations** is being credited with these interventions, focusing on good governance respect for human rights.

The subversion of the elective process had commenced even before 1948, but was not perceived as threatening the overall expression of the people's will. But after 1980 the state machinery, including law enforcement and justice, were found to be in collusion in undermining democracy. This process reached such horrendous heights by 1999 with widespread disruption of the elections, there was a resounding public outcry and disillusionment with the elective process. In the meantime, beginning with 1972 some voluntary organizations concerned with civil rights and social justice were engaged in a search for suitable interventions but had failed to come up with any concrete proposals. **The opportunity however came in 1994 and ever since, with increasing intensity independent people's organizations have volunteered to monitor elections, from the time of receiving nominations to the release of results.** International observers, invited by the NGOs and the government, have also joined the ranks of election monitors. However the desire for free and fair elections still remains unfulfilled, since those in power and control the state machinery, with access to public property have shown the greatest reluctance to permit the free expression of the people's will. As we approach another General Election in December 2001, more

than fifty NGOs and other religious and cultural groups have swelled the ranks of election monitors.

5.0 CURRENT SITUATION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA, LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDES

**“CARATA BHIKKAVE BAHUJANA HITAYA BAHUJANA
SUKHAYA” -**

Go forth ye bhikkus for the good of the many and
The well being of the many.

5.1 Opportunities

Sri Lanka has always held volunteerism in high respect, and as a result many have been drawn to it. Buddha in his address to his first disciples advised them to go forth among the people for the good of the many, and for the well being of the many. This spirit of welfarism and the sense of caring were not exclusive to the bhikkus, but has also been imbibed by the laity. Hinduism in turn has also reinforced the practice of volunteerism among the Tamils. Many centuries later Islam and Christianity had added new dimensions to charity and volunteerism. In spite of many historical developments and changes in attitudes, people’s commitment to volunteerism has remained strong, as signified by the large number of voluntary organizations in the country. With the right policies and strategies, leadership, heightened awareness, promotion and greater recognition, volunteerism can be made even a more potent factor in the future.

*Social and economic environment creates many
opportunities for voluntary work*

The current political and socio-economic conditions are a perennial source of opportunities for volunteerism, provided it seeks new directions, new purposes and an increased sense of social responsibility, among all sectors. In the current context of the situation in Sri Lanka would volunteerism *per se* and for its own sake provide any sense of purpose unless it is made to resonate with social change and social justice?. As we move deeper and deeper into the new millennium should we not reflect on these concerns while we contemplate on the ways and means of promoting and facilitating volunteerism at present and in the future?

As we reflect on the current situation and the need for a desirable future for the country we can see many opportunities for voluntary interventions. The perceived strengths also suggest both tapped and unutilized potential for volunteerism. What is urgently needed is to develop a well-coordinated and comprehensive plan of action matching needs and opportunities with programs, supported by resource mobilization. Sound data bases would be an essential prerequisite for any such large scale intervention. Would a “Peoples’ Summit on Volunteerism” at any early date be the right forum, and perhaps as part of a continuing series of promotional activities associated with IYV?

It may be appropriate at this point to inform us of some of the participants’ perceptions of opportunities for volunteerism in Sri Lanka, as identified at a recent national workshop: ^c

- Prevailing political and socio-economic environment
- Plethora of voluntary organizations of diverse sizes, capacities and program activities.
- Partnership building among different sectors
- International links and funding

^c Held in Colombo, on October 16, 2001

- State initiatives, support and policy directions
- A long and strong culture and tradition of volunteerism
- Opportunities for networking
- Recognition of volunteerism as an important catalyst in social development.
- Nationally and internationally recognized voluntary organizations and quality of leadership

5.2 Strengths

In the same context as with opportunities what would a profiling of our current strengths in volunteerism suggest?. The following is a summary of those perceptions:

- Volunteerism is an integral part of the Sri Lankan culture. It is recognized and respected by society.
- Volunteerism contributes to positive character building, with leadership, team work, capacity building, unity of purpose and commitment.
- Encourages and builds social cohesion.
- Complements development activities of the state.
- Adds value to social capital through better output than with paid work.
- More efficient in delivery of services.
- Access to abundant human resources.
- Diversity of interests and activities.
- Develops a sense of social responsibility.
- Provides a sense of self-satisfaction.
- Opportunities for interactive learning and sharing.
- Enabling environment for networking and partnership.

5.3 Weaknesses

In making the best use of the perceived opportunities and strengths it is necessary to be equally aware of the perceived weaknesses in volunteerism in the present country context. While socio-economic factors seem to be more debilitating than others,

factors such as personality traits, negative attitudes, poor program planning and management, and internal and external politics could be of no less importance. However good leadership should be able to overcome such weaknesses, through good managerial practices, dialogue and practice of democracy. A close look at people's perceptions of the weaknesses as per workshop deliberations would suggest the following scenarios:

- Negative images of and attitudes towards volunteerism and those engaged in it.
- Lack of coordination in planning/ implementation.
- Unhealthy competition resulting in duplication, waste and rivalry.
- Not recognized as of high priority.
- Lack of space/recognition within voluntary organizations, for individual creativity, new ideas, innovation.
- Volunteerism seen more as 'charity', causing dependency.
- Lack of commitment, right motivation, and required skills.
- Personality traits such as 'ownership' pursuit of personal agendas and benefits, denial of internal democracy.
- Abuse of power and resources.
- Lack of accountability and transparency, in state sector in particular.
- Inadequate trained personnel, resulting in lack of professionalism.
- Problems of sustainability.
- Poor documentation and dissemination of information.
- Urban bias in programs, with class bias in some selective areas.
- Lack of sufficient recognition/appreciation.
- Insufficient research and publication.

More radical perceptions would not exclude a critique of volunteerism as it is practised today, with very little sensitivity to the needs of situation analysis, dynamics of global forces and trends, and the imperatives of social change, social responsibility and social justice. The attitudinal and behavioral changes following economic liberalization have intensified the sense of individualism, consumerism, ostentatiousness and commercialism, thereby undermining the individual's sensitivity to social responsibility. Even the great majority of the bhikkus, once the vanguard of

volunteerism has not been spared by this unhealthy phenomenon. **Taking volunteerism back to the people, and to its roots and inspirations could be one of the most formidable challenges we are confronted with today.**

5.4 Levels of involvement in volunteerism by different sectors

In gauging the levels of involvement in volunteerism one has to make an assessment of the ground situation where it takes place. In doing so it would be more focused if considered by different sectors.

i State or the public sector

At the time of independence British colonial rule had left behind a large public sector, which subsequently grew to such proportions that it encompassed practically every aspect of people's lives. In that process even volunteerism was not spared, as state welfarism, poverty alleviation and social development swept over the socio-economic scene. However in more recent years state welfarism has been selective, departing from the previous universalistic approach. As a result the state investment in direct social welfare has also declined in absolute monetary terms. In spite of these changes, the state still remains an important stake-holder, in social welfare, in which the voluntary sector is only a very insignificant junior partner.

