

## The Micro-Politics of Accessing the Research Participants

---

Sithy Fathima Zulfika (School of Education)

### **Abstract**

*The paper discusses the politics around accessing the participants in a research project. It is aimed at studying the barriers and the needs of girls to access schooling in the context of post tsunami and the post-war situation in the eastern part of Sri Lanka. The snowballing sampling method was selected for identifying the research participants from two ethnic minorities.*

*Hypothetically, the first round of participants to be identified, were the girls who had not returned to school after the tsunami, and their parents or caretakers. The school records, teachers and principals were recognised as potential sources for identifying and locating these girls. However, in the field, the information on such girls apparently went missing in school records and school stakeholders' evidence. The paper provides various 'cross checking' strategies used to identify and locate the girls and their parents.*

*The access to participants and related information was accomplished through an ethnographic field investigation. It was undertaken through an array of four tasks: i) identifying the names and related information of the girls, ii) locating them and iii) approaching them, as well as iv) engaging them into an interview process. Many issues of micro-politics in the social context of the research site were uncovered and challenged at every step. The micro-politics and discourses (social practices) identified behind this situation were related to reconstruction, conflict and the post disaster environment, socio-cultural beliefs and practices, ethno-political geography and financial manipulations and motivations. Thus, the reasons are one way or the other linked with social, cultural, economic and political power and authority. The paper also discusses how these political realities were handled in this ethnographic and discourse analytic research study.*

### **Introduction**

The paper relates my experiences during a field investigation for my doctoral research project aimed at studying the barriers and the needs of girls to access schooling in the post tsunami and the post-war situation in the eastern province of Sri Lanka. The research focused on two ethnic minorities, Tamil and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka<sup>2</sup>, that live in the middle of ongoing civil war and ethnic conflict, which has been affecting the normal day-to-day life of these populations for more than two decades. The same communities were affected badly by the tsunami, which struck more than seven countries in the Asian region in December 2004. The research site selected for this research was badly affected by both disasters. The post disaster and continuing war situations have created many forms of micro-politics in every aspect of social life of these populations. My investigation reveals the micro-politics around

---

<sup>2</sup> The ethnic composition in Sri Lanka classified into three major categories: Singhalese, Tamils and Muslims, thus 'Muslims' are considered as an ethnic group as well as religious group in official statistics

accessing research participants from these affected communities, who experience conflicts and devastation.

## Post-Tsunami Context in Sri Lanka

The tsunami had struck suddenly and its like had never been experienced in the history of the people of Sri Lanka. Out of 25 districts, 14 coastal districts were affected, comprising more than four fifth of the entire coastal area of the country. Of these, 12 districts were severely affected. Nearly 40,000 people died, two thirds of them women and children, and one million people have been displaced<sup>3</sup>. Almost 800,000 people lost their livelihoods, 234,000 families were affected, and 113,625 houses were entirely destroyed. The tsunami caused geographical detachment and, multiple and nightly displacements every day. About eighty percent of the coastal roads and bridges, factories, public buildings, and the tourist industry were destroyed, along with 97% of the Sri Lankan fisheries industry. The government estimates that the total amount required for reconstruction is 1.8 billion US dollars (Task Force for Rebuilding Nation (TAFREN) 2005).

One hundred and eighty four schools, 79,016 children and 3,263 teachers were affected in this disaster. About 70 schools were destroyed because of their proximity to the sea, and the government declared that 91 schools would have to be relocated. The land to be selected for temporary sheltering and rebuilding of schools and the permanent relocation of communities has become a very critical issue in this area. There is a scarcity of land, owing to land lost by the sea's advancement, and the proposed 'Vulnerable Zones' or 'Buffer Zones' (TAFREN 2005:61) or a 'Coastal Security Green Belt' (Hill 2005:6), exacerbates this problem. Moving fishing communities, and disturbing so-called 'ethnic boundaries' would definitely lead to tensions and conflicts among different communities. In this socio-political context, any reconstruction initiative has to be considered in the light of the ethnicity and 'conflict sensitivity' (Japanese Bank of International Corporation (JBIC) and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) 2005:8).

