

Enhancing the Citizens' Participation through Elections in Post-conflict Sri Lanka: Special Reference to Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Promoting democracy and strengthening good governance have become a core component of post-conflict and peace-building initiatives. Good governance and democracy play a key role in capacity building in Post-conflict countries in order to transit from recovery to sustainable development. In the post-conflict era of Sri Lanka as a country which suffered three decades of war has achieved many of the goals of democratization, good governance and capacity building. But if we look at the statistics citizens' participation and engagement in elections held in Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka in the post-conflict era which in the past used as escaping strategy from conflicts is now seen and used as a strategy for institution building, good governance and capacity building show the lack of engagement and participation of citizens. Some macro and micro reasons are the causes of such a problem such as no trust towards the existing government, lack of right to information in wartime as well as in post-conflict era, loss of their documents as a result of war, trauma and stigmatization as a cause of war, unawareness of the voting rights and etc. The intention of this paper is to analyze the main reasons and attempt to suggest sustainable recommendations to achieve sustainable democracy and build the capacity of Northern and Eastern provinces as a mean of good governance. At the same time, it is essential to repeat the widely accepted lesson which is the successful holding of one election does not guarantee continued peace, stability, and democracy in a post-conflict country. What elections can achieve is to give legitimacy to existing institutions. Finally authors wish to conclude by emphasizing the fact that third tier of government should be strengthen at the first phase of post-conflict capacity building.