The state itself does not provide any voluntary services with the solitary exception of volunteerism in the primary health care services. State contribution to volunteerism is largely made up of partial financial support to voluntary organizations maintaining homes for various kinds of persons in need, As Laksiri Jayasuriya observes these voluntary institutions, even combined with similar state-run homes would be able to offer shelter and care to only a fraction of those in need (*State Welfarism and Politics in Sri Lanka 2000*). **This yawning gap remains a formidable challenge to volunteerism in Sri Lanka.** The quality of services in state-run institutions would depend on the levels of bureaucracy and the degree of efficiency.

The health care services in Sri Lanka have a relatively long history of volunteerism, particularly in the preventive area of primary health care (PHC).

Primary health care in Sri Lanka has been one of the outstanding successes among all the developing countries worldwide. Many of the basic services, such as immunization, ante and post natal care, child health clinics and nutrition, both at the level of rural and urban communities, are delivered by state medical and paramedical personnel with the active participation of young volunteers in all parts of the country, including the Vanni in the NE Sri Lanka under LTTE control.

Patrick (1978); Crook (1998)

Since 1989 the state has been involved in a massive multi-pronged poverty alleviation program, with financial support and technical advice from the UN, World Bank and the IMF. More than half the country's population has been targeted by this program, which started as Janasaviya, and since 1995 is called 'Samurdhi'. Its level of performance has always been a matter of great controversy, to a large extent due to its politicization. While the state keeps a tight control over its operations, the beneficiaries have been mobilized as a large voluntary force to undertake self-help activities or *shramadana*, in savings and rural credit, income and employment generation, improving quality of life, and basic infrastructure development. The degree and the spirit of volunteerism among the samurdhi recipients is considered low, and its sustainability has also been a serious concern.

Under the previous dispensation or Janasaviya, a large number of newly created NGOs were entrusted with various tasks such as monitoring, evaluation, study and reporting, and service delivery, which were later subjected to high level investigation. Large infusions of money and other resources to self-seeking state authorities and pseudo-voluntary organizations, without proper planning and control mechanisms, could be a corrupting influence on the stakeholders as well as fly-by-night intermediaries. **The endemic lack of accountability and perceived immunity from prosecution and culpability for gross mismanagement of state resources by state officials has plagued the state sector.**

In promoting, facilitating and recognizing volunteerism in the other sectors the state enjoys many advantages, such as in locating and negotiating donor funds for others, providing training in useful skills, building genuine partnership with the other sectors, providing representation to other sectors, as equals on country delegations to in-country or overseas conferences and other such events, recognizing outstanding persons and institutions in volunteerism and thereby motivating others.

In creating an enabling environment for volunteerism the state has been the sole authority in enacting appropriate legal instruments, and formulation of policies. In all these matters, the state should seek the fullest cooperation and consultation of the concerned sectors in a spirit of participation. On the whole except for a short period in the 1980s and 1990s when the NGO-State relations were at a very low ebb, harmonious relations have prevailed among the different sectors.

Till 1980 the state had taken little interest in interfering with the NGOs, through any regulatory mechanism but there have been occasions where reservations have been expressed by politicians in power, without resorting to any follow-up action. In 1980, for the first time, the government had decided to impose some regulatory measures, through a **“Voluntary Social Service Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act No.31 of 1980.**

An Act (No:31 of 1980) to provide for registration, with the government of Voluntary Social Service Organizations, to provide for their inspection and supervision; to facilitate the co-ordination of the activities of such organizations; to give governmental recognition to such organizations which are properly constituted; to enforce the accountability of such organizations in respect of financial and policy management under the existing rules of such organizations, to the members of such organizations, the general public and the government; to prevent malpractice by persons purporting to be such organizations; to regularise the constitution of voluntary social service groups which have not been legally recognised; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto:

For some reason or the other, in spite of the many things the Act was intended to do only the registration of the NGOs was put into operation and that also without the utmost firmness. There has been no follow-up action to formulate the regulations to enforce the other measures. 18 years later, and nearly five years after the fiasco of the Presidential Commission on the NGOs (1990-93) and Amendment to Act No.31 (Act No 8) was passed in parliament adding a new section 14A to give the power to the line minister to appoint an Interim Board of Management to administer any NGO alleged with fraud and misappropriation.

The National Secretariat for the Registration of NGOs has been in operation since 1980, and by 2001 has registered 289 NGOs, both local and foreign. They are entered in the alphabetical order into a Directory, without any categorising of the NGOs either by sector or interests. Nor has it attempted to document even a very brief profile of their activities. As a result it would be of very limited use as a tool for study or analysis. A little more professionalism and attention to accuracy would certainly enhance its usefulness.

Functions of the NGO Secretariat

- § Registration of NGOs
- § Function as a focal point and a clearing house in respect of NGOs
- § Function as a referral point for NGOs that require to engage in a particular field of activity for those individual agencies which have particular expertise and resources
- § Providing a central base for donor agencies to communicate with
- § Functioning as an information centre to furnish necessary information to NGOs in Sri Lanka
- § Monitoring of NGO activities
- § Resource base for NGOs and performance of co-ordinating activities

Another ambitious project undertaken by the Ministry of Social Services to create an institutional mechanism in data management in the social sector is the “**Social Development Management Information System**” (SOMIS). Its proposed structure

and objectives seem to suggest some vulnerability of SOMIS deteriorating into another clumsy bureaucratic white elephant. However, if it is successfully implemented it should have a far reaching positive impact on volunteerism in Sri Lanka. The functions of SOMIS are:

- § to integrate relevant data and information for monitoring social conditions in particular with reference to the poor and disadvantaged groups and planning for social development;
- § to facilitate co-ordination among agencies and various stakeholders in information generation, flow and exchange;
- § to support the evaluation of social programs in various sectors and better derive their interrelationships;
- § to serve as a platform for data dissemination among concerned governmental, non-governmental and other organisations;
- § to facilitate rapid assessment of social conditions and problems so as to effect early actions to forestall the deterioration of social progress

iii Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The emergence of NGOs as a third sector in development is largely a post-World War II phenomenon world-wide. It has grown as a countervailing force against the rising tide of poverty and other forms of deprivation, denial and exclusion among more than half the world population. Not long after independence in Sri Lanka there was growing concern for alternative strategies other than those of the government, for economic and social development. While some turned to India and Gandhian inspiration others sought inspiration from the new development models designed by the UN, World Bank, IMF, and the economic think-tanks in the west. The first development NGOs to appear followed these different routes or inspirations. **Sarvodaya Movement started in 1958 by Dr.A.T.Ariyaratne with Buddhist and**

Gandhian inspiration was the forerunner to many development oriented NGOs.

