

# FROM REHABILITATION TO PEOPLES' DEVELOPMENT

by  
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Rehabilitation should be our priority for 1990, because it concerns such a large number of youth and the President has gone on record saying that 1990 should be considered an year to achieve the aspirations of youth. Rehabilitation therefore is a national priority and if we consider it a matter of national priority, certain things will have to follow. Firstly we must have a rehabilitation policy which will both identify and define the content in terms of issues of rehabilitation as we confront them in 1990. A policy document is necessary which will spell out the issues and the strategy in addition an appropriate budget has to be voted for it. The availability of a policy document will also serve some other important purposes. One is to get a national consensus on rehabilitation amongst all political parties and amongst all social groups - all opinion makers in the country. In other words we will be able to make rehabilitation one of the elements of a national consensus that we need, in 1990 if the country is going to come out of its crisis.

Second the policy document can also serve as a public education document. Going beyond the medium of policy-makers and elite groups it can go amongst the ordinary people and it can sensitise them, make them aware of the sources of the problem. It can also help in national reconciliation,

achieving unity in making people understand their own role in national development .

All youth in rehabilitation camps would be people who are aspiring to set themselves up in employment and then self employment. So, that means sooner or later they will have to become wage earners and if they strive to become earners they should be prepared and equipped and oriented with appropriate skills and support services to take on these tasks. The rehabilitation programme can also help towards building up confidence and trust, building up faith in the minds of people in the government.

We must get into discussion with all parties and groups concerned on the issue of rehabilitation. To get them to reflect on it we must get them to take up a position on it, we must get them to debate it both within their organisations as well as across the organisations. Serious concerned professional groups like social workers, psychologists, social scientists, academics, intellectuals should also be part of this debate because they can bring in a different content and seriousness, to it.

We must give special attention to the children who have been orphaned or affected by the conflicts we have come out of. We must device special programmes for them keeping in mind the

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family/community in which they are situated. But in order to do all this we need accurate and comprehensive information - this kind of data bank is very important.

Field investigation is necessary, for this organisations like UNICEF could contribute in this area and help to formulate specific programmes. If appropriate programmes based on sound data are available funding wont be difficult. But the first stage is investigate, understand the problem.

## Janasaviya

Rehabilitation would mean addressing our minds to the roots, the causes of violence. And Janasaviya is one important aspect of this process. This year we hope to complete identification of eligible families in the balance 245 AGA divisions.

Having identified the 'Janasaviya Families' all Government development program-

mes will pick up a certain number of these families as part of their normal implementation programmes. Anything from 20 to 35 percent of development expenditure will be directed towards Janasaviya Families.

The families will be entering the development process through fisheries, housing, minor export crops etc. Now through those entry points may be it should become possible for a large number of these families to become mobile in terms of employment and so we will be reducing the overall numbers of the poor. We will be reducing the queues of people who are waiting to receive Janasaviya. In terms of housing most families who have had their houses either destroyed or because of some reason have had to relocate themselves leaving their former houses and who are in need of new houses through the 1.5 million housing programme we will be able to find answers to their problems because they will get fixed up in one or two or three programmes which will be relevant to them. For example, one sub programme out of the This twelve is to with rehabilitation and reconstruction and disaster housing. There is another sub programme linked up with urban poor so through one of these two or three sub programmes these families will be able to find basic solutions to their problems on housing.

### Alternatives

I don't think the conventional options we have been adopting are real options. If we depend on and expect conventional strategies and conventional

policies of development to deliver us from the crisis, we will get more and more caught up in the crisis rather than redeem ourselves from the crisis. Our only hope is to look for new alternatives in the coming decade. But we have to ask ourselves what is the creative, the humane, the self fulfilling way in which the answers can be got. I think one reason for the crisis that we have gone through is that development programmes did not reach large numbers and people didn't receive anywhere near what they expected to receive in terms of the accessibility of the programmes and that has to be changed immediately. I think we have found very positive ways in which we can go to scale with large numbers rather than small numbers. Then we need to place the premium on productivity, without productivity we are not developing our own resources, we are not developing a base, we are merely eroding our base.

So we must produce, we must place premium on productivity which is really saying that we must achieve growth.

We have the great body of experience, a huge wealth of experience, lying unknown, unrecognised, unwritten about, unresearched, uninvestigated in this country, which has really been by passed. The efforts the struggles, the experiences the initiatives taken by poor people — urban, rural and plantation as well as by what I may call the peoples of small sectors, for example Maranadara Samithi, small informal groups of people or may be of youth which are only known in that locality or area. Now these informal organisations and voluntary

groups have done useful work for people although it doesn't transcend the boundaries of their own villages or hamlets or their own means of communication.

The fact that these efforts have not been heard of or have reached the formal sector, the people in government, people in the higher echelons, by the elite groups, certainly not by the people in Colombo, has meant that we have not been aware of the real resources and the real possibilities and capabilities available amongst our people and in our country. According to my experience I find that no where in Sri Lanka do we get people who are poor we will get communities who are poor, we will get villagers that are poor, we will get urban settlements that are poor, but the individuals that we call poor, are in a paradoxical way very rich and they have a latent worth in them.

Poverty resides in the policies that we formulate in the procedures that we introduce, in the programmes that we have been implementing, in the projects that we have been attempting in the concepts that we have been propagating. Certainly, I find that these are very impoverished. Poor in the sense that they have not been able to encompass the richness of the experience, the creativity of the experience, the struggles of the experience, the initiatives of the experience of the peoples sector, of the small people, or the people at the base. So we have got a situation where our elites, our opinion makers, our conceptualisers, our formulators of policy have not sufficiently realised the huge richness and variety

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and capability at the resources which we have in large numbers so, here is a case where we have to unlearn in terms of conventional wisdom, in terms of received ideas and opinions.

### **Initiatives**

What we have is a highly centralised state – an over centralised state, so much so that over centralisation has caused the contradictions to explode, and this has very clearly happened. If you talk of hamlets, we are taking 30,000 hamlets for granted, and we will be in fact allocating to ourselves the task of deciding, designing, creating, formulating policies for all those people. So that at every turn, the internal factors, almost have no identity and that is why we get a situation where we have created a situation of total dependence.

Hence, this whole 'Illeem Wadaya' that you get, of people asking, because that is not what they are expected to do because the system is oriented in such a way so, you've got to ask for water, you've got to ask for houses, you've got to ask for bridges, you've got to ask for culverts, you've got to ask for loans and credit and so on all that the system seems to be successfully doing is getting people to go in one concentric circle after another, behind different agencies and behind different receptacles of power saying give us this, give us that, give us the other. Instead if we tell people, you are capable of doing a lot for yourselves, and also you are the best person to do a lot of the things in terms of satisfying your own needs, but certainly we recognise the fact that you can't satisfy all your needs by yourselves.