Many children under 14 years of age were orphaned by the tsunami in the coastal communities, with 1,169 children having lost both parents (in the northeast alone 740 children lost both parents) 3,725 children lost one parent (of these, most lost their mothers and 28 children turned out to be unaccompanied by any other family member as of March 10, 2005 (NCPA 2005)<sup>4</sup>. Further, the loss of parents, siblings, peers, school mates, friends, teachers, relations, neighbours, known and liked people, has led to the situation of breakdown of interpersonal relationships and of attachment of children to their families and immediate community. The mass destruction and loss of housing, physical infrastructure, the children's supportive network, and

---

<sup>3</sup> There are differences among reports produced by different agencies: A-GA 2005; DPDHS 2005; Mosque-Committee 2005; TAFREN 2005; UNICEF 2005; [www.kalmunaimc.com](http://www.kalmunaimc.com) 2005

<sup>4</sup> Data only represents some of the districts affected by the tsunami. The whole island survey is in progress.

of their social security or 'sense of community' (Raphael 1986:117,134) have had a severe emotional impact on the children.

### *Post-tsunami Context of the Research Site*

The research site for this study is the post tsunami situation in the Kalmunai Education Zone (KEZ) in Sri Lanka. The highest death toll and the highest material destruction were recorded in the Kalmunai Municipal Council area. The hardest-hit area by giant waves, the highest density of population and housing along the coastal fringe had led to more devastation in this region than in any other. The concentration of business enterprises and, rice and paddy storage situated in the coastal areas were further reasons for the severity of loss. In Kalmunai, nearly one kilometer of the coastal belt was inhabited and almost 400 meters of this coastal belt area was affected by the tsunami. Ten percent of the population of this area died (11,312 people), or one quarter of the total deaths in Sri Lanka, two thirds of them children and women. About 17,000 families were affected, 18,724 houses were completely destroyed and 97,432 people uprooted and displaced. Eleven hospitals and health centers, and two main drug storage buildings were completely washed away. More than 40 of the camps closed in December 2005, but people were not settled permanently until December 2006. However 97,432 people still live in temporary shelters. There were 79 refugee camps still functioning (Ampara–Government Agent (A-GA) 2005; Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services (DPDHS) 2005; Mosque-Committee 2005; TAFREN 2005; UNICEF 2005; Weinstein 2005; www.kalmunaimc.com 2005). The environmental and socio-economic damage was as severe as that in Aceh, Indonesia (United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) 2005a). With the tsunami, the sea advanced landward by 50 to 75 meters in most places; in some places even up to 750 meters with the furthest up to 4 kilometers inland. The main occupations of the peoples of the affected areas were fishing, farming, trading, and tourism. These industries and associated employment were completely destroyed by the tsunami.

Fifteen out of 70 schools fully destroyed in Sri Lanka were in Kalmunai Education Zone and one thousand and five hundred students died in Kalmunai out of 3,500 who lost their lives in Sri Lanka (Ministry of Education (MOE) 2005a): ( Zonal Director of Education (ZDE) 2005). Furthermore, more than 20,000 children and 700 teachers were directly affected by the tsunami in the KEZ. In Kalmunai, 70 percent of the children who died were aged below seven. Almost all the children below five years died in the affected coastal area. Girls and women aged 13-29 died disproportionately in this area, four times as many as males. In that sense, tsunami-surviving young children, particularly girls, are the few surviving representatives of a lost generation.

The major effects on the school education system were physical damage to the buildings and to services and facilities such as water, electricity, communications and sanitation. Laboratories, equipment, sports facilities, machinery, tools, furniture, books and other library resources and consumable teaching materials (such as chemicals, chalk, black and white boards and pens) were damaged beyond recovery (MOE) 2005b). According to a government estimate, the total damage to the education system in terms of material loss is nearly 263.08 million US dollars (TAFREN 2005). More than twenty years of civil war and ethnic conflict have made the situation even more complex.