Whatever the initial inspirations, ideals and value orientations, with the on-rush of massive donor funding beginning with the 1970s, most NGOs have gone through a painful metamorphosis transforming them into torch-bearers of international donors. As Denis Gulet would say, only a few could survive with integrity, under the circumstances.

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (SSM)

'Sarvodaya signifies a thought and 'Shramadana' the translation of that thought into concrete action. 'Sarvodaya' means 'awakening of all' while 'Shramadana' means 'sharing of one's time, thought and energy'

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement had its small beginning in 1958 when its founder Dr.A T Ariyaratne, a school teacher, and his band of school and out- of- school volunteers from Colombo undertook a community development project in a remote village with a socially excluded community. Thus SSM was started with the specific objective of involving in a voluntary effort the rural communities and the youth in a constructive effort to:

- i. develop the personality of youth in keeping with their culture and the rapid changes taking place around them*
- ii. awaken the rural communities to the realities of social change and help them to become agents of such change in keeping with their own cultures and interests*
- iii. achieve national integration by giving opportunities for all irrespective of caste, creed, race or language to contribute to nation building based on the principles of truth, non-violence and self-denial and for the objective of realizing fundamental human rights and social justice, and bring about collaboration with people and communities with similar ideas and progressive programs in other countries of the world for peace, human rights and brotherhood.*

What commenced as a very modest self-help project in one village has since then spread to thousands of villages and towns all over the country and even to some communities abroad.

From simple community development the focus as well as the services also have increased many-fold making SSM one of the largest voluntary organizations anywhere in the world.

On the wake of the cascading donor funds, the 1980s saw a large proliferation of new NGOs, with new development agendas. This phenomenal growth had its benefits too, as it required the new NGOs to go forth seeking new target groups, thereby spreading the net wider for voluntary services. The search for new interventionist strategies also assumed greater urgency. The donor links added pressure on the quality of functioning of their local partners, at a level more compatible with the former. Higher standards and greater efficiency in program management, service delivery and reporting and documentation had to match most donor expectations. While the bigger NGOs with better resources were able to go along with this trend, some of the smaller NGOs with poor communication and negotiation skills were soon marginalised and forced to drop out of the rat race, or seek some affiliation with the emerging NGO umbrella organisations (e.g. NGO Council of Sri Lanka; Central Council of Social Services).

The Development NGOs of Sri Lanka, a Directory (reprint 2000) documents the annual budget of nearly 200 NGOs, with 91 others baring no such assets. The total so declared would indicate the following:

Total annual budgets of 200 NGOs – Rs.580 million	
Ranging from Rs.150m to Rs.400 per NGO	
Rs.150m	-01 NGO
50m-149m	-02
10m-49m	-12
05m-09m	-17
01m-04m	-62
500,000 – 999,000	-24
50,000 - 99,000	-12
Less than 50,000	-17

An important recent development in the NGO sector in Sri Lanka is the tentative move away from exclusive 'non profit' to 'for profit' economic enterprises, technical services, service delivery and commercial banking, as practised in Bangladesh (BRAC and Grameen Bank). What this portends to the future of volunteerism in Sri Lanka is yet to be seen.

In addition to budgetary terms the Sri Lankan NGOs can be distinguished by:

- § the area of spatial coverage, from a single village to a cluster of villages, a district, or the entire country.
- § the area of focus, ranging from a single development issue or sector to those more enterprising focusing on a variety of issues, with an integrated view of development (e.g. Sarvodaya)
- § the range of services and delivery capacity
- § the number of card carrying or accredited members
- § the extent of resources, including infrastructure facilities
- § the quality of leadership, ranging from a mere chairperson / CEO to a high profile national leadership.

Among the Sri Lankan NGOs only the Sarvodaya Movement would meet most of the criteria to be in the top bracket. But with a singular focus on rural banking Sanasa would surpass all the others in membership/ ownership. The great majority of the NGOs are of medium or relatively small size, with the annual budget ranging from Rs. 400.- to Rs.999,000.

The issue orientation is also significant, with such a multitude of sectoral and sub-sectoral issues. However, some broad categories of such orientations would include:

A. Economic Development

- agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries
- poverty alleviation / income and employment generation
- sustainable development (environment / energy / natural resources)
- management (business / entrepreneurship)
- rural banking
- technology

B Social Development

- education (training, counseling, consultancy)
- welfare (health, shelter, displaced persons/ persons in need / social security)
- population
- women's rights / empowerment
- social change and social justice
- employment
- quality of life
- sports and recreation

C POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

- good governance
- human rights
- law and justice (legal aid)
- ethnic issues
- refugees
- war and peace

D RELIGION AND CULTURE

- religious and cultural issues
- arts and crafts
- language and literature
- multi cultural and religious interface
- fundamentalism and new evangelism

E MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

- information technology
- media freedom
- business promotion
- consultancy
- participatory methodologies
- research and publications

With the liberal democratic environment and the centuries old sense of deep-rooted religious tolerance prevailing in Sri Lanka, NGO registration and penetration has been relatively easy. In recent years this has enabled many new fangled NGOs, with both implicit and explicit religious agendas, to operate without impunity. With the rise of religious fundamentalism and aggressive forms of new evangelism, with access to foreign funding, the activities of these new NGOs have caused some social tension, and even public demands for regulation and control. The report of the Sinhala Commission (2001) contends that nearly 100 such NGOs are in operation today, and engaged in unethical conversion taking mean advantage of people's poverty. The report also adds that the catholic church has estimated that the number of such NGOs would be as many as 300-350 (*Sinhala Commission Report 11, 2001*).

iii Private / Corporate Sector

Since the 1980s the private sector has been promoted as the engine of growth and development and with that there has been some withdrawal of the State from some of the key service areas such as land and air transport, telecommunications, shipping and port services, import and distribution of food and plantation management. Private sector has also made some inroads into the gas and energy sector, curative health and education. While these structural adjustments have been taking place, there has not been any appreciable increase in the state contribution to social welfare, nor has there

been any commensurate increase in private sector commitment to social overheads, including philanthropy.

Historically the private sector involvement in welfarism and volunteerism has been largely within the parameters of tax concessions extended by state for individual or corporate contributions to approved charities and charitable institutions. Even such contributions could be of self-promotional nature. In monetary terms that would not be of a very substantial nature and not significant enough to be recognised in any national development reports. There has not been any consistent practice of making regular budgetary provision for volunteerism. The private sector has also been more inclined to engage in volunteerism under its own steam than in partnership with other sectors. However, this pattern appears to be changing with growing readiness to work with others. One factor that seems to constrain the corporate sector is the problems of time management which may also be perceived as one of conflicting interest, between pursuit of business interests and committing scarce time for non profit volunteerism. That as well as the demands of social life seem to hamper the nurturing of a sense of commitment to philanthropy.

In spite of this pervasive trend of increasing alienation of the affluent from non-materialistic pursuits, there is the reverse trend of increasing membership in social clubs, such as the **Lions, Rotary, Jaycees** and others which have been successful in blending sector interests with philanthropy and service to others. With growing urbanisation and the increase in the ranks of those in business and professions, these clubs are likely to proliferate, with positive impact on volunteerism.

iv Media

Until 1979 the media in Sri Lanka has been confined to the print media in the three national languages, and the state owned broadcasting station also transmitting in the same languages. Promoting and facilitating volunteerism were not considered as part of their primary agendas, and therefore had low priority. As a matter of policy some time was provided for religious broadcasts. Since 1979 commencing with a private TV station, TV broadcasting has grown in leaps and bounds, and with a high degree of technical sophistication. The growth has been significant after 1990 and this has

also increased the opportunities for promoting volunteerism through the electronic media. Motivation for that is partly derived from company policy which recognises the social responsibilities of the media.

While the media is more inclined towards promotion and recognition, it has also taken upon itself the tasks of campaigning and lobbying for social action and social justice. During elections in particular the media has been devoting considerable prime-time to focus on issues of public interest, particularly of good governance, political, social and administrative accountability. Increasing people's participation is characterised by these TV programmes.

However, whether in promotion and facilitation, or partnership building, what is being perceived as more desirable pro-active approach is to go to the people rather than wait till they come in search of the media. Some of the programmes of voluntary action in the South Asian region broadcast by **Ya TV** seem to be on target in creating awareness in and promotion of volunteerism through the TV. On the whole there seems to be much untapped potential in the media in promoting volunteerism as a dynamic transformative force.

v. Academia

The academia has considerable potential for and an obligation to contribute to the promotion of volunteerism, both within and outside the academia, in various ways such as,

- § Through personal and institutional commitment
- § Campaigning and advocacy
- § Research and publication
- § Human resource development
- § Counselling
- § Inputs to policy formulation
- § Situation Analysis

§ Curriculum development
§ Institutional building
§ Interactive and outreach programmes linking the academia with the community
§ Leadership roles in volunteerism

As one senior academic explained the work in the academia could be 75% volunteerism, a sentiment unfortunately not sufficiently recognised by the large majority of the academic community. After all academia is a perennial source of radicalism, creative ideas, innovation, social movements and trained human resources for all sectors. The early induction of the students to volunteerism could be a sound building block for a future of volunteerism throughout adult life. In many foreign universities volunteerism or community service forms a part of the course unit system, as an elective for earning credit. There can be other forms of recognising volunteerism in assessing students, faculty and those in support services.

The Sri Lankan academia could also benefit from some interesting initiatives in promoting volunteerism overseas. In New South Wales, Australia a **School of Volunteer Management** has been established to develop and deliver accredited training in the subject. The credits include a **Diploma in Volunteer Management Practise** for managers and co-ordinators of volunteers. The opportunities for training and accreditation have been extended to the Pacific region by offering an **International Certificate in Volunteer Management** through the **Asia-Pacific School of Volunteer Management** (*Volunteering Worldwide* 2000). The only such accreditation available within the university system in Sri Lanka is the **Post-graduate Diploma in Community Development offered by the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo, since 1984.**

Outside the main stream universities in Sri Lanka a **School of Social Work** has been established in 1950s by the Central Council of Social Services and taken over by the Ministry of Social Service in 1965. It is the only accredited national level institution for the study and training in social work. This school has been recently upgraded and re-designated as the **National Institute of Social Development** enabling teaching and training leading to a National Diploma.

6.0 FACTORS IMPEDING GREATER PROMOTION AND FACILITATION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA

In chapter 5 mention is made to some of the people's perceptions on 'Weaknesses' in volunteerism in Sri Lanka. In this chapter an attempt is made to examine, under four categories, some of the factors impeding the promotion and facilitation of volunteerism, based on literature, workshop deliberations and interviews.

6.1 Legal

Existing legal provisions covering employment of young persons (Act of 1956 and Act No.50 of 1998) appear to be hampering the mobilization of young school leavers and others awaiting employment as volunteers on a non-remunerative basis. Letters of appointment issued to such persons have, on occasions, opened the door for subsequent litigation for the recovery of wages and other forms of compensation. In the eyes of the courts voluntary sector tends to be equated to the 'for profit' private sector. A review of the law with some sensitivity to the voluntary sector needs attention. An alternate strategy could be the creation of a National Volunteer Service exclusively for young persons, by an appropriate legal instrument.

Existing income tax laws also have some implications on the economic viability of the organized voluntary sector, particularly with tax liability on earned incomes. With volatile donor and state funding, voluntary organizations are increasingly resorting to income generation activities or 'for profit' economic enterprises, which also result in employment generation. The stringent application of the law would hamper such activities. A recent case in point is the imposition of income tax on Sanasa Societies. This situation also needs review with a view to bringing some relief to the voluntary sector.

Some legal safeguards against politically motivated punitive action against voluntary organizations is another area for reflection and intervention. A case in point is the Presidential Commission on the NGOs during 1991-93

All voluntary organizations are not member-organizations, with a good proportion being exclusively 'limited' member organizations and not accountable to the people. Should there be some distinction in the eyes of the law in respect of the types of membership? In the same context, is some nationally accepted rating or quality assessment / assurance (an ISO Certificate for volunteerism?) be considered in view of the highly crowded and competitive NGO scene?

An area where there is both need and potential for voluntary action is in legal aid. The current services by a few professional and semi-professional voluntary organizations seem to be awfully inadequate.

The only state controlled regulatory provisions for registration of voluntary organizations are the:

- i. Social Service Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act No.31 of 1980 and (Amendment) Act No.8 of 1998
- ii. Registration of Societies Act
- iii. Registration of Companies Act
- iv. Registration of Co-operative Societies Act

The first is the only Act intended to cover the social service sector, including the Development NGOs. In view of the narrow definition of those coming under the Act, the great majority of the voluntary organizations such as religious organizations remain outside the registration and supervision of the state. However, there is no consensus among the voluntary organizations on the need for any regulatory mechanism under state control, with some apprehensions of increasing state control. Under those circumstances it would be in the best interests of the country and all the stakeholders, to engage in a fruitful dialogue to create a more conducive legal environment for the functioning of the voluntary sector. However, any such exercise could consider the following criteria as desirable elements:

- Types of membership
- Vision / mission statement

- Types of beneficiaries
- Transparency of programme activities and financial management
- Source of funding
- Annual report, accessible to public scrutiny, on request

Under Act No 31 of 1980 a 'Voluntary Social Service Organisation' means any organization formed by a group of persons on a voluntary basis and

- a) is of a non-government nature
- b) is dependent on public contributions, charities, grants payable by the government or donations local and foreign, in carrying out its functions
- c) has its main objectives, the provision of such relief and services as are necessary for the mentally retarded or physically disabled, the poor, the sick, the orphans and the destitute and the provision of relief to the needy in times of disaster

The voluntary organizations engaged in campaigning and advocacy for social justice and human rights would welcome more space for public interest litigation, as practised in India. Such an opportunity would enable for those concerned to agitate for a greater sense of social responsibility on the part of the state, particularly in respect of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded sections of the society.