More than 110 schools in the war and conflict zones were not functioning even before the tsunami struck (Anandan 2005). It is estimated one million school-aged children directly affected by war in the northeast province and one third of them either never have attended or have dropped out (UNICEF 2003b). School children living in the welfare camps share the schools in the adjoining non-affected areas or share other partly-affected schools, whichever are closer to their welfare camps and temporary residences. This situation leads to many problems, which affect the smooth functioning of schools and the education of children. The problems are related to overcrowding, insufficient time for learning because of only three hours of schooling as two schools operate out of one school's premises, one in the morning and other in the afternoon, lack of teachers and other learning facilities, administrative and management conflicts, for example, over the use of resources and recurrent expenditure (Rural Development Foundation (RDF) 2003a).

When considering children, the most vulnerable are those who are physically and mentally disabled by war, war-orphans, children of widows or malnourished children, children who shoulder the family responsibilities, and children who have been displaced several times. Before the tsunami, the school records categorised these children as 'dropped out' or 'long absentees' or 'repeaters', and the majority of them were girls. Initially, the educational needs of these children to recover from educational disadvantages caused by war and displacements were identified by local Non-government Organisations (NGOs) who work with particular communities, in places where refugee camps are located in high concentration. With the help of UNICEF, these NGOs have started a 'Catch-up Education' program, a special educational program for children in the camps to enable them to re-enter formal schooling (RDF 2003b).

Subsequently, UNICEF took the initiative to spread this program to other areas including wherever multiple displacements had occurred, particularly in the eastern part of Sri Lanka. UNICEF is still implementing this program in and outside of schools, with the help of local NGOs and local educational authorities. Over the period of the last seven years, about 43,000 children received education in these classes and 7,000 re-enrolled in the available schools. Most of the children who did not re-enroll were girls. Why these girls did not re-enroll in schooling remains unanswered (UNIFEM 2005:3).

In the war situation, the society itself is traumatised and militarised, and becomes more immune to an increased level of violence. Girls face high risks for their mobility and personal safety when they live in the refugee camp in unknown places and they live in a violence-tolerant society. In addition to losing access to educational facilities and suffering the impact of war and refugee life, this situation becomes more challenging for their schooling (Mounaguru 2004). This situation necessitates a study to see whether there are any safety and security issues that affect the girls' access to schooling.

Situation of education in the context of war and conflict in the northeast is summarised as follows.

Successive governments have demonstrated national commitment and significant advances towards 'education for all'. However, recent research points out to a marked deterioration, with significant disparities in infrastructure and allocation of resources between urban and rural areas and in conflict affected areas. Literacy rates are decreasing and school dropouts are increasing'.... 'Despite of policies on

inclusion, children are excluded from compulsory primary education if they have no birth certificates, are displaced, disabled or poor or if the school is being used as a welfare centre is closed due to lack of resources, Government 'catch up' programmes (in the conflict-affected areas) are few and under resourced'

Country Report for 2001 of Save the Children quoted in DFID 2005; 84

The access of relevant participants from the above socio context of the research site was needed to answer the following research questions of the research.

1. *Why are tsunami-surviving young girls not returning to primary school?*
2. *What do other stakeholders perceive as the barriers and the needs of young girls for accessing primary schooling?*

## Accessing Research Participants

Accessing research participants is an important and essential part of any successful investigation (Rice, Bunker et al. 2007:501) in the field. When working with participants attached to any social institution, normally there would be a primary line of communication, through which one could go, by following appropriate rules and formalities, to finally contact the research participants concerned. However, when focusing on school children, the tasks become more challenging, since there are many lines of communication that articulate multiple levels of authorities and power. Thus, gaining access to a research site and to the children of a vulnerable population becomes an additional challenge (Rice, Bunker et al. 2007).