6.2 Economic

With increasing political uncertainties globally economic uncertainties are bound to follow (*The Economist* Oct 20, 2001.12) and get worse, with corresponding shrinking of donor support to NGOs in developing countries. The recipient countries, such as Sri Lanka will have their own economic woes. All these factors would impact on the viability of the voluntary sector, unless it develops its own capacities for greater self-reliance and more efficient ways of managing its own resources. A wide ranging dialogue among all the stakeholders is required in order to take a stock-taking of the

current situation as well as the emerging scenarios. For example increasing economic liberalization and globalization could create more social problems thereby exerting more pressure on the voluntary sector.

The persisting practice of indiscriminate distribution of income support under state sponsored poverty alleviation programs and also by the voluntary sector as a part of the rehabilitation of displaced persons is perceived as counter productive in creating more dependency rather than developing people's capacities for self-reliance, self-help and self-confidence. Perhaps as one NGO executive observed 'not all would need income support, they would rather have better skills, shelter, sanitation and infrastructure development'.

The philanthropic organizations with international links have to contend with increasing membership contributions to their parent organizations, payable mostly in US\$ which keeps on appreciating against the local currency. This situation would apply particularly to organizations such as Lions and Rotary Clubs.

6.3 Social

Numerous social factors seem to be debilitating the promotion and facilitation of volunteerism as suggested by the following perceptions.

- § Lack of sufficient commitment due largely to the lack of a sense of social responsibility
- § Lack of an intellectual dialogue on critical issues of volunteerism and social responsibility
- § Lack of interest in volunteerism among young persons in the higher income brackets
- § Quality of leadership, with a few able to inspire others.
- § Need for trained professionals with the right attitudes and commitment

- § Too much politicization, undermining the credibility of volunteerism and the voluntary workers
- § Voluntary workers also need social security and some income support, specially those committed to long-term or life-time of volunteerism

6.4 Attitudinal

Negative attitudes in particular can be even more pervasive than the other factors in impeding the promotion and facilitation of volunteerism. However, attitudes have their own implications on legal, economic and social factors. In both state- NGO and state private-sector relations attitudes have been an important determining and defining factor and calls for extra effort to maintain a greater sense of objectivity, equanimity and sensitivity.

Perceptions of the attitudinal factor may be summarized as follows:

- § Much of the voluntary work is project / donor driven and centrally controlled and implemented, thereby devaluing people's ownership and participation
- § Lack of sufficient commitment, and a sense of genuine volunteerism, in all the five sectors.
- § Negative perceptions of leadership, motivation and management (see under Weaknesses)
- § Too little of donor funds reach the intended beneficiaries
- § Too much of bureaucracy eroding the sense of volunteerism
- § Like politics volunteerism, also could degenerate to be self-serving (see Weaknesses)
- § Too much of urban bias, with implications on costs, communications, service delivery and management culture
- § Problems of networking with the state, for example in decision making, resource management, political manipulation. Reluctance of the state to accept others as equal partners
- § Most private sector activities in volunteerism lack follow-up, reinforcement and sustainability, due to a lack of long-term commitment

§ Recognition is a key motivating factor in volunteerism, but is awfully lacking, as conceded by all interviewed. Needs creative / innovative ideas to make it happen. Some new approaches could include:

- a national award system, targetted at different levels, such as by age, gender, sector and institutions, with a more stringent but transparent selection criteria and process
- recognition of 'social entrepreneurship' e.g. Ashoka Award in the USA (E-mail: info@ashoka.org)

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 General

i. Provide greater recognition to volunteerism and voluntary workers

This could be translated into action through:

- greater recognition for volunteerism as a matter of policy by the state and as a legitimate and important partner in national development and social integration
- opportunities for equal representation in national bodies where volunteerism is an integral part
- a national award system for individuals, institutions and different sectors
- greater opportunities for human resource development
- greater freedom and space for creativity and innovation
- recognition of volunteerism as a credit earning activity

ii. Provide sufficient financial resources

- State should provide increased financial support, as a matter of state policy,
- Establish a mechanism for equitable distribution of such funds
- Assist NGOs in locating and negotiating donor funding
- The corporate sector should provide more funds for volunteerism on a direct or partnership basis
- Mutual support among NGOs in resource mobilisation

iii. Provide opportunities for Capacity Building

- Most voluntary organizations suffer from lack or inadequacy of trained personnel with requisite professional skills.

iv. Promote volunteerism in the Educational Sector

- Educational sector could be one of the largest and most widespread catchment areas for promoting and facilitating volunteerism.

- Volunteerism could be integrated into school and tertiary level curricula
 - Volunteerism in the school could be the foundation for a lifetime of volunteerism
- v. **Promote more Interactive Volunteerism through Networking and Partnership**
- This would promote greater interaction, mutual understanding and support, learning exchanges and personality development
- vi **Introduce a Code of Ethics /Norms for volunteerism**
- This would enhance confidence building and eliminate negative images of volunteerism, particularly in respect of management practices and Donor NGO relations
- vii **Volunteerism should be more Needs-driven than donor / project-driven**
- With donor project driven volunteerism NGOs could be less responsive to ‘real’ needs as against ‘perceived’ needs.

7.2 Specific

- 7.2.1. Establish an independent and flexible ‘**Central Body / Council**’ at national level for promotion, facilitation and coordination of voluntary work
- 7.2.2. The state in collaboration with the voluntary sector should establish a **Regulatory Mechanism** to monitor the flow and the use of foreign donor funds.
- 7.2.3. The state in consultation with the voluntary sector conduct **periodic review of the laws / rules / regulations** governing voluntary organizations, and introduce appropriate amendments, revisions or new legal instruments.
- 7.2.4. The Central body /Council should establish at national level a ‘**Clearing House**’ for collection and dissemination of information on

volunteerism, while encouraging similar initiatives at the district / division levels.