There is plenty of literature available, in nursing and health research, on the barriers, challenges and strategies of getting access to children in the schools for research, through permission from multiple authorities, like in Sri Lanka (Pincus and Friedman 2000; Lamb and Dale 2001; Story, Sherwood et al. 2003; Rice, Bunker et al. 2007). Most of the research indicates the formalities and possible barriers one may encounter in these formal lines of communications. It is a customary practice in Sri Lanka that the school or any other authority, to which the children are attached, has the authority and power to grant permission and to provide the information on the children. It was therefore my plan, to communicate with the formal authorities in the zonal office and in affected schools to identify the names of girls and related information, who were not attending the school, and to locate them.

There is hardly any research that pinpoints the barriers in accessing school children who are not in school, or whose information is not available from the formal authorities for one reason or other, nor research on the strategies that could be used to contact them. Thus, locating the names of participants was my first challenge in this research project.

## Method for Accessing Participants

Hypothetically, the first round of participants to be identified, were the girls and their parents or caretakers. In the snowball sampling method, the first round of research participants, and the issues communicated within their interviews, determines any subsequent rounds with participants. The subsequent rounds were needed to understand different stakeholders' perspectives on the

research problem or on related issues communicated in the first round. Originally, three formal lines of communication were identified for accessing the research participants in this research: the Kalmunai Education Zonal office of the department of education, temporary schools and refugee camps, where selected school communities concentrated. Accordingly, these places were visited to collect the names of young girls, who survived the tsunami, but were presently not attending schools, to complete their primary schooling.

### *Potential Resources to Access Participants*

The official school records, teachers, principals, and the education officer in-charge for school statistics were recognised as potential sources for identifying the names of the girls and the information needed to locate them. I visited the education office and fifteen temporary schools to find out the names of girls. However, the information about the girls apparently went missing in all these records. Apparently, almost all tsunami surviving children including young girls were re-enrolled and continuing their studies. Two of the principals of the schools, which were selected later in this study, confirmed this aspect very firmly.

PR1: 'I think generally all the children survived in the tsunami are at school now. Further some ten more children came as displaced here from war-ridden area called Muttur. Altogether now 174 children are in our school' (PR1 2007).

After having noticed many times the statistics on the board on daily attendance at the school, I inquired about the figure on students' attendance for the day. The principal responded to me in the following way.

R: The statistics on the board shows that there are 122 students present today... that means fifty two children are not in the school today... that is almost one third of them... and 71 boys and only 51 girls present today....

PR1: As far this school is concerned, there will be a valid reason if the children are not attending to school specially if there is 'Hartal', children will not come. Here, as you know, we often have 'Hartals'.... Or illness or parents wants them at home to do some work or some parents wants to keep them at home as they have to attend an important work outside. Other than these absenteeism... dropout is very less.

R: So, do you have any long absenteeism?

PR1: Mm...there are a few children like that.... Yes ... yes now I could understand what you mean...the children who absent often... yes definitely there are ... children... But, for them to be in that situation ... the main reason is the poverty of parents. Here our life is being destroyed every day by war and conflict... more to add... tsunami did the complete destruction....

Another principal responded in similar way.

R: How is re-enrolment and retaining of children at your school....

PR2: All re-enrolled in the school ...not much dropouts as such, children get absent sometimes.... Sometimes long absenteeism ... because of poverty...

One of the other principals, who was selected in the study later, accepted the fact that almost one third of the children are, for one reason or other not in the school, though he was optimistic about the situation, which he said is getting better.

PR3: In October 2006 only we found the real situation of our school... we had 1765 children plus we should have another 200 children enrolment as two years' new admissions but we had only 1328 children....However, from this year 2007... we could see the stability ....bringing the children together only helped us to understand the problem holistically.... moreover, as we got tin sheet tents for classrooms and furniture.....there has been a change in enrolment and teaching- learning of children...too.

Another school principal in one of the affected schools also confirmed that there was only 55-60% of the students attending school regularly even in 2007.

The principals indicated that there are children who access schooling differently and are not participating in schooling effectively. I visited about 108 refugee camps in the research site, since I realised particular school-communities live in many camps. What I observed several times was that there were many girls at the camps in the morning while schools were held. After visiting the camps several times, meeting many people and making many inquiries, I established without any doubt, that many girls either did not go to school or left the school some time before or have never gone to school. This was the departure point to leave formal channels of communication and to collect the names and information of girls who had not returned to school after the tsunami through alternative channels and authorities. My decision was firmly confirmed by an interview with the Deputy Director of Education at a later time:

ED: 'In my own assessment, there are only 55-60% of the children in average are coming to affected schools daily. If you have 1900 children in the school (sic.[enrolled]), nearly 1400-1450 students are in the school every day. If there is any previous announcement about relief distribution, on that particular day, there will be more student than ever. If not, children would come next days hearing the information from others.

Further, most of the schools now have collected at least some information about all of their surviving children. That is why; there will be very small difference in the student population attending school in the record. Particularly, information of all the children is in the class registers now.

However, considerable number of children never comes to school. The other question is whether they learn in the school even they attend the school... In that sense, in fact, here rather talking about drop out, we have to take as long absenteeism, or repeaters or some thing like that...or in some other term... you have to employ for that reason... sometimes, may be you cannot find long absenteeism

even.... may be, all would be marked as being present every day... '

I looked for many other lines of communications and potential sources to gather information on the girls and to enlist their help to locate and to approach them. I used general administrative structures in the area, child protection authority, health department for general statistics, survey reports, resource profile on children affected by tsunami with names and address of refugee camps, where they resided and which school they attended. I also met personnel in international and local INGOs and NGOs, such as Terre Des Home (TDH), Save The Children (SC), Christian Children's Fund (CCF), which work with, affected children. I received a considerable amount of information on the girls who are not in the schools in the particular area that they cover in their programs.

Since my concern was the girls who were from two ethnic minorities and from particular schools selected in the study within these communities, I visited these schools and communities frequently. I talked to ordinary local people, community leaders and teachers personally. It happened that I talked to some students by chance, who became potential informants on absentee girls, who had studied with them. I selected particular classes, grades four, five and six, from these schools, with the permission of principals, and had in-depth conversations with them about the girls who studied with them and were not coming to school at the time. I collected information on an extensive number (average 14) of girls. In that sense, I found students and development workers are good sources to identify the names of girls, who were not in the schools and to provide the information on where to locate them.

Locating the girls was another challenge since they are uprooted and often move from place to place. People in this area are kept apart, socially and geographically at distance, within the socio-political context. This situation made the task more difficult. However, I managed to visit personally all the places wherever I could possibly meet the girls and their parents or care takers. In many cases, I became personally involved in community gatherings and events, such as drama nights and art exhibitions of affected children, camp cultural ceremonies, and orphanage cultural events, to meet these girls, while using all my personal contacts to locate them. Personal contacts also helped me to find and to make more contacts to locate and reach the girls and their parents and caretakers. Personally visiting all the places, becoming involved in community gatherings and events were more effective means to locate the girls.

Approaching the research participants, the girls and their parents or care takers, was another big challenge as they were from two ethnic minorities. Geo-ethno-political aspects were the main constraints on the effort to reach them and to access information. Mistrust, suspicion and hatred among different communities and the military presence on the borders of these villages in the research site led to denial of access to different villages, where different ethnic communities lived. In that situation, I also communicated with the participants through different relief organisations, authorised bodies and socially recognised persons like senior citizens, divisional secretaries and camp leaders.