- 7.2.5. The Central body / Council while undertaking pilot studies, should promote / encourage the academia and NGOs with such capacities, to undertake **research and publications on significant experiences of volunteerism**
- 7.2.6. The Central body / Council should take early action to **identify ‘Real’ needs of the people**, often not addressed or marginally addressed by the state, and campaign / lobby for greater voluntary commitment to such areas of need.
- 7.2.7. The Central body / Council should take steps to publish a **Directory of Voluntary Organizations**, and keep it updated at regular intervals.
- 7.2.8. The state in collaboration with the voluntary sector declare an annual **‘National Day of Volunteering’** to create greater awareness of and greater participation in volunteerism, while creating a sense of solidarity among the different sectors, committed to volunteerism
- 7.2.9. Establish a **Steering Committee** from all the concerned sectors to take forward the above recommendations.

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**Annex II**

**LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Name / Designation</b>                                                         | <b>NAME OF ORGANISATION</b>                                                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01        | <b>Mr.Hilmy Ahmed, General Manager</b>                                            | <b>Ya TV</b>                                                                  |
| 02        | <b>Mr.Mahendra Amarasuriya, MJF,<br/>Past International Director<br/>Chairman</b> | Lions International<br><b>Commercial Bank</b>                                 |
| 03        | <b>Mr.Patrick Amerasinghe, President</b>                                          | National Chamber of Exporters of Sri Lanka &<br>Young Entrepreneurs Sri Lanka |
| 04        | <b>Dr.Vinya Ariyaratne, Executive Director,</b>                                   | Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya                                  |
| 05        | <b>Fr.Tissa Balasuriya, Chairman</b>                                              | Centre for Society and Religion                                               |
| 06        | <b>Mr.Sunimal Fernando, Executive Director</b>                                    | INASIA                                                                        |
| 07        | <b>Mr.Nandasiri Gamage, Director General/<br/>Chairman</b>                        | National Youth Services Council                                               |
| 08        | <b>Ven.Galaboda Gnanissara Thera</b>                                              | Viharadhipathi, Gangarama (Temple)                                            |
| 09        | <b>Mr.Leel Gunasekera, Former Director,<br/>Adviser</b>                           | Department of Social Services,<br>Ministry of Cultural Affairs                |
| 10        | <b>Mr.Victor Gunawardena</b>                                                      | Programme Officer, Sri Lanka Foundation Institute                             |
| 11        | <b>Ms.Ranee Herath, Hon. President</b>                                            | Lanka Mahila Samiti                                                           |
| 12        | <b>Prof. Siripala Hettige, Dean, Faculty of Arts</b>                              | University of Colombo                                                         |
| 13        | <b>Dr.Chandana Jayaratne, Senior Lecturer<br/>Member</b>                          | Dept. of Physics, University of Colombo<br><b>Rotary Club</b>                 |
| 14        | <b>Mr. Chula Jayasuriya, Director General</b>                                     | Ceylon Chamber of Commerce                                                    |
| 15        | <b>Ms.Viji Jegarasasingam, Addl. Secretary</b>                                    | Ministry of Social Services                                                   |
| 16        | <b>Dr.Kumari Navaratne, Commissioner – General</b>                                | Samurdhi Authority                                                            |
| 17        | <b>Ms. H R Pathirana, Deputy Commissioner,</b>                                    | Dept. of Probation and Child Care                                             |
| 18        | <b>Ms.N.J.Pathirana, Director</b>                                                 | Dept. of Social Services                                                      |
| 19        | <b>Prof.Nandasena Ratnapala</b>                                                   | Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology,<br>University of Sri Jayawardenepura       |
| 20        | <b>Mr.Lal Ratnaweera, Project Coordinator,</b>                                    | National Secretariat for NGO Registration                                     |
| <b>No</b> | <b>Name / Designation</b>                                                         | <b>NAME OF ORGANISATION</b>                                                   |
| 21        | <b>Dr.Padma Ratnayake, Executive Director</b>                                     | <b>SAP-SRI LANKA</b>                                                          |

|    |                                                     |                                           |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 22 | <b>Mr.Rosmend Senaratne, General Manager</b>        | EAP ENTERTAINMENTS LIMITED                |
| 23 | <b>Mr.Neil Seneviratne, Secretary General</b>       | NATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE              |
| 24 | <b>Mr.Gamini Sumanasekera, Chief Editor</b>         | SUNDAY DIVAYINA, UPALI<br>NEWSPAPERS LTD  |
| 25 | <b>Mr.Kalyananda Tiranagama, Executive Director</b> | LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS &<br>DEVELOPMENT |
| 26 | <b>Mr.N.V.Wijewantha, Executive Director</b>        | HELPAge SRI LANKA                         |

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

|    | NAME & ORGANIZATION                                                         | INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY WORK                                                                                                                                                |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | S.H.L Aliyar<br>Deputy National Advisor (Training)<br>Seva Lanka Foundation | Preparation of training materials for Community Based Organizations & Monitoring and Evaluation                                                                              |
| 2  | Imesh Abeywickrema<br>Coordinator , SOLO-U<br>Sarana Fund, Ceylinco Group   |                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 3  | Sriyanth Goonathilaka<br>JICA                                               | JICA has 39 volunteers working in a wide range of voluntary work in various parts of the country                                                                             |
| 4  | Premasiri Weliwita<br>Chief Executive<br>Young Entrepreneur Sri Lanka       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voluntary teaching in schools</li> <li>- Enlist volunteers</li> <li>- Training volunteers</li> </ul>                                |
| 5  | Kalyananda Tiranagama<br>Lawyers for Human Rights and Development           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Legal aid</li> <li>- Legal awareness</li> <li>- Human Rights Education</li> <li>- Protecting rights of vulnerable groups</li> </ul> |
| 6  | Ashraff Hushin<br>Secretary General<br>Young Men's Muslim Association       | Social service<br>Uplift the poor living condition of the unprivileged                                                                                                       |
| 7  | Hewage Jayasena<br>YMBA Boralla<br>Colombo                                  | Has a worldwide programme involved in Dhamma School, and conducting Dhamma examinations                                                                                      |
| 8  | Jayatissa Samaranyake<br>IPID                                               | Promote volunteerism through training, planning and consultancy services                                                                                                     |
| 9  | Ms. Soma Abeyratne<br>Head of Training Division<br>Help Age Sri Lanka       | Train home care volunteers in age care                                                                                                                                       |
| 10 | Ms.S.R Suriyagoda<br>Secretary<br>Sri Lanka Youth Council                   | Work for youth organizations to improve standard of youth to make them better citizens of the country                                                                        |
| 11 | Chamindra Weerackody<br>IPID                                                | Promoting voluntary work                                                                                                                                                     |
| 12 | Lal Rathnaweera<br>Project Coordinator<br>NGO Secretariat                   | Registration of NGO s in Sri Lanka<br>Implementation of UNFPA funded projects                                                                                                |

|    | NAME & ORGANIZATION                                                     | INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY WORK                                           |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | Ms. Melanie Fernando<br>YA * TV.                                        | Create awareness of the work of volunteers, volunteer organizations etc |
| 14 | Ms. Yamuna Balasuriya<br>Programme Coordinator<br>SARVODAYA<br>Moratuwa | Shramadana activities                                                   |

|    |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                     |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15 | W.M.K Wijetunga<br>Freelance consultant on education and NGO management                 | Thru education /HRD<br>Lionism (past)<br>Sarvodaya /IWE/ MBSSL                                                                                      |
| 16 | D.H Sampath Viraj<br>Seenigama Lahiru Project                                           | Programs with community, disabled,<br>- Housing needs, English training, Scholarships,<br>- Computer training                                       |
| 17 | U.M Muzain<br>Department of External Resources                                          | Coordinate volunteer organizations in Sri Lanka and International (focal point)                                                                     |
| 18 | Peter Van Sluijs<br>UN Volunteers<br>UNDP                                               | - Management of intern volunteers programme<br>- Project development involving volunteers<br>- Recruitment of volunteers                            |
| 19 | Ms. Taniya Weerasooriya<br>National UNV<br>UNV/UNDP<br>Serving IYV Desk                 | In formal employment coordinating IYV advocacy and activities in Sri Lanka<br>Informally serve in orphanages, advisory inputs to youth              |
| 20 | Dr. J.G Jayatilaka<br>Commander<br>St John Ambulance Association and Brigade            | Train first aid workers from schools, to all workplaces and villages<br>Involve in primary health work and communicable disease                     |
| 21 | Raja Jagasothy<br>Advisor<br>Aesthetic Arts<br>Young Men's Hindu Association<br>Negambo | Self Employment training in, printing<br>- Batik<br>- Screen<br>- Textile                                                                           |
| 22 | Dr.Chandana Jayarathna<br>Senior Lecturer<br>University of Colombo                      | Senior students' Counselor of the University to welfare of students<br>Working as the Director, Community service in Rotary Club of Central Colombo |

|    | <b>NAME &amp; ORGANIZATION</b>                                                            | <b>INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY WORK</b>                                                              |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 23 | Ms. Asha Abeyssekara – Van Dort<br>YA* TV                                                 | Highlighting volunteerism specially among young people through Young Asia Television programmes   |
| 24 | Ms Padmini Samarasinghe<br>Director<br>National NGO Council                               | Coordinates all non governmental organizations and work towards national unity in all aspects     |
| 25 | Ms.Mallika Samaranayake<br>IPID                                                           | Facilitating / promoting volunteerism in development work at community level                      |
| 26 | Ms.Hema Jayaweera<br>Ministry of Education and Higher Education                           | Involvement in Seva Vanitha unit of the Ministry and engaged in a few village level organizations |
| 27 | Ms.Kanthi Fernando<br>Commissioner and A dult Leader<br>Sri Lanka Girl Guides Association | Creating awareness of volunteerism among girls<br>- Encouraging young ideas about volunteerism    |

|    |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 28 | Ms.Ranee Herath<br>President<br>Lanka Mahila Samithya           | Lanka Mahila Samithya in involved in income generating projects. We have a network of 300 Societies all over the island and nursery schools all over the island |
| 29 | Ms Laksmi A.Perera<br>President<br>Sri Lanka Women's Conference | SLWC is the apex body of over100 voluntary organizations. All affiliates are women NGO's wanting for the welfare of women and children                          |
| 30 | Ms.Padma Ratnayake<br>South Asia Partnership Sri Lanka (SAPSRI) | Researcher on Volunteerism (1987 – 1991)<br>Engaged in voluntary work since 1991                                                                                |
| 31 | Azmi Thassim<br>Chamber of Commerce<br>Hambanthota District     | Business development services<br>Startup loans / advice for youth in the Hambanthota District                                                                   |
| 32 | Ananda Jayawardena<br>Ranaviru Doo Daru Rekawaranya             | Scholarship programmes for deceased soldiers' children                                                                                                          |
| 33 | Ms.Ramani Jayatilaka<br>University of Colombo                   | Helping students<br>Helping village communities                                                                                                                 |
| 34 | Ms.Inoka Dias<br>Ceylon Chamber of Commerce                     | Welfare Programmes<br>Corporate social responsibility                                                                                                           |
| 35 | Ms Rashida Rshan<br>SUNFO                                       | Welfare and progress of social development                                                                                                                      |

|    | <b>NAME &amp; ORGANIZATION</b>                                                                           | <b>INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY WORK</b>                                                                                                                                   |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 36 | A.Sooriyagoda<br>Deputy Director<br>Department of External Resources<br>Ministry of Finance and Planning | Coordinating of all volunteer activities in Sri Lanka                                                                                                                  |
| 37 | Dr.D.W Weerasooriya<br>Vice Chairman<br>UNA Sri Lanka                                                    | Past President/ Secretary – Rotary Club Colombo Central<br>Co- Director and Commander, St John Ambulance Service<br>Assistant Treasurer, Sri Lanka Medical Association |
| 38 | Leel Gunasekara<br>President<br>Federation of Consumer Associations of Sri Lanka                         |                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 39 | Vijitha Fernando<br>United Nations Youth Federation                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 40 | V.I.Fernand<br>National Mercantile Bank                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 41 | Ms Geethani Perera<br>“Lankadeepa”                                                                       | As a news reporter<br>Participation in discussion and writing                                                                                                          |

VOLUNTEERISM  
(Definition adapted from “MEASURING VOLUNTEERING – A Practical Tool Kit 2001”)

Ú VOLUNTEERISM IS:

- a) Work undertaken for **NO FINANCIAL GAINS**

**Financial Gains exclude Monetary Reimbursements:**

- è a volunteer receives which is less than the market value of the work
- è by an organisation, of legitimate expenses, arising out of voluntary activities performed by a person
- è to persons with limited or no financial resources to enable them to engage in volunteerism

Ú VOLUNTEERISM IS:

- b) Work undertaken of one's **OWN FREE WILL and SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM**

OWN FREE WILL IS

- è A basic level of voluntary action
- è Where a person acts devoid of external pressure or coercion

SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM IS COMPROMISED WHEN

- è Community service is an alternative to military service or a suspended prison sentence
- è Schools require students to volunteer
- è An employer brings pressure on employees to volunteer
- è Pressure is exerted by peers

## Ú VOLUNTEERISM IS:

c) When it brings benefits TO A THIRD PARTY as well as TO THE PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEER

è Pure leisure activity such as sports is not volunteerism

è When leisure activity such as sports is undertaken to raise funds for a good cause it is volunteerism

**VOLUNTEERISM**  
**(Types and Categories proposed by the Tool Kit)**

1      *MUTUAL AID OR SELF HELP*  
*Eg. Kaiya , Shramadana , dana*

2.      PHILANTHROPY

    Ú Unpaid services to Community

    Ú By individuals and Organisations

3.      CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY OR LOBBYING

    Ú Voluntary action for social change and social justice

        e.g.