Subsequently, I became involved in meeting the immediate needs of the research participants, which they expected and requested from me, such as providing vital information, lobbying service providers and donors, and making sure of basic relief. This helped me to gain the acceptance of the communities,

in which I sought to undertake research and helped me to get more access and time to get to know the participants as well as their families and communities. This involvement enabled me to explain the purpose of the research and its importance, and to obtain their full cooperation. Visiting them as many times as possible, participating persistently, and becoming involved personally in meeting their needs, increased my access and enhanced their effective participation in the investigation.

### Micro-Politics in Accessing the Participants in the Research

The reasons behind the difficulties and challenges faced in finding the names of the girls and the information to locate them, and approaching them, were related to micro-politics in the research site. Micro-politics is generally defined as power, influence and control among individuals and groups (Willower 1991:442). It is all about the 'dynamics of how power operates' in social life (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin 2005:114). 'Politics' is not only holding power and, controlling and manipulating the resources, events and situation, it is also related to not having power. Politics also means having power to make decisions on behalf of a group and exercising power to create, manipulate, and use the information, resources and situations. Alternatively, politics also means disempowerment, having no say on any decision made, often resulting in discriminations, denials, and no access to or control over resources and their benefits. Therefore, politics refers to a process, mechanism and outcomes of the exercise of power within social institutions. Furthermore, politics is a practice that is always concerned with seeking benefits.

Both discourse and socio-cultural analysis pay attention to culture and the social area as the central focus of analysis and to how power operates in the micro-politics of a social institution (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin 2005:107). Further such analysis also depicts 'how social decisions are covertly built into the decisions of social structures', such as schools and education offices (Fisher 1989:950). Thus, the analysis of micro-politics involves examining and exposing the 'hidden interplay of power and control' (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin 2005:114) within social practices and it shows 'how the individuals and groups working (sic.[work]) around social exercises' (107). It also highlights the power structure and explains how bureaucrats exercise the power through particular lines of communication (Ferguson 1984). Further, discourse analysis and critical ethnography capture micro-politics and provide a means to uncover the 'human agency in micro-politics', people who wield power at individual and collective levels and this is played out within socio-cultural structures (Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin 2005:109,117).

### Findings: Reasons for Missing Information and Difficulties in Locating and Approaching them

The political issues identified here were in relation to four main areas: reconstruction, conflict situation, displacement and refugee life and related socio-cultural issues. The missing information on girls, who were not attending school, seemed a deliberate and intentional political issue. Though all the children were not re-enrolled or not attending the schools after the tsunami, all the schools had collected information of all tsunami-surviving children and records as if they in the schools. The statistics produced in the schools had been provided to the zonal office and to the department of education, even to the donor organisation including UNICEF. Thus, UNICEF's report on education,

two years after the tsunami, confirmed that 90 percent of children were at school in the affected areas. Most of the children, even though they were not in the schools, had accessed relief and resources and had benefited. The information had also been used for financial and material manipulation at all levels.

The principals, teachers and the officers used their professional power and authority to create and manipulate this information on behalf of affected school communities. Further, they maintained that the records were reliable and accurate. In this regard there was no one to question such misinformation. On the other hand, affected communities, including the school community and other stakeholders, since they were all disempowered by disaster and had experienced discriminations in the political arena in Sri Lanka, had a fear of missing relief and resource allocations, exclusion from reconstruction initiatives, and even fear of losing their own schools if they did not show enrolment of enough student population that could lead to the situation of combining schools.

Politics around locating and approaching girls and their parents was mostly related to the conflict situation, socio-cultural aspects, and displacement, and refugee life of the working population. People were kept at a distance and so were ethnically polarized. People from one community were seen as 'alien' and the 'enemy' by the 'others' in the conflict situation. 'Accepted' community leaders or members of socially and politically powerful groups or from armed groups in particular communities opposed and blocked the researcher from accessing participants. Such 'popular leaders' upheld and sustained their power position in the society by controlling decision making at the individual and at group levels. They permitted access if the opinion being expressed agreed with their position and confirmed their control of people. That is they had the power to facilitate or to obstruct the visits to camps and meeting with the participants.

On the other hand, the displacement and refugee situation of the people in the post disaster situation affected them as 'people without address' or 'people without face' or 'people without name or roots'. There was no one in the host village, who could identify them or say who they were as they lived an itinerant lifestyle. The multiple displacements and daily night displacements during a longer term of say more than two years of refugee life made this situation more complicated. This situation has also created many informal authorities and many lines of communications as 'hurdles' for reaching the research participants of affected communities. There was misunderstanding and lack of awareness by the people in the post disaster situation that the information could be used to collect money in the name of the refugee, and could be used by anybody who collected the information. It has also resulted in denial of consent to be a research participant. In many cases, access was granted to me only after having explained through a person whom they trusted, such as one who had performed for their benefit or after having done some kind of relief and financial assistance for particular participants and their affected communities, and shown my concern towards their plight.

I came to the conclusion that there were two types of 'missing' participants: missing 'intentionally' and 'spontaneously'. In the post tsunami context, 'spontaneous missing' of participants and difficulties in locating them was somewhat understandable. However, 'intentional missing' of some participants and the 'deliberate hindrance to obtaining information' and unapproachable

higher-legal authorities were, most of the time, related to the politics around reconstruction in the post tsunami context in the war-ridden region. It was also due to the government's direction to abstain from providing information on the grounds that the recovery and the reconstruction matters in the northeast were very sensitive political issues at the time of fieldwork. Sometimes withholding of information was due to corruption in the reconstruction arena. 'Deliberate and intentional' politics was used for concealing the situation and the information from the affected communities and donors, and particularly internal donor communities to whom the legal authorities were accountable.

## Conclusion

Obtaining approvals from participants are the essential mechanism for the research to proceed. In this research context, accessing research participants needed more approvals beyond getting approvals of participants and related institutions that are formally identified in the normal situation. Moreover, access was also challenged and the researcher had to act in the context of the micro-politics within the society in which the research participants belonged. The micro-politics identified were related to reconstruction, conflict and post disaster environment, socio-cultural beliefs and practices, ethno-political geography and financial manipulations and motivations. Thus, the reasons were linked with social, cultural, economic and political powers and authorities in the social institutions in the research site. The micro-politics of the research context required overcoming many hurdles for accessing the research participants.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge my Supervisor Dr. Izabel Soliman, for her continued support, encouragement and persistence through the preparation and completion this paper. The author wishes to thank two anonymous referees for their comments on an earlier draft of this article. I also gratefully acknowledge Prof Warren Hallaway for his assistance to improve the language expression in this paper.

## References

- Ampara-Government Agent (A-GA). 2005, *District Summary Report on the Lost in Tsunami -Ampara*, Government Agent's Office, Ampara.
- Anandan, S. 2005, North and East Sri Lanka: Fisheries Industries Affected by the Tsunami Rebuilding Fishing Community Aftermath Tsunami Colombo [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)
- Department for International Development (DFID). 2005, 'Why we need to work more effectively with fragile states', Department for International Development: UK.
- Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services (DPDHS). 2005, *Human Loss in Kalmunai MC in the Tsunami*, Kalmunai Deputy Director of Health Services Office.
- Ferguson, K. E. 1984, 'The feminist case against bureaucracy', Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Fisher, F. 1989, 'Beyond the rationality project: Policy analysis and the postpositivist challenge', *Policy Studies Journal*, vol.17, pp. 941-951.
- Hill, S. 2005, *Education in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities*, CREC, UNE, Armidale.

- Japan Bank of International Corporation (JBIC) and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). 2005, *Sri Lanka Needs Assessment for Post-Tsunami Reconstruction*, JBIC and JICA, Government of Sri Lanka, Colombo.
- Lamb, L. & Dale, J. 2001, 'Adolescent research recruitment issues and strategies: Application in a rural school setting', *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, vol.16, pp.43-52.
- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). 2005, *North East Needs Assessment in the Post-Tsunami Situation*, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Killinochchi, Sri Lanka.
- Marshall, C. & Gerstl-Pepin, C. 2005, *Reframing Educational Policies for Social Justice*, Pearson Education, Boston.
- Ministry of Education (MOE). 2005b, *Needs Assessment for Post-Tsunami Reconstruction*, Colombo Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Education (MOE). 2005a, *Details of Damage Caused by Tsunami to Schools in the Coastal Areas of Sri Lanka Colombo*, Sri Lanka Education For All and MDG unit, Ministry of Education.
- Mosque-Committee. 2005, *Effects of Tsunami Ampara*, Mosque committee.
- Mounaguru, S. 2004, Conflict and development in eastern Sri Lanka' in *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan Discourses in Peace and Conflict*, eds G. Frerks & B. Klem, The Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Cligendael', The Hague, Netherlands.
- National Centre for Policy Analysis (NCPA). 2005, 'Immediate Assessment of the Orphaned either with Single Parent or Both Dead.' Retrieved 14 July from [www.childprotection.gov.lk/tsunami/immediateplan.htm](http://www.childprotection.gov.lk/tsunami/immediateplan.htm)
- Pincus, D. & Friedman, A. 2000, 'Improving children's coping with every day stress: Transporting treatment interventions to the school setting', *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, vol.7, pp.223-240.
- Raphael, B. 1986, *When Disaster Strikes*, Basic Books Inc. USA,
- Rural Development Foundation (RDF). 2003a, Annual Progress Report 2002, Puttalam, Rural Development Foundation, Sri Lanka.
- Rural Development Foundation (RDF). 2003b, Progress Report on Catch of Education Puttalam, Rural Development Foundation, Sri Lanka.
- Rice, M., Bunker, K.D., Kang, D-H, Howell, C.C and Weaver, M. 2007, 'Accessing and recruiting children for research in schools', *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, vol.29, no.4, pp.501-514.
- Story, M., Sherwood, N., Obarzanek, E., Beech, B.M., Baranowski, J.C., Thompson, N.S., Owens, A.S., Mitchell, M. & Rochon, J. 2003, 'Recruitment of African-American pre-adolescent girls into an obesity prevention trial: The GEMS pilot studies', *Ethnicity & Disease*, vol.13, no.S1, pp.78-87.
- Task Force for Rebuilding Nation (TAFREN). 2005, 'Rebuilding the Tsunami affected area -Implementation plan', Department of National Planning and Ministry of Finance and Planning, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP). 2005a, 'After the Tsunami: Rapid Environmental Assessment. A People's Process for Post-Tsunami Rebuilding', Colombo, Sri Lanka, ICSF, India

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2003b, 'At a glance: Sri Lanka', UNICEF, New York.
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2005, 'Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami: UNICEF Responses at 90 days. A people's Process for Post-Tsunami Rebuilding' Colombo, Sri Lanka ISCF, India.
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). 2005, *Gender Profile of the Conflict in Sri Lanka United Nation Fund for Women*.
- Weinstein, H.M. 2005, 'Sri Lanka' in *After the Tsunami*, eds L. Fletcher, E. Stover & H. Weinstein, Berkeley Human Right Center and School of Public Health , University of California.
- Willower, D. 1991, 'Micro-politics and sociology of school organizations', *Education and Urban Society*, vol.23, no.4, pp.442-454.
- www.kalmunaimc.com (2005). Post-Tsunami Situation KMC Kalmunai.
- Zonal Director of Education (ZDE). 2005, 'Impact of Tsunami on the School Education system in Kalmunai Education Zone-A Status Report - March 2005', *Impact of Tsunami on School Education Sri Lanka*, Kalmunai Education Zone, Department of Education, Sri Lanka.