        è      Environmental issues

        è      Care for the disabled, aged

        è      Better shelter, quality of life

        è      Human security (conflicts, landmines  
                etc)

4.      PARTICIPATION AND SELF GOVERNANCE

        Engagement from village to national level

        è      Mobilisation of people

        è      Interaction with elected representatives

        è      Pursuit of practices for good governance

        è      Participation in various committees

**VOLUNTEERISM**  
**(Categories – Adapted from Directory of Development NGOO - Sri Lanka 2000)**

A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries
- Poverty Alleviation
- Sustainable Development (Environment / Natural Resources Energy)
- Management / Business
- Water Management
- Rural Credit / Banking
- Income and Employment Generation
- Technology

B. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION:

- Information Technology
- Business Promotion
- Consultancy
- Research & Publications
- Participatory Methodologies

c. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Human Rights
- Laws and Justice (Legal Aid)

F Ethnic Issues

F Refugees

F Good Governance

D. RELIGION & CULTURE (Promotion & Publication)

F Religious & Cultural Organisations

F Aesthetics

F Multi Culturalism and religious interface

E. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

F Educate (HRD, Counselling, Consultancy etc)

F Welfare / Shelter / Health / Refugees

F Population

F Quality of Life (Water / Sanitation / Environment etc)

F Employment

F Sports & recreation

**(Note: Categories are not listed according to priority. People Mobilization / Participation common to all categories)**

**A GLIMPSE OF  
VOLUNTEERISM  
THE GLOBAL SCENE**

1. **“NON-PROFIT”** Sector is the **EIGHTH** Largest Economy Bigger than that of Russia or Canada
2. Voluntary Sector employs nearly 19 m paid full timers. Another estimated 10 m are engaged in Organised Volunteering
3. Voluntary Sector / the Third Sector – A US\$ 1 Trillion industry, no longer marginal, bigger than any private capitalist conglomerate

Ú It accounts for average of 4.7% of GDP

Ú 5% of non agricultural employment

Ú More than 9% of service employment

Ú 30% of public sector employment

4. “EU Job summit – 2000” of EU Heads of Governments and European Development Bank recognised the third sector as the fastest net creator of jobs in the Union.  
**(Yet policy makers, governments, private sector have still not understood economic significance of the third sector)**

(John Palmer in “Window on Europe: 20 Million Workers Can’t be Wrong” 2001)

**VOLUNTEERISM  
IN SRI LANKA  
CURRENT SITUATION, TRENDS & PATTERNS**

Many untapped opportunities for expansion of Volunteerism

“A phenomenon of public squalor amidst private wealth” (LJ)

“A global village without a genuine sense of community”

**Z STATE**

**F** Important actor (legislating, funding, working in partnership with NGOO, private sector)

**F** Registration of NGOO / connect donors with NGOO / limited interventions

**F** Large investment in poverty alleviation

**F** Has to go a long way to build durable partnerships

**F** Needs better sense of accountability

**F** Needs well coordinated national strategy / action

**Z NGOO**

**F** Still the largest actor in Volunteerism

**F** Still growing

**F** Sensitive for changing needs / Situations

**F** Wide range of profile from International to CBO

**F** Wide range of activity

**F** Needs more networking

- F Lack adequate funding
- F Emergence of religious dimensions
- F Research / publication needs not adequately met
- F Constraints by inadequately experienced, inexperienced personnel, professionalism, leadership

**Z PRIVATE SECTOR**

- F Late comer to volunteerism, gradually finding space making impact in selected areas
- F Linkage of tax concessions to Volunteerism / charity
- F Slow in partnership building
- F State not mainstreamed / not a part of policy
- F Associated / identified with social clubs
- F Constraints by low priority and negative attitudes

**Z ACADEMIA**

- F Does not consider Volunteerism as a legitimate function
- F Very little academic discussion
- F Few inputs to providers of volunteerism

**Z MEDIA**

- F Very limited role

F Potential for provider / recognition / building partnership

F Creating a favourable environment for volunteerism

VOLUNTEERISM  
IN SRI LANKA  
A HISTORICAL TIME LINE

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Century BC- 1815        | <b><i>ALTERNATING / Sinhalese and occasional Tamil rule.</i></b><br>Buddhism dominant influence on society and volunteerism<br><b>Hindu and Islamic elements of volunteerism</b>                                                            |
| 1506 to 1815                            | <b><i>Portuguese and Dutch rule with parallel Sinhala rule</i></b><br>Christian institutions of volunteerism / charity / nuns                                                                                                               |
| 1815 to 1948                            | <b><i>British rule island wide.</i></b><br>Christian / Western influences reinforced / elements of market economy eroding traditional social organisations including volunteerism. Slow inputs of liberal democratic practices.             |
| 1900 to 1930                            | Political / Social ferment, Temperance Movement / Peoples Mobilization as a Civil Society                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1929 to 1930                            | Great depression / Malaria epidemic / volunteerism in competition with State. Easy ride to State Council on Volunteerism                                                                                                                    |
| 1931 to 1947                            | Social legislation / State Welfarism.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1939 to 1949                            | World War II. State sponsored Volunteerism. Co -op. Movement / Community Centres / Rural Development / "Grow More Food" / People Mobilised on a war footing                                                                                 |
| 1948                                    | <b><i>Independence from British rule .</i></b> Welfarism continues                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1956                                    | Peoples participation in governance enhanced                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1960 <sup>s</sup> and 1970 <sup>s</sup> | UN Decades of Development / WB and IMF focus on Economic Development. NGO participation in development. Basic Needs / Total Development / Peoples Participation / Peoples Centred Development / Shramadana – some of the strategies         |
| Post 1978                               | Liberalisation in the economy. Rush of foreign funds / agendas. Proliferation of DNGO <sup>s</sup> . Poverty Alleviation on focus. A new wave of colonialism?                                                                               |
| 1990 <sup>s</sup>                       | State- NGO relations take a bashing (NGO Commission), but inconclusive outcome. US\$ becomes elusive / donor funding more focused on new issues / agendas of gender / ethnicity / peace, human rights / good governance. What more to come? |
| 1995                                    | UN Summit on Social Development and Demands on Volunteerism.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Current                                 | Globalisation – a new wave of evangelism.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |