THE USE OF TAMIL AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OUTSIDE THE NORTH AND EAST OF SRI LANKA

Social Indicator - Centre for Policy Alternatives

2006

ACRONYMS

- ✓ Official Languages Policy   -OLP
- ✓ Official Languages Act   -OLA
- ✓ Official Languages Department   -OLD
- ✓ Official Languages Commission   -OLC
- ✓ Badulla Municipal Council   -BMC
- ✓ Colombo Municipal Council   -CMC
- ✓ Hatton Police Station   -HPS
- ✓ Registrar's office of the Kandy Katchcheri   -KKRO
- ✓ Nuwara Eliya Base Hospital   -NBH
- ✓ Ratnapura High Courts   -RHC
- ✓ Thimbrigasyaya Divisional Secretariat   -TDS
- ✓ Vice Principal   -VP
- ✓ D.S.Senanayake College   -DSSC
- ✓ Isipathana College   -IC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Across the surveyed institutions, it was found that the capacity of the respective officials to handle administrative matters and assist the Tamil speaking public in the Tamil language was greatly inadequate.

- A majority of the officials surveyed, express a willingness to employ Tamil translators, however, their requests remain unfulfilled as Tamil translators are reluctant to work for the low remuneration fees offered by the institutions.

- The Official Languages Department (OLD) and the Official Languages Commission (OLC) does not maintain regular contact with the officials in the institutions (with the exception of one institution) surveyed.

- Official language training programmes appear to be ineffective in responding to the language needs of the members of staff in the surveyed institutions.

- More than 46% of the non managerial staff in the surveyed institutions state that they face language difficulties when interacting with the Tamil speaking service recipients.

- More than 59% of the staff surveyed, admit that they have never participated in a language training programme.

- The principals of the two bilingual schools surveyed state that the administrative language in their school is Sinhala.

- More than 77.5% of the surveyed Tamil speaking general public express their dissatisfaction with the lack of Tamil language skills of the public institution staff.

2. INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken by Social Indicator (SI) for the Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE) to examine the current position relating to the implementation of the official languages provision in areas outside the North-East, where there is a substantial Tamil presence.

Language as is universally accepted is integral to ones culture in both the material and the socio-psychological aspects of the community. Thus, this constitutes an indispensable identity marker even at the personal level. Thus, the term "Mother tongue" becomes a concept highly loaded with emotions and motivations for actions towards its maintenance and furtherance. In this regard, language as a socio cultural and more importantly a political identity marker could play a decisive role.

The 13th Amendment to the 1977 constitution, in 1988 was based on the provisions agreed to in the Indo-Lanka Accord. One of the main aspects of this Amendment was the declaration of Sinhala and Tamil as national languages with English as the link Language. Thus, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the OLP by studying the attitudes of the public service providers and the Tamil speaking public.

The Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka constitute, Sri Lankan Tamils, Sri Lankan Moors, and Tamils of Indian descent. Our study therefore focuses on specific geographical locations in which these three communities reside along with the Sinhalese, in substantial numbers.

The study examines how institutions of public administration, health and the judiciary in these geographical locations function with regard to the implementation of the OLP. A significant, albeit hitherto, neglected area of investigation brought within the purview of this study, is the enquiry undertaken in two bilingual schools in Colombo, with regard to the implementation of the OLP.

Provided below in Table 1 are the population figures of the geographical locations selected for this study and Table 2 provides the ethnic breakdown of each population.

TABLE 1*

Area	Total population
Colombo MC	642,163
Kandy District	1,272,463
Nuwara Eliya MC	25,049
Badulla MC	40,920
Ratnapura District	1,008,164
Thimbirigasyaya DS	264,767
Hatton-Dickoya UC	14,255

TABLE 2*

Area	Sinhalese	% of total pop.	Tamils	% of total pop.	Muslims	% of total pop.	Other	% of total pop.
Colombo MC	265,657	*41.4*	199,640	*31.1*	164,448	*25.6*	12,418	*1.9*
Kandy District	942,038	*74*	155,546	*12.2*	171,239	*13.5*	3640	*0.3*
Nuwara Eliya MC	13,568	*54.2*	9033	*36*	2220	*8.9*	228	*0.9*
Badulla MC	29,960	*73.2*	4706	*11.5*	6025	*14.7*	229	*0.6*
Ratnapura District	873,265	*86.6*	112,916	*11.2*	21,116	*2.1*	867	*0.1*
Thimbirigasyaya DS	148,567	*56.1*	74,184	*28*	35,659	*13.5*	6357	*2.4*
Hatton-Dickoya UC	3,752	*26.3*	7,991	*56.1*	2,450	*17.2*	62	*0.4*

*Figures obtained from the 2001 Census.

The category 'Tamils' includes Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils.

The category 'Muslims' includes Sri Lankan Moors and Malays.

The category 'Other' includes Burghers, Sri Lankan Chetty, Bharatha and those defined as other by the Census Department of Sri Lanka.

3. OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of this Rapid Assessment (RA) is to gain an understanding of the nature and extent of the implementation of the Official Languages Policy (OLP) in public institutions in the sectors of health, law and justice and education outside of the North-East.

The research in particular aims to assess:

¶ The level of Tamil language proficiency of the staff at the institutions and its impact on the Tamil speaking public
¶ Knowledge of and attitude towards the OLP of both the staff at the institutions and the Tamil speaking public.
¶ The effectiveness of the initiatives taken if any, by the public institutions to implement the OLP.
¶ The constraints, draw backs, obstacles faced by the public institutions when implementing the OLP

With regard to the implementation of the OLP in the education sector, bilingual schools were selected to assess; the implementation of Tamil medium education, the Tamil medium staff and students' relationship with the school management and to assess the awareness of both staff and students with regard to the implementation of the OLP and their attitudes with regard to its effectiveness.

4. METHODOLOGY

The following steps were taken by SI in order to understand the nature and the extent to which the OLP is implemented:

- Desk research and elite inquiries

- Informal discussions with senior officials of the selected institutions

- A self administered survey was conducted amongst the middle and lower level staff of the institutions

- An exit poll with service recipients of each selected institute

In response to the request made by FCE, SI extended the study to two leading bilingual schools in Colombo. In order to understand the implementation of the OLP in these schools, Principals, Vice Principals, 6 Tamil medium teachers and advanced level students from each school were interviewed. Table 3 illustrates the number of interviews conducted under each sector.

TABLE 3

Institution	Managerial staff	Non-managerial staff	Tamil speaking public	Principals and Vice-Principals	Tamil medium teachers	Tamil medium students	Total
Badulla MC	4	40	40				84
Colombo MC	4	40	40				84
Hatton PS	4	27	40				71
Kandy KRO	4	40	42				86
Nuwara Eliya BH	4	29	25				58
Ratnapura HC	4	29	39				72
Thimbirigasyaya DS	-	-	40				40
DSSC				3	6	6	15
IC				3	6	6	15
Total	24	205	266	6	12	12	525

Desk Research

As a first step, SI conducted extensive desk research and met with individuals and institutions with knowledge on the subject of the implementation of the OLP in order to obtain background information prior to embarking on this study.

Sampling

SI agreed to conduct an assessment of the implementation of the OLP in the following institutions:

- Badulla, Municipal Council (BMC)
- Colombo, Municipal Council (CMC)
- Hatton, Police Station (HPS)
- Kandy, Registrar's Office of the Kachcheri (KKRO)
- Nuwara Eliya, Base Hospital (NBH)
- Ratnapura, High Courts (RHC)
- Thimbirigasyaya Divisional Secretariat (TDS)*
- DS Senanayake College (DSSC)
- Isipathana College (IC)

*The SI team was unsuccessful in obtaining interviews with the staff at TDS as permission was not granted to conduct this study at the institution by the higher officials of this institution. However, the SI team was able to conduct an exit poll with the Tamil speaking service recipients of the institution.

Questionnaire Designing

Two structured questionnaires were designed by SI to be administered amongst the minor staff and the general public. In order to evaluate the perceptions of higher ranking officers in these institutions a protocol was developed and in-depth interviews were conducted.

Data Collection

The field work was carried out in the period between October 2005-January 2006. The field work comprised of individual interviews with higher officials in each institution, school management, teachers and students.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire intended for the non managerial staff and the Tamil speaking general public, contained both close-ended and open-ended questions. The questions intended for the Non Managerial Staff were framed in a manner that would elicit deeper insights into the staff experiences with dealing with the Tamil speaking public and their attitudes towards the implementation of the OLP. The questionnaire for the Tamil speaking public strived to understand their grievances, when receiving services from the relevant public institutions.

The close-ended questions were aimed at finding out specific details, such as language usage in the selected institutions.

Once the questionnaires were coded, they were re-checked to ensure precision and then entered into a database. Following the process of cleaning the data, it was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The processing of the completed questionnaires from the non-managerial staff and the general public were carried out separately.

5. SURVEY FINDINGS

5. A. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

5. A.1. INSTITUTIONAL STAFF TAMIL LANGUAGE CAPACITY

The Tamil language capacity of the staff in each institution, as expressed to the SI team by the higher officials of the respective institutions is as follows;

BMC Consists of staff totalling 450, but has only one Tamil officer and a Tamil typist working on contract basis in their cadre

CMC Consists of 15 departments. From a cadre of 12,000, only 100 persons can converse in rudimentary Tamil. All 100 belong to the Non-managerial staff category.

HPS Out of a total of 250 staff only approximately 10-20 officers can converse in rudimentary Tamil.

KKRO Consists of 60 officers and none of the officers are capable of handling administrative matters in Tamil.

NBH From a staff of 450 only 85 can converse in rudimentary Tamil.

RHC From a cadre of 60 officers, no officer is capable of handling administrative matters in Tamil.

TABLE 4

Public Institution	Total Staff Population	Number of staff able to work in Tamil (approximately)
Badulla Municipal Council	450	1
Colombo Municipal Council	12,000	100
Hatton Police Station	250	10-20
Kandy Registrar's office	60	0
Nuwara Eliya Base Hospital	450	85
Ratnapura High Courts	60	0

5. A. 2. MANAGERIAL STAFF

*Information from higher ranking officials was collected using **in-depth interviews.***

1. Staff proficiency in Tamil

The Tamil population ratio in each of the geographical locations in which the selected institutions are situated, is more than 25%, sometimes going up to 60%. However, in comparison, the number of officials proficient in Tamil with the capacity to handle administration work is extremely low, with the majority belonging to the non managerial level.

When questioned on the glaring inadequacy of Tamil speaking staff, most of the high officials stated that the Tamil speaking public who request for services from their institution are conversant in Sinhala and therefore matters can be handled in Sinhala. In the instance that a Tamil speaking person does not speak Sinhala, the person is accompanied by a person fluent in Sinhala. This seems to be the case particularly at the CMC and the KKRO.

At the RHC, when a Tamil speaking person is accused of an offence, an officer from another office is brought in to translate the evidence.

Further interaction with the managerial staff revealed that none of the six surveyed institutions have an official Tamil translator on their staff. Thus, although all of the institutions have vacancies for Tamil-Sinhala translators, excepting the BMC and the RHC the other institutions have not taken any action to fill the vacancies. The BMC has alerted their relevant Ministry and the OLC of the vacancy but they state that they have not received a response. The Registrar of the RHC also stated that he requested the Ministry to appoint a Tamil translator but he too had not received a response.

When questioned about the language used in official letters and application forms they revealed that very few applications are received in Tamil as most of the Tamil speaking persons use Sinhala. The officials at the RHC stated that all statement are recorded in Sinhala and written submissions in Tamil cannot be read by the office staff.

All the officials interviewed in this study declared that irrespective of whether the original document sent to them by the public was in Sinhala or Tamil, their replies were always in Sinhala due to the absence of staff proficient in Tamil.

At the BMC it was revealed that due to encouragement by the local MP's some Tamil speaking persons bring their documents in Tamil, but as the office face difficulties in translating this information, there is an exceptionally long delay in handling complaints made in Tamil.

Thus, the result of this situation is that Tamil people are compelled to get their documents translated to Sinhala prior to taking them to the relevant officer.
However, with regard to official forms available to the public at the institutions, it was observed that all forms are available in Sinhala, Tamil and English at all the surveyed institutions. At the RHC official forms are used in very few instances such as when a

11

member of the public is required to pay a fine. Although the forms/receipts are printed in all three languages it is filled in with the relevant details by a clerk at the institution and done so always in SInhala regardless of the first language of the member of the public it is filled in and handed to. At the NBH forms are available in all three languages and are filled in by the administrative officers, the discharge cards handed over to the patients are printed in all three languages but the details are filled in, in English.

In each of the offices studied, all the higher ranking officials admitted that they are not at all satisfied with the level of implementation of the Official Languages Act and further revealed that their efforts to impress upon the relevant authorities to redress this situation has never been attended to.

2. Use of English

The use of English is marginally better than Tamil in that, even officers at the lowest level can speak a few words, and sometimes read in English, however, this does not imply that administration can be carried out in English. 40% of the staff working at the CMC is acquainted with the English language but their level of proficiency is insufficient to carry out administration in English.

It was interesting to find that at the BMC there has been a need for at least some officers to engage in English due to the need to communicate with representatives of an American NGO which is funding the BMC.

3. Knowledge of the provisions of the Official Languages Act relating to the Tamil language

The responses of the higher ranking officials to questions regarding the provisions in the OLP relating to Tamil was revealing. Those at the HPS and RHC stated that they are aware of the Act although not of the exact provisions. In the other institutions, the officers stated that they have heard of the Act but not in their official capacity. RHC and BMC higher officials stated that at least a section of the staff was aware of the provisions.

Equally revealing were the responses of the higher officials to the question of making the implementation of the provisions a high priority. While some of them declared that high priority should be given, some others expressed that some priority is needed but that the attempt would be unsuccessful. A third group questioned the need for any additional attention and stated that it is not necessary.

A noteworthy observation made by some of the officials was that those who have an understanding of both Sinhala and Tamil are very difficult to find, and that the qualified few prefer to work in non governmental organisations where they are better paid. Almost all the officials declared that, had they been fluent in all three languages they would apply for jobs with a better salary. Therefore, it is clear that the shortage of suitably qualified staff is one of the major obstacles to the effective implementation of the OLP.

4. Interaction with the Official Languages Commission (OLC) and the Official Languages Department (OLD)

A further important aspect that emerged during the course of the study is the interaction the officers had with the OLC and OLD. Only the BMC and the CMC have been in touch with the OLD. In the case of the BMC it is due to the pressure they have had from the local MPs. Others were aware of the work of the OLD, but none were aware of either the role or work of the OLC.

A demand for the implementation of the provisions could be observed only at two institutions. For example, at NBH a patient had demanded for doctors who are conversant in Tamil. At the HPS, the officers working in the station had demanded the appointment of Tamil speaking Police officers due to the difficulties they had in dealing with both Tamil complainants and the accused.

Whenever complaints were made regarding the non availability of Tamil speaking staff, the matter was reported to the superior officers but action has never been taken.

5. Initiatives taken to implement the OLP

The following observations were made on the crucial question of any attempts made by the officials of the institutions to improve their Tamil language capacity. Of the six institutions interviewed, the CMC, BMC and the HPS have each sent two officers for language training at the OLD. It was revealed that the main motivation for such training is the promise of a salary increment. However, on completion of the course it was found that it was not at all useful. Furthermore, they believe that it is not possible to motivate officers beyond the age of 45 to obtain such language training.

6. The Implementation of the OLP vs. the ethnic crisis

All the officials interviewed hold the view that the successful implementation of the OLP would mitigate the existing ethnic tensions.

5. A.3. NON-MANAGERIAL STAFF

In order to assess the knowledge and the attitudes towards the OLP, a self administered questionnaire was administered among 205 non managerial level staff of each of the selected institutions. Of the 205 persons surveyed, 42% were male and 57.1% were female. The officials are largely from the clerical service. It is at the clerical level that the work concerned is frequently transacted. Thus, the non managerial staff constitute an important sector within the public service.

Ethnic Breakdown

TABLE 5

	Frequency	%
Sinhala	195	96.1
Tamil	7	3.4
Muslim	1	0.5
Total	203	100.0

First language

TABLE 6

	Frequency	%
Sinhala	194	94.6
Tamil	9	4.4
No Response	2	1.0
Total	205	100.0

Educational Background

TABLE 7

	Frequency	%
Up to O/L	25	12.3
O/L	32	15.7
Up to A/L	39	19.1
A/L	72	35.3
Undergraduate	8	3.9
Graduate and above	28	13.7
Total	204	100.0

Level of proficiency in the English language

TABLE 8

	Read		Write		Speak	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	141	68.8	138	67.3	83	40.5
No Response	64	31.2	67	32.7	122	59.5
Total	205	100.0	205	100.0	205	100.0

Table 8 reveals the non managerial staff's level of proficiency in the English language. The trend observed in the table is that, individuals have either responded 'yes' to the question or evaded the question, possibly due to the fact that they did not want to reveal that they are not proficient in the English language. As such, 59.5% of the respondents did not respond to the question of their ability to converse in English. However, 95.5% of the respondents either strongly agree or somewhat agree that it is important to have a command of the English language in carrying out work in their institutions. (Ref. Table 9)

The importance of English at the institutions

"English is very important to work in this institution" To what extent do you agree with this statement?

TABLE 9

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	128	64.0
Somewhat Agree	63	31.5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	2.0
Somewhat Disagree	2	1.0
Strongly Disagree	3	1.5
Total	200	100.0

Interaction with the Tamil speaking public

When looking at the overall percent of the Tamil speaking public who visit the 6 institutions per day, 49.1% of the non managerial staff interviewed from the institutions express that more than 20 Tamil speaking individuals visit per day. (Ref. Table 10) Furthermore, 84.1% of the staff interviewed either strongly agree or somewhat agree that they face difficulties in interacting with the Tamil speaking public due to their language inability. (Ref. Table 11) Thus, this could indicate that the staff are incapable of effectively providing public services to the Tamil speaking public due their poor command of the Tamil language. Nevertheless, although, 84.1% admit that they face difficulties, it appears that only 31.9% of the staff use the services of a translator for their work. (Ref. Table 12) Therefore, this further confirms, that at least 52% of the staffs have been unable to effectively deliver services to the Tamil speaking public. Thus, to no surprise, 65.5% of the non managerial staff 'strongly agree' that people working in state institutions should have a command of both Sinhala and Tamil languages (Ref. Figure 1) and 96.8% reveal that a language improvement programme is 'essential' for their institution. (Ref. Table 15) Furthermore, 94.6% of the staff convey that given the opportunity, they would attempt learning a second language. (Ref. Table 16)

The total number of Tamil speaking public obtaining services per day

TABLE 10

	Frequency	%
Less than 5	29	16.0
Between 6-20	63	34.8
Between 21-50	29	16.0
More than 51above	60	33.1
Total	181	100.0

"I face problems when interacting with Tamil speaking people due their language inability"

TABLE 11

	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	91	46.7
Somewhat agree	73	37.4
Neither Agree nor disagree	9	4.6
Somewhat disagree	4	2.1
Strongly disagree	18	9.2
Total	195	100.0

Use of a Sinhala-Tamil translator

Do you use the services of a Translator for official work?

TABLE 12

	Frequency	%
Yes	60	31.9
No	118	62.8
DK/NS	9	4.8
No response	1	0.5
Total	188	100.0

"People working in government organisations must know both the Sinhala & Tamil languages"

FIGURE 1
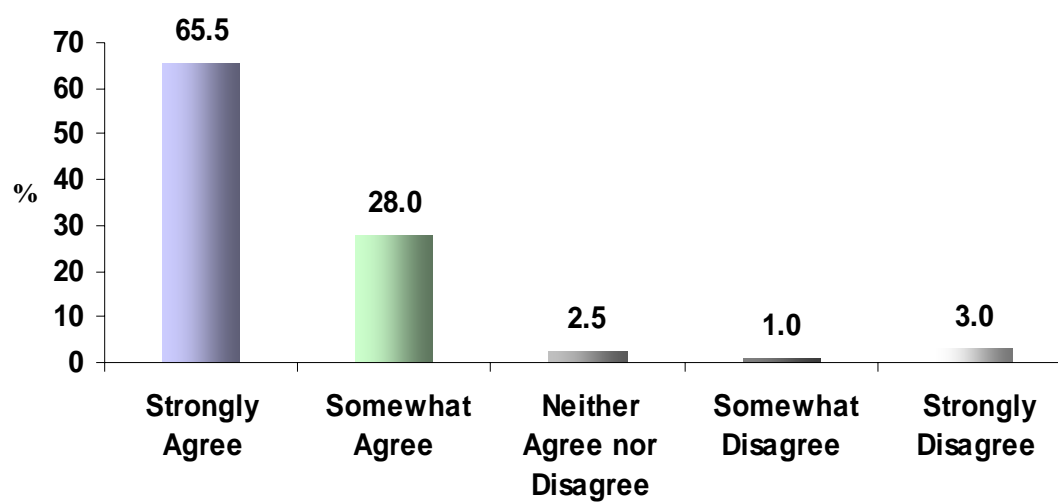
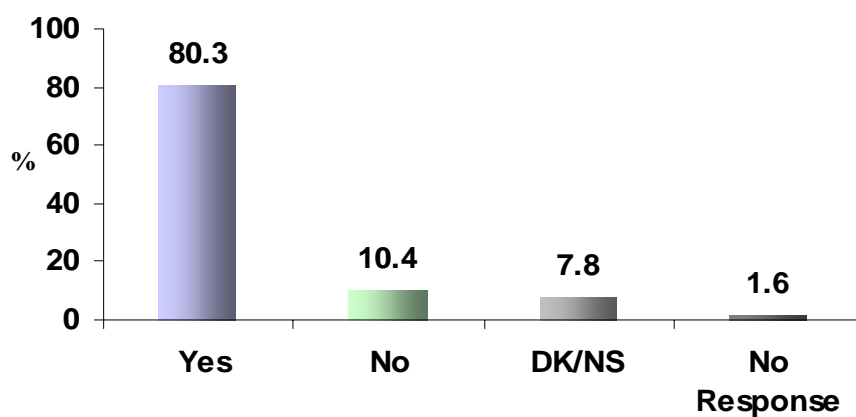## Preferred language of use when interacting with supervisors

TABLE 13

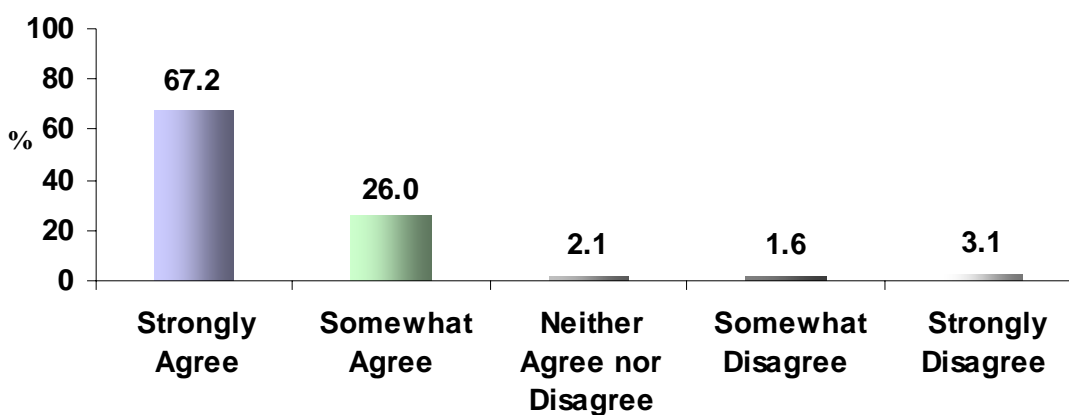| Language	Frequency	%
Tamil	2	1.0
Sinhala	176	90.3
English	17	8.7
Total	195	100.0

Awareness of the OLP

Are you aware of Official languages Policy of the country?

FIGURE 2

"The Official Languages Policy should be given higher priority in this institution"

FIGURE 3

Institutional provision for learning Tamil

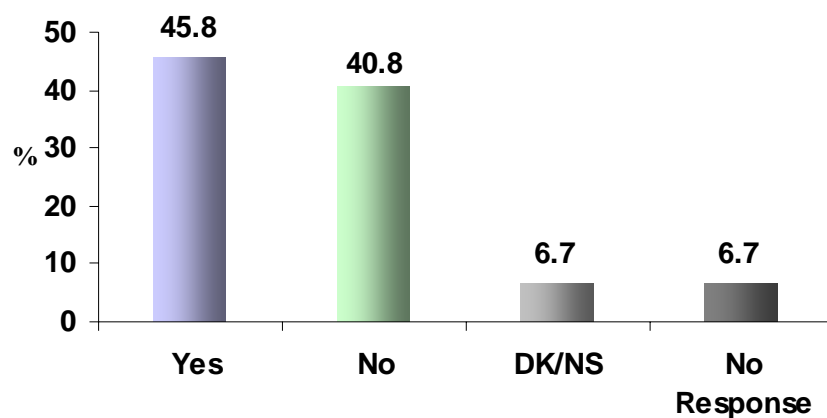Is there provision for you to sit for the promotional exams in your mother tongue?

TABLE 14

	Frequency	%
Yes	183	93.4
No	9	4.6
DK/NS	3	1.5
No response	1	0.5
Total	196	100.0

Attempts at improving the Tamil language ability of the staff

Please tell me, whether any action has been taken in the past to improve the Tamil language skills of your institution?

FIGURE 4

The need for a language improvement programme

What is your opinion, on the need for a language improvement programme for your institution?

TABLE 15

	Frequency	%
Is essential	184	96.8
Is not essential	2	1.1
DK/NS	2	1.1
No response	2	1.1
Total	190	100.0

If you are given the opportunity to learn Sinhala/Tamil, would you accept the offer?

TABLE 16

	Frequency	%
Yes	176	94.6
No	5	2.7
No response	5	2.7
Total	186	100.0

Is the knowledge of a second language (Tamil/ Sinhala) compulsory/ beneficial for promotion in your career at this institution?

TABLE 17

	Frequency	%
Yes	138	84.7
No	23	14.1
No response	2	1.2
Total	163	100.0

Has the lack of knowledge of the Tamil language ever led to a demotion/cut in payment in your/others career at this institution?

TABLE 18

	Frequency	%
Yes	12	6.3
No	168	88.0
No response	11	5.8
Total	191	100.0

Officers own assessment of the status of and the work conducted in Tamil at the institutions

The officers of the surveyed institutions were requested to make a self assessment with regard to their ability to carry out/ participate in each task listed below in both Sinhala and Tamil languages separately.

TABLE 19

Description	Tamil %		Sinhala %	
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
1. In official/department meetings	36.4	63.6	94.8	1.3
2. In letters sent to staff	36.5	63.5	95.3	2.0
3. Notices & Announcements	50.0	50.0	96.6	1.4
4.Interactions with members of the public	54.5	45.5	93.8	2.7
5. Computing facilities	36.0	64.0	67.4	18.1
6. Training manuals	47.2	52.8	83.5	7.2
7. Training courses	49.1	50.9	86.1	6.3
8. Official circulars	47.9	52.1	90.3	6.3
9. General day-to-day communication amongst colleagues of your own rank	51.9	48.1	95.4	2.6
10. When communicating with supervisors/department heads/superiors/ministry officials	38.8	61.2	93.7	2.5

5. A.4. TAMIL SPEAKING GENERAL PUBLIC

This section of the report discusses the findings regarding the nature and the status of the implementation of the OLP vis-à-vis the Tamil speaking public when receiving services from the surveyed institutions. A structured questionnaire was used for this purpose.

266 members of the Tamil speaking general public from the selected areas were surveyed through this study (Table 20) and among them 62.8% were male. The ethnic composition of the general public surveyed is: 73.3% Tamil and 26.7% Muslim.

TABLE 20

	Frequency	%
CMC	40	15.0
Thimbirigasaya	40	15.0
Badulla	40	15.0
Kandy	42	15.8
Ratnapura	39	14.7
Hatton	40	15.0
Nuwara Eliya	25	9.4
Total	266	100.0

First language of the service recipients

Of the 266 respondents, 94.7% of the respondents' first language is Tamil, 4.2% of the respondents' first language is Sinhala and 1.1% of the respondents' first language is English.

TABLE 21

	Frequency	%
Sinhala	11	4.2
Tamil	251	94.7
Engilsh	3	1.1
Total	265	100.0

Members of the public who have received their primary and secondary education in Tamil

TABLE 22

	Frequency	%
Primary	232	97.5
Secondary	6	2.5
Total	238	100.0

97.5% of the respondents state that they have received their primary education in the Tamil medium, while 2.5% of the respondents state that they received their secondary education in the Sinhala medium.

## Preferred language of use in obtaining assistance from the staff

TABLE 23

	Frequency	%
Tamil	241	90.9
Sinhala	20	7.5
English	1	0.4
Other	3	1.1
Total	265	100.0

Just over 90% of the surveyed public convey that they would prefer to communicate in Tamil when obtaining services from the public institutions.

Satisfaction with the Tamil language proficiency of the officials

When questioned with regard to the public's satisfaction with the Tamil language ability of the staff at the institutions, 77.4% of the respondents express that they are either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied.
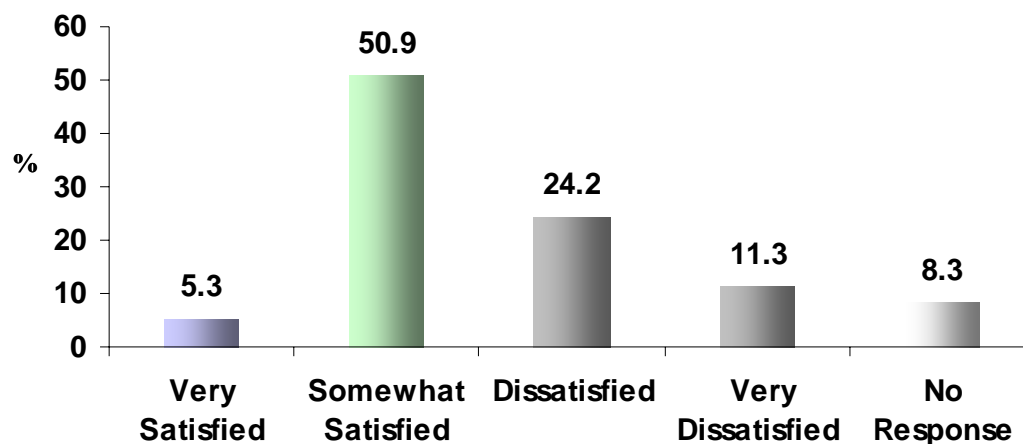
FIGURE 5
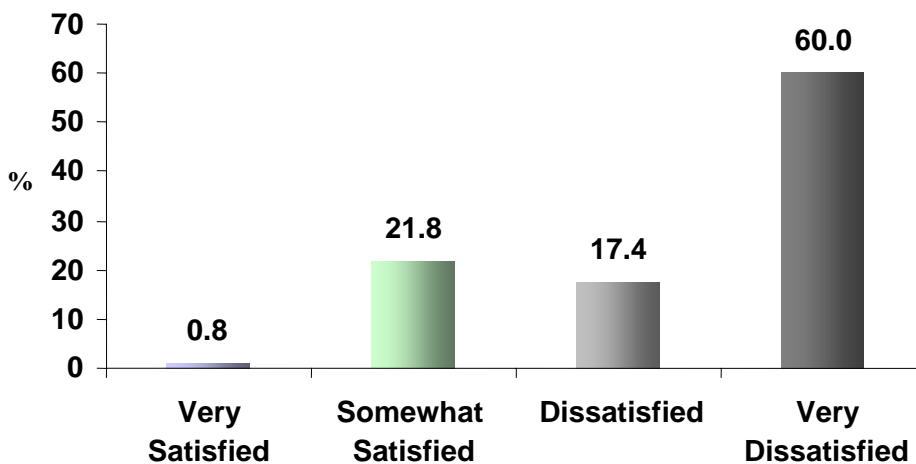
General assistance provided by the staff

When the general public was asked to what extent they are satisfied with the helpfulness of the staff when providing public services, only 5.3% of the respondents expressed that they are very satisfied.

FIGURE 6

Availability of a receptionist

TABLE 24

	Frequency	%
Yes	90	35.4
No	146	57.5
DK/NS	18	7.1
Total	254	100.0

When the general public was asked whether there is a receptionist present at the government institution to assist them with their queries, 57.5% state that there is no receptionist present.

Availability of a Tamil translator

When the respondents were questioned on whether the institution they visited provided an official Tamil translator, of the 35 individuals who responded, 32 state that there were no official translators.

TABLE 25

	Frequency	%
Yes	2	5.9
No	32	94.1
Total	34	100.0

Complaints made regarding difficulties in obtaining services in their preferred language

The respondents were asked whether they had ever registered a complaint with the higher officials about the difficulties they face due to the Tamil language inability of the staff; more than 98.5% replied that they had not.

TABLE 26

	Frequency	%
Yes	4	1.5
No	260	98.5
Total	264	100.0

Notice boards and signs displayed in the Tamil language

Those surveyed were asked if they had observed any sign boards/notices in Tamil at the institution they visited and 58.9% of the respondents state that they had observed some signboards while, 35.4% declared that they had not observed any. Figure 7, below provides a breakdown by each institution. At the NBH 100% of those surveyed had observed notice boards and the KKRO and CMC also have relatively higher figures than the other institutions. However, 97.4% of those who visited the HPS had not noticed any sign boards in Tamil, it could either be that their sign boards are only in Sinhala/English or it could be that the nature of the institution is such that they do not have general sign boards for the public.

FIGURE 7
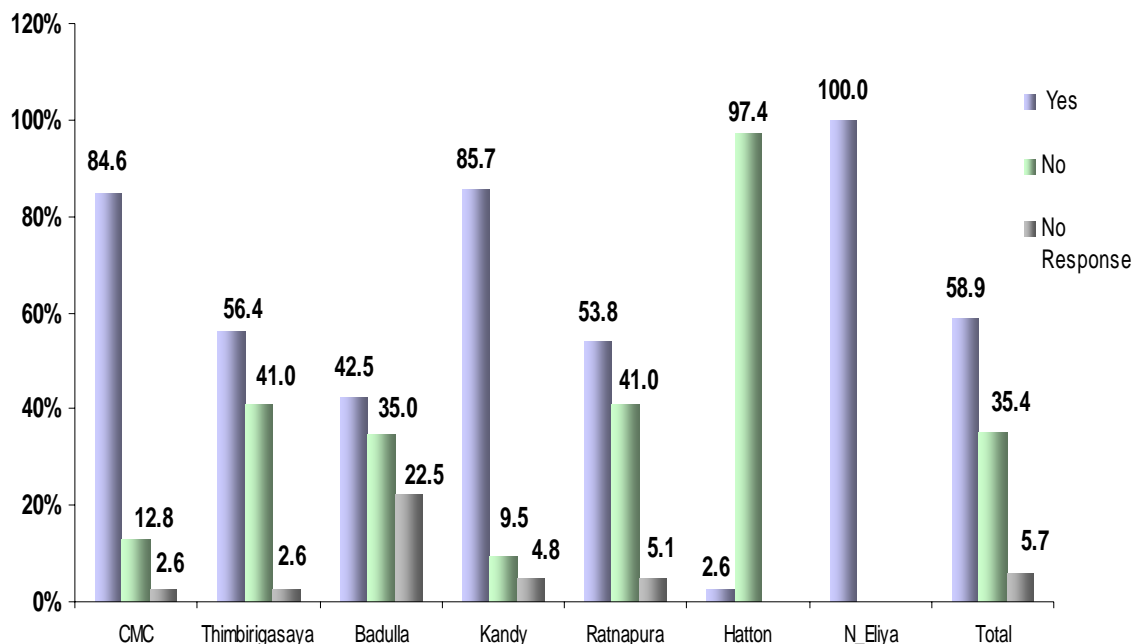
Awareness of the Official Languages Policy (OLP)

When the public was questioned on whether they are aware about the OLP, more than 66.5% state that they are not aware of it. This would mean that most members of the public are less likely to complain or express their dissatisfaction of the non implementation of the OLP.

TABLE 27

	Frequency	%
Yes	89	33.5
No	177	66.5
Total	266	100.0

Awareness of the Official Languages Department (OLD)

When the public was questioned on whether they are aware about the OLD, more than 70% state that they are not aware of it.

TABLE 28

	Frequency	%
Yes	77	28.9
No	189	71.1
Total	266	100.0

Awareness of the Official Languages Commission (OLC)

When the public was questioned on whether they are aware about the OLC, 71.6% state that they are not aware of it.

TABLE 29

	Frequency	%
Yes	75	28.4
No	189	71.6
Total	264	100.0

5. B. EDUCATION SECTOR

In response to the request made by the FCE, SI extended its study on the implementation of the OLP in public institutions to the education sector. The following findings presented in this regard are only that which relates to the implementation of the OLP in the education sector.

Due to time constraints only two schools were selected for the study. It was perceived that a selection of two leading schools in Colombo which have both Sinhala and Tamil mediums would be useful in assessing the administration of Tamil medium education within a Sinhala majority school.

Thus, this section of the study focuses on;

- The administrative framework within which the Tamil medium section operates

- The status of the Tamil medium students and teachers within a Sinhala majority school

The two schools in Colombo chosen for this study are DS Senanayake College and Isipathana College.

In each of the two schools face-to-face interviews were conducted with;

A. I) The Principal
   II) The Vice Principal

B. Tamil speaking teachers

C. Tamil speaking students

30

A. I) Principals

The principals of the two selected schools are Sinhalese, as head of the school they are in overall charge of the school's administration, including the Tamil medium section which operates under the purview of the teacher in charge.

Regarding the issue of the language used in the overall administration, both Principals disclosed that Sinhala is the administrative language.

On the question of Tamil translations of circulars etc. available for the benefit of the Tamil medium teachers, both principals reveal that circulars are available in all three languages.

On the question of affording the Tamil language the officially stipulated status, one principal pointed out that in his school, as the Sinhalese student population constitutes 75% of the total student population, it will be unreasonable to extend the same facilities to the Tamil medium students. He stated that the Tamil medium has been provided not equal status but the necessary status, and implied that in disbursing funds, the Tamil medium cannot be treated on par with the Sinhala medium. Furthermore, from his response it was clear that Tamil translations regarding administrative matters are done only when the necessity arises.

In one of the schools, a common assembly is conducted in Sinhala only for all the students and there is no Tamil translator present. In the other school, assemblies are held on the basis of the student's religion and therefore each religious group has a different assembly hall.

On the availability of information resources, both principals state that the school library is adequately stocked with books in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Both claim equal treatment with regard to access to laboratory facilities.

On the question of the OLP, both principals state that they are aware of it and have implemented it in their schools.

Commenting on the ethnic crisis, both principals were of the opinion that if a bilingual policy (Sinhalese learning Tamil and Tamils learning Sinhalese) is adopted beginning from the school level, tensions between the ethnic communities could be mitigated.

A. II) Vice Principals (VPs)

VPs are the deputy heads and they carry out the day to day administration of the school. Although both schools have two VPs each the SI team interviewed only one VP from each school. Both were Sinhalese.

With regard to information resources, the VPs of both schools revealed that there is a dearth of Tamil books in their libraries, contradicting the statement given by the Principals who state that there are adequate books available in all three languages.

Both VPs made specific reference to the absence of any training for teachers to learn the language of the other community.

With regard to the question pertaining to the ethnic crisis, they shared a similar opinion to that of the principals.

B. Teachers

6 Tamil medium teachers were interviewed from each of the 2 schools. Of the total interviewed, 9 teachers were Tamil and 3 were Muslim.

Although the principals of both schools reveal that circulars are available in all three languages, all the teachers interviewed express that they experience severe difficulties due to the non availability of official circulars and notices in the Tamil language. Neither the school, the department of education nor the ministry provide them with Tamil translations of the circulars and notices. Therefore, they have to depend on Muslim teachers to translate these documents for them. The result is that in some instances, by the time they obtain the translated copies, they find that the deadline has passed for submitting the application for courses of study etc. offered in the circular. Thus, they express that these types of incidents make them feel that they are denied of the opportunities offered to all other teachers.

The teachers further complain that official school meetings such as staff meetings, house meetings etc. is conducted exclusively in Sinhala and there are no Tamil translators available. This makes it difficult for them to make any effective contributions at these meetings.

Furthermore, they reveal that when meeting with the principal they have to be accompanied by a Tamil medium teacher who is conversant in Sinhala (although Tamil medium teachers are officially not required to be conversant in Sinhalese) as there are no official translators available.

With regard to interactions with the minor staff, the Tamil medium teachers express that they face difficulties due to the fact that the minor staff speak only in Sinhala and there are no translators available. For example, a science teacher revealed that, as the lab assistants speak only Sinhala, most often, they are dependant on their students to translate to the lab assistants for them.

Thus, it is evident that the teachers interviewed are compelled to be either dependent on their students or fellow colleagues when communicating with the school administration and the minor staff.

C. Students

Of the total 12 students who were interviewed, 7 are Muslim and 5 are Tamil. All the students are from the G.C.E. Advanced Level class.

With regard to official circulars, all the students interviewed state that invitations to attend Parents-Teachers Association meetings or any other correspondence from the school is sent to their parents in Sinhala, with no Tamil translation, although their parents are incapable of reading Sinhala.

They further complain that quite often their parents cannot enter the school premises as the person at the entrance does not understand any Tamil and their parents do not speak Sinhala.

Therefore, as illustrated above, due to the unavailability of translators at the two schools, the students interviewed and their parents appear to face difficulties.

Sinhala/Tamil language classes

At present, Sinhala/Tamil is taught to non Sinhala/Tamil students as optional languages, beginning from grade 6.

Due to the highly exam oriented system of education, the teaching of Sinhala/Tamil as optional languages has virtually become irrelevant to the needs of the students. The students interviewed state that teaching an alternative language should be made more effective by conducting a public examination. (Teaching of the other language as a 2nd language).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

■ A glaring pattern that emerged from the survey is the failure to serve the Tamil speaking members of the public in the national language of their choice.

   If the Tamil speaking members of the public are bringing Sinhala speaking persons to the office for help in transacting their business, it doesn't mean the problem is solved, it underlines the seriousness of the existing problem. (They may even have to pay someone to bring them along)

■ Do the local heads of the offices concerned have funds, the authority and the cadre vacancies to employ translators or are they assigned translators from the head office?

   Perhaps the cadre of translators and their salary scales should be   significantly increased after a cadre assessment is made by the Commissioner of Official Languages. The salary scales should be adequate to attract the required cadre into the public services.

■ A root cause of the problem is the persistent non recruitment of Tamil speaking persons into the public service. In every office there must be a minimum cadre of Tamil speaking and Sinhala speaking officers. This should be worked out by the Language Commission in consultation with the Ministry of Public Administration and if necessary a decision should be made to recruit, as required, Tamil speaking or Sinhalese speaking cadres supernumerary (i.e. in excess of cadre vacancies) to serve the immediate need. Fresh recruitment thereafter could be suspended till this excess cadre disappears in due course through retirement, resignations, etc. and, when resumed, should be compatible with the language specific cadre requirements.

■ It appears that there is no penalty attached to failure to provide services in Tamil. Heads of offices at all levels should be clearly instructed that they are responsible for providing services in both languages and that they will be penalised for any failure in this respect. At least, the head would have to provide a good explanation for any shortcomings and come up with effective steps to resolve the problem within a given time period. If unable to provide a good explanation for current failure or to take effective steps to provide services in both languages within the said time period, a black mark should be placed on the officer's personal file. Appointments and promotions should be subject to satisfactory performance in this respect.

■ The attitude of the two school principals is not acceptable. Tamil teachers and students are discriminated against and humiliated when they are expected to attend school assemblies conducted exclusively in Sinhala. Parents too are handicapped and humiliated when information relating to the schooling of their children is available only in Sinhala.

Some of the fault may lie with the Ministry of Education which sends out circulars to bilingual schools in one language only. It is the duty of the Ministry to comply with the Official Language Policy of the State, and that of the Principals of bilingual schools to insist that the Ministry complies with that policy in relation to their schools.

■ The language training programmes now provided do not seem to be successful. Gaining proficiency in mid career is difficult. It requires motivation and very hard work. One salary increment is insufficient as a motivation to gain adequate proficiency in another language. There should be greater incentives to learn another language to a level of proficiency that the person is able to work in that language.

Passing language examinations is by itself, no use if the officers cannot actually work in that language. Appointments, promotions and preference in transfers should depend on officers being able and willing to work in two, preferably three languages and this factor should be worked into the entire scheme of incentives and penalties throughout the public services.

■ The far reaching recommendations (copy attached) made in the Language Audit of 30 December 1998, have not been implemented by the Commissioner of Official Languages. If those recommendations had been implemented, the problem would have considerably eased by now. Those recommendations are yet relevant.

7. ANNEXE

7.1. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TAMIL SPEAKING PUBLIC

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#e0e0e0; padding:10px; text-align:center;">

LANGUAGE ASSESMENT STUDY
NOVEMBER 2005
CONDUCTED BY-
SOCIAL INDICATOR
105, FIFTH LANE, COLOMBO 03,
TP: 2370473

</div>

INTERVIEWER:

NAME OF INTERVIEWER:

I here by certify that all information provided here is true and accurate and has been obtained from the respondent as instructed.

_____
Signature of Interviewer

INTERVIEWER: ALL STATEMENTS IN BOLD LETTERING ARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOU AND SHOULD NOT BE READ OUT TO THE RESPONDENT.

Good morning /afternoon/ evening. My name is _____ and I represent Social Indicator, a research organization that conducts independent research on social issues. We are currently conducting a study to assess the implementation of the language policy in the country and to formulate recommendations for future reform that could ensure language pluralism and the parity of status We would appreciate it if you could spend some of your valuable time to answer a few questions on this issue.

NAME OF INSTITUTION:

SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender
    1. Male
    2. Female

2. Ethnicity

    1. Sinhala
    2. Tamil
    3. Muslim
    4. Indian Tamil
    5. Burgher

3. First Language

    1. Sinhala
    2. Tamil
    3. English

4. Age (Specify)   ……………………….

5. Occupation of the respondent

1. Executives, Managerial and Administrative Professionals	8. Housewife
2. Professionals	9. Retired
3. Technicians and Associate Professionals	10. Business
4. Clerk	11. Self employed
5. Travel, Restaurant, Protective service workers and Sales workers	12. Elementary Occupation
6. Agricultural and fisheries workers	13. Unemployed
7. Students	14. Other

6. Educational Background of the respondent

1. Cannot read and write	
2. Literate but no formal education	
3. Grade 5-9	
4. Up to ordinary Level	
5. Ordinary Level	
6.Up to Advance Level	
7. Advance Level	
8. Undergraduate	
9[1]. Graduate and above	

SECTION II: PUBLIC INTERACTION WITH INSTITUTION

7. Can you please tell me in which medium you obtained your primary and secondary education?

Language	Primary	Secondary
Tamil		
Sinhala		
English		
Other		

8. When you visit a government institution / organization to obtain a service / information, which language do you prefer to use?
>   1. Tamil
>   2. Sinhala
>   3. English
>   4. Other

9. To what extent are you satisfied with the language proficiency of the employees of the present institution?

Language	1.very satisfied	2.Somewhat Satisfied	3.Dissatisfied	4. Very dissatisfied	98	99
Tamil						
Sinhala						
English						
Other						

10. To what extent are you satisfied with the assistance you received from the officials in this institution?

    1. Very satisfied
    2. Satisfied
    3. Dissatisfied
    4. Very dissatisfied
    5. No response

11. In your experience, have you ever seen a receptionist in this institution to assist the service recipient/ the public?

    1. Yes
    2. No (Go to Question 15)
    3. DK/NS (Go to Question 15)
  99. No response (Go to Question 15)

12. Which language do you use to fill up the forms/applications in this institution?
          1. Tamil
          2. Sinhala
          3. English

13. When you fill up the forms/applications, do you receive assistance from any one?

          1. Yes
          2. No (Go to question number 22)

14. Did you have to pay for the assistance you received?
          1. Yes
          2. No

15. Please tell me whether in this institution they have an Official translator?
        1. Yes
        2. No

16. In the past have you ever made any attempt to complain to higher officials about the problems you face because of the lack of language proficiency of the staff?
        1. Yes
        2. No

17. If the answer is "Yes", please tell me whether the higher officials had taken any action to solve those problems?
        1. Yes
        2. No

SECTION III: PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL LANGAUGE POLICY (OLP)

18. Are you aware of the Official language policy of Sri Lanka?
        1. Yes
        2. No

19.   If the answer is "Yes", how would you assess your knowledge in OLP?
        1. I am an expert in OLP
        2. I am somewhat knowledgeable about OLP
        3. I have only heard about OLP but do not have any knowledge on the
           Issue

20. Are you aware of the Official Language Department?

        1. Yes
        2. No

21. Are you aware of the Official language commission?
        1. Yes
        2. No

22. In this institution, have you seen any public notice boards for the convenience of the service recipient?

        1. Yes
        2. No
        3. No response

7.2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL STAFF

LANGUAGE ASSESMENT STUDY
NOVEMBER 2005
CONDUCTED BY
SOCIAL INDICATOR
105, FIFTH LANE, COLOMBO 03,
TP: 2370473

INTERVIEWER:

NAME OF INTERVIEWER:

I here by certify that all information provided here is true and accurate and has been obtained from the respondent as instructed.

_____
Signature of Interviewer

INTERVIEWER: ALL STATEMENTS IN BOLD LETTERING ARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOU AND SHOULD NOT BE READ OUT TO THE RESPONDENT.

Good morning /afternoon/ evening. My name is _____ and I represent Social Indicator, a research organization that conducts independent research on social issues. We are currently conducting a study to assess the implementation of the language policy in the country and to formulate recommendations for future reform that could ensure language pluralism and the parity of status We would appreciate it if you could spend some of your valuable time to answer a few questions on this issue.

Background Information

Name of respondent ………………………………………………………

1. Gender

   1. Male
   2. Female

2. Ethnicity

   1. Tamil
   2. Sinhala
   3. Muslim
   4. Burgher
   5. Other (Specify) ………………….

3. First Language
   1. Sinhala
   2. Tamil
   3. English
   4. Other (Specify)

4. Age (Specify) ……………………….

5. Occupation of the respondent ………………………………………….

6. Educational Background of the respondent

1. Up to ordinary level	
2. Ordinary level	
3. Up to advanced level	
4. Advanced level	
5. Undergraduate	
6. Graduate and above	

7. Could you please tell me the language skill you have?

Languages	Read	Write	Speak
Tamil			
Sinhala			
English			
Tamil & Sinhala			
Tamil & English			
Sinhala & English			
Tamil,Sinhala & English			

8. "People working in government organizations must know both Sinhala & Tamil languages"
Could you please
    Tell   me to what extent do you agree with this statement?

    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Somewhat agree
    3. Neither Agree nor disagree
    4. Somewhat disagree
    5. Strongly disagree

9. "English is very important to work in this institution" Could you please tell me to what extent
do you agree with this statement?

    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Somewhat agree
    3. Neither Agree nor disagree
    4. Somewhat disagree
    5. Strongly disagree

10. Which language would you prefer to use when interacting with your supervisors?

    1. Tamil Language
    2. Sinhala Language
    3. English Language

11. Please tell me which language you prefer them to use when they interact with you?
    1. Tamil Language
    2. Sinhala Language
    3. English Language

12. Are you aware of Official Language Policy of the country?

      1. Yes
      2. No
      3. DK/NS
    99. No response

13. "Official Language Policy should be made a high priority in this institution" To what extent do you agree with this statement?

      1. Strongly Agree
      2. Somewhat agree
      3. Neither Agree nor disagree
      4. Somewhat disagree
      5. Strongly disagree

14. How satisfied you are with the internal use of Tamil and Sinhala in the following areas in this institution?

	Tamil		Sinhala		
Performances	1.Satisfied	2.dissatisfied	3. Satisfied	4. dissatisfied	5. No response
1. In official/department meeting	1	2	3	4	5
2. In letter sent to staff	1	2	3	4	5
3. Notices & Announcements	1	2	3	4	5
4. Communication with the members of the public	1	2	3	4	5
5. Computing facilities	1	2	3	4	5
6. Training manuals	1	2	3	4	5
7. Training courses	1	2	3	4	5
8. Officials circular	1	2	3	4	5
9. General day-to-day communication amongst colleagues of your own rank	1	2	3	4	
10. When communication with supervisors/department head/superior/ministry officials	1	2	3	4	5

15. As part of your official duties approximately how many people come to seek assistance, in a given day?

1. Less than	5	
2 Between	6-20	
3. Between	21-50	
4. More than	51above	

16. Please tell me approximately how many Tamil speaking people visit to your institution on a given day?

1. Less than	5	
2. Between	6– 20	
3. Between	21-50	
4. More than	51 above	

17. "I face problems when interacting with Tamil speaking people due to their language inability" To what extent do you agree with this statement?
      1. Strongly Agree
      2. Somewhat agree
      3. Neither Agree nor disagree
      4. Somewhat disagree
      5. Strongly disagree

18. Do you use the service of a Translator for official work?

      1. Yes
      2. No
      3. DK/NS
    99. No response

19. Please tell me, whether any action has been taken in the past to improve the language skills of your institution?

      1. Yes
      2. No
      3. DK/NS
    99. No response

20. Please tell me, whether any action has been taken in the past to improve the language skills of your institution?

     1. Yes
     2. No
     3. DK/NS
    99. No response

21. What is your opinion on the need for a language improvement programme in your institution & its impact?
     1. is essential
     2. is not essential
     3. Don't Know/Not sure
    99. No response

 22. If you are provided with opportunity to learn Sinhala /Tamil would you like to   join?

     1. Yes
     2. No
    99. No response

23. Is the knowledge of a second language (Tamil/ Sinhala) compulsory/ beneficial for promotion in your career in this institution?

     1. Yes
     2. No
    99. No response

24. Has the lack of knowledge in Tamil ever led to a demotion / cut in payments in your / others career in this institution?

     1. Yes
     2. No
    99. No response

7.3. PROTOCOL FOR HIGH RANKING OFFICERS AT THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

1. Please tell me the number of staff in your organization?

2. Please tell me the number of staff able to work in Tamil (Speak/Read/Read & Write)?

3. Please tell me the average number of citizens requesting service in Tamil?

4. Please tell me in which languages official letters & communiqués sent to the public fro0m your institution?

5. Are you satisfied about your staff member's language skills?

6. Do you agree that the people working here SHOULD know both Sinhala & Tamil languages?

7. Is English important for the work of your office?

8. When you interact with your staff what language you prefer to use with them?

9. Are the forms to be filled in by the public in their mother tongue?

10. In your institution do you use the service of a translator for official work?

11. Are you aware of the official language policy (OLP) in the country?

12. Are you practicing the OLP in your institution?

13. Do you think that implementation of OLP should be made a high priority in this institution?

14. To what extent your staff members are aware of OLP?

15. What are the difficulties you are facing when implement the OLP in your institution?

16. Are you giving any training programme or awareness programme regarding OLP?

17. Are you in touch with official language commission?

18. Are you in touch with official language department?

19. Is your organization taking part in official language commission's workshops/seminars/meetings?

20. When public complaint to you about the problems they are facing due to the language inability what will be your reaction for that?

21. Have you ever received any complaints from your staff reading communication gab with public?

22. When you get complaints regarding languages are you informing the official language commission about the complaint?

23. 0How satisfied are you with the internal use of Tamil in this organization?

24. What procedure / steps do you take when you receive complaints / suggestions etc, in Tamil?

25. If your staff need further training on language skill what are the most important areas that need improvement?

26. Is the knowledge of Tamil / Sinhala compulsory / beneficial for salary increment in your organization?

27. Has any action been taken in the past to improve the language skills of your staff members?

28. If there is an opportunity provided to teach Sinhala/Tamil to your staff, what specific support could you extent to this process?

29. Have you ever inspected by the official language commission regarding OLP?

30. Have you ever asked by the public to practice the OLP in your institution?

31. Have you ever asked by the public to have staff from Tamil speaking community?

32. Have you ever questioned by the public for not having staff from Tamil speaking community?

7.4. PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Do you know about the Official Language Policy of the country?

2. Are you getting any special language programme from your school?

3. Which language you are using when you communicate with Sinhala/Tamil students?

4. Are you getting chance to interact with Sinhala/Tamil students more often?

5. Do you have any cultural exchange programme in your school?

6. Do you think the students in this institution are very fluent in Sinhala and Tamil?

7. What are the steps do you think that school administration should take to build a better relationship between Sinhala and Tamil students?

8. Are you satisfied in the way which the administration is handling the language issues in the school?

9. Do you think that both a languages in this institution are treated equally by the administration?

10. To improve Tamil/Sinhala languages in the school what are the steps do you think the administration should take?

11. How often you get a chance to interact with Tamil/Sinhala students?

12. Out side the school do you go for any special classes to learn Sinhala/Tamil?

13. What are the advantages of studying in a bilingual school?

14. Can you please describe the structure of the school?

15. How they handle with parents?

16. Who is in charge for both the language sections?

17. In which language they are conducting the assembly?

18. At school, house meetings and general meetings are conducted in which language?

19. How many Tamil prefects are there?

20. Do you face any problem in communicating with prefects?

21. Are they able to hear your problems well?

22. Do you face any problems when you communicate with lab assistants?

23. Do you face any problems in the computer lab?

24. Are you satisfied with the library service in your school?

25. What are the common problems you are facing due to language inability?

7.5. LANGUAGE AUDIT – SEGMENT FINAL REPORT – 30 DECEMBER 1998

AN AUDIT ON THE USE OF TAMIL AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN PROVINCES OUTSIDE THE NORTH EAST

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank in full measure the heads of the institutions audited and their staff for the unstinting cooperation given to the Project Director and the Audit Team, the staff at Marga for their wholehearted support, and the Chairman Official Languages Commission and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Marga Institute for their guidance and advice.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

English was the official language of Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon under British rule and for eight years after independence in 1948. Despite a century and a half of British rule, at no time did even 10% of the population enjoy English literacy. The large majority of those who spoke Sinhala and /or Tamil but not English were severely disadvantaged during the British period and also in the early years after independence. In terms of the Official Language Act of 1956, Sinhala replaced English as the only official language. Sinhala speakers gained from this change, but Tamil speakers remained disadvantaged in access to the public services and in employment in the state sector. The status of Sinhala as the only official language was embedded in the 1972 Constitution, and again in the 1978 Constitution. Tamil was not elevated to the status of an all island official language till the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1987; its status was further enhanced with the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment in 1988.

Sinhala and Tamil are now official, administrative and court languages, and English is a link language, but the de jure evaluation of the status of the Tamil language has not been matched by de facto equality. In some respects the imbalance and disabilities are greater than ever before. We need to set out the status of the Tamil language in law and public policy, and to evaluate the implementation of these laws and policies.

Originally, in terms of Articles 18 and 19 of the Constitution Sinhala and Tamil were the National Language, Sinhala was the only Official Language, but the Thirteenth Amendment made Tamil also an Official Language and English the link Language throughout the island.

In terms of Articles 20 and 21, Sinhalese and Tamil are the languages of Parliament, the Provincial Council and all local authorities, and also the media of education. Even at the tertiary level, if any course of education is provided, using state resources, in one national language, it is required that a similar course must be provided in the other.

There is ambiguity in Article 22 (1) which begins the declaration that "Sinhala and Tamil shall be the languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka", but the same sentence goes on to specify, "and Sinhala shall be the language of administration and be used for the maintenance of public records and the transaction of all business by public institutions of all the provinces of Sri Lanka other than the Northern and Eastern Provinces where Tamil shall be so used."

Despite the apparently unambiguous assertion, in the first clause, of the status of Sinhala and Tamil everywhere, the rest of the sentence implies that there are qualifications to Sinhala being the language of administration in "the Northern and Eastern Provinces' and Tamil being the language of administration in "all the provinces of Sri Lanka other than the Northern and Eastern Province." The

third part of this article provides foe Presidential Directives for 'both Sinhala and Tamil or a language other than the language used as the language of administration in the province… to be used as the language of administration of 'any unit comprising a division of an Assistant Government Agent."

Notwithstanding the above qualifications, Articles 22 (2) and (3) unambiguously affirm the right of every person other than an official acting in his official capacity :

a) To receive communications from and to communicate and transact business with, any official in his capacity, in Sinhala, Tail or English.

b) (if the law recognizes his right) to inspect or to obtain copies of or extracts from any official register, record, publication or other document, to obtain a copy of, or an extract from such register, record, publication or other document, or a translation thereof, as the case may be, in Sinhala, Tamil or English.

c) (where a document is executed by any official for the purpose of being issued to him,) to obtain such document or a translation thereof, in Sinhala, Tamil or English.

As set out Article 22 (4), Provincial Councils and local authorities also have the right to communicate with state agencies and to receive communication in their own languages. In all cases (state institutions, Provincial Councils and local authorities) they may also communicate with each other in English.

As provided in Article 22 (5), the language of examination for admission to the Public Service, Judicial Service, Provincial Public Service, Local Government

Service or any public institution may be Sinhala, Tamil or English, with the proviso that the recruit :

> May be required to acquire a sufficient knowledge of Tamil or Sinhala, as the case may be, within a reasonable time after admission to such service of public institution where such knowledge is reasonably necessary for the discharge of his duties:

> Provided that a person may be required to have sufficient knowledge of Sinhala or Tamil as a condition for admission to any such service or public institution where no function of the office or employment for which he is recruited can be discharged otherwise than with a sufficient knowledge of such language.

In terms of Article 23 (1) and (2) all laws and subordinate legislation, Orders, Proclamations, rules, by-laws, regulations and notifications made or issued under any written Law other than by Provincial Council or a local authority, and the Gazette shall be published in Sinhala and Tamil together with a translation thereof in English.

The provision for the language of the courts as set out in Article 24 (1) and following subsections is essentially similar to that set out in Article 22 (1) and following subsections for the following languages.

The Constitution also affirms, in Article 26, the integrity of citizenship of Sri Lanka, i.e., there is only one category of citizenship irrespective of whether it was acquired by descent or by registration.

Under the Directive Principles of State Policy and fundamental duties, Articles 27 (5) and (6) read as follows :

27 (5) The State shall strengthen national unity by promoting co-operation and mutual confidence among all sections of the People of Sri Lanka, including the racial, religious, linguistic and other groups, and shall take effective steps in the fields of teaching, education and information in order to eliminate discrimination and prejudice.

27 (6) The State shall ensure equality of opportunity to citizens, so that no citizen shall suffer any disability on the ground of race, religion, language, caste, sex. Political opinion or occupation.

The smooth and effective implementation of the language policy of the State primarily and directly monitored by the Department of Official Languages functioning under the direction of the Ministry of Justice, and the Official Languages Commission functioning under direction of the President. In general the Ministry of Public Administration functions central agency for the recruitment of personnel, the Department of Official Languages as facilitator providing comprehensive language training facilities for the personnel, and Commission as a agency exercising vigilance in respect of compliance with the language policy of the state.

The various constitutional and administrative reforms may appear to suggest that implementation of Tamil language is in place and working well. Unfortunately the reason is very different. The frustrating experience of the Tamil speaking people in secured equality in respect of the official status of

their language and in access to the public service and public sector employment has continued. Obstacles are acknowledged in para 5 of 31.3.1992 of the Official Languages Commission. The fact that non-compliance with language provision is punishable is stated in the Official Language Commission circular there has been no effective follow-up on compliance.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

It is in this context that the Chairman, Official Languages Commission, using the power vested him by the Official Languages Commission ACT No.18 of 1991, took steps to review and access the current status pertaining to the use of Tamil as an official language through commissioning language audits in selected Government institutions in areas outside the North East to ascertain " the manner in which Tamil is being used, the shortcomings, the reasons therefore and the nature of remedial measures that should be undertaken".

SCOPE OF AUDIT

The Chairman, Official Languages Commission, selected a total of 37 offices for to sample surveys (language audits segments A & B) and sought the services of Marga Institute to carry out the first of these surveys (segment A) covering 16 offices within the span of 3 months commencing late September 1998. These offices were selected from among those situated outside the North East but serving areas with high concentrations of Tamil speaking populations and having extensive interaction with the citizenry.

Marga Institute appointed a team comprising a Project Director, four Consultants and four Investigators 9listed in Annexe V) to conduct the audit.

The audit encompassed investigation of a wide range of governmental and municipal institutions selected by the Chairman, official Languages Commission. The institutions selected had extensive interaction with the citizenry and were situated in areas in which significant numbers of Tamil speaking people resided. A list of the institutions appears in Annexe II.

The categories of citizenry embraced ranged from motor vehicle owners and drivers, victims of crime, the sick, the indigent, pensioners, registrants, employees and employer to ratepayers and house builders. The nature of transactions involved ranged from the making of various kinds of applications, reporting crime obtaining poor relief, seeking health care, sending telegrams, obtaining information, licenses, certificates and extracts, to making appeals.

METHODOLOGY

Marga Institute undertook this assignment with effect from 28th September, UVA and Sabragamuwa provinces. Initially two questionnaires were prepared and sent out for completion and return, one to the police stations and the second to the other governmental institutions. Thereafter visits were arranged, first to the institutions situated in Colombo and then to those in the outstations. At these visits preliminary discussions were held with the heads of the institutions, who were briefed on the purpose of the audit. At the bigger institutions, branch office that had the greatest interaction with the public were selected for investigation, whilst the smaller institutions were looked into in toto. 'Liaison' officers appointed by heads of the offices assisted the audit team in carrying out their investigations.

The full team headed by the Project Director visited the office of the Motor Traffic Department, the Labour Secretariat, the Colombo Divisional Secretariat, and the Colombo Municipal Secretariat. This followed by a team of three members led by Mr K Manikavasakar, Consultant, to Wattala Post office in late October 1998.

Information was gathered through observations, interviews and test checks. Questionnaires were checked and doubts clarified. Information gathered was collated. After holding several brainstorming sessions individual reports were prepared on each institution audited. An Interim Report was formulated subsequently, based on the five language Audits carried out in October before the outstation visits. These were sent to the Chairman, Official Languages Commission, and a copy of the relevant departmental report was sent to each departmental head.

In the first week of November the Consultants and Investigators split into two teams, one headed by Messrs P. Balasingham and Mahesan Selvaratnam, the other by Messrs K.Manikawasaker and S.S.Navaratnarajah, and visited the institutions on the schedule outside the Western Provision. These surveys were completed within a week, but there were additional visits to the Colombo offices. There was also follow up, by fax and over the telephone, with all the offices visited to collect whatever required data that could not be obtained when those offices were visited. Reports were prepared on every office covered and these too were sent to the departmental heads concerned as well as to the Chairman, Official Language Commission.

Copies of the Interim Report and the reports on every institution visited are annexed. Tabular summaries of a few relevant parameters in respect of the offices audited are presented in Tables 1, 2 & 3. These Tables back-up our

findings that, overall, the level of implementation of the Tamil Language provisions of the law is very low.

SOME SALIENT FACTS

The team observed that there were low levels of awareness and compliance I respect of the Tamil language policy of the state from low priority given to such compliance. This was evident from several factors including the following :

a) These have been chronic shortages of Tamil speaking cadres and no serious attempt appears to have been made to correct this deficiency in any of the offices visited, although they all served large numbers of Tamil speaking people. In consequence, Tamil speaking persons are often compelled to transact their business in Sinhala 9sometimes through interpreters whom they bring along) or, in a few cases, in English.

b) Even officers who had passed Tamil proficiency examinations and drawn incentive allowances appeared to be mostly unable to work in Tamil, particularly in relation to correspondence.

c) Basic equipment such as typewriters were not available or were in short supply in many offices. In some offices there were one or two Tamil typewriters but no Tamil typists.

d) Even simple and low cost measures such as having all name and direction boards and notices in Sinhala and Tamil had not been taken in most offices.

e) None of the offices had a complete set of the legal documents and circulars issued by the Ministry of Public Administration and the Official Languages Commission.

f) Several heads of offices did not respond in time to the questionnaire sent, although during the visit there was very good cooperation extended to the team everywhere.

LACK OF CENTRL DIRECTION

The responsibility for this poor state of affairs has to be shared by the Ministry of Public Administration, all the line Ministries and the individual departments. The team found no evidence of any sensitivity to Tamil language competency in recruitment or of any significant step taken to ensure compliance with the relevant state policy. The team came across very few circulars on this subject issued by the Ministry of Public Administration in the last 11 years.

Even in those areas outside the North East in which a large percentage of the population is Tamil speaking, only a negligible proportion of the staff in many of the Government institutions are fully proficient in Tamil. Consequently, when the Tamil speaking people encounted delays and unfavorable responses when they sought to transact business in Tamil, they switched to the language or languages used by the public servant to ensure the transaction of business. They also lost the will to protest. Any undesirable practice which is not checked in time may become entrenched. It is in this context that the use of Tamil in many government offices virtually disappeared and the officials concerned escaped the need to work in Tamil, contrary to the laws of the land and policies of successive governments.

A large majority of the Tamil speaking people have been educated in the Tamil medium. They would very much prefer to use Tamil in official dealings just as the majority of Sinhala speaking people opt to use Sinhala in all official dealings. It is the duty of the public service to serve the public in the language of the latter, and not that of the public to be prepared to transact business in the language of the public servant.

STATISTICAL DATA

There is no statistical classification by mother tongue available either of the population served by an office or of the staff of that office e. We do have statistical classification by ethnicity of the populations of AGA Divisions and Municipal and Urban Council areas as at the 1981 census (the last available) projected up to 1986 and of the office staff as at the time of the visit of the language audit team (last quarter of 1998). We have used this data, grouping the Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil and Sri Lanka Moor populations together as Tamil speaking and all other populations together as Sinhalese speaking for the purpose of linguistic classification of the office staff and the population served by that office.

Consequently, there will be inaccuracies in our classification (e.g., a minority of Sri Lankan Moors may be Sinhala speaking, some of the other minorities may be Tamil speaking and that may have been many changes in the population composition of many areas since 1981, but the level of accuracy of the data w do have is sufficient to warrant or analysis, findings and recommendations. The relevant data complied by us is set out in (Tables 4 & 5).

It is noted that of the total cadre in all the offices listed above, the proportion of the staff fully proficient in Tamil is 5.88%, and that I most offices it is much less. Even these percentages may understate the problem elsewhere in the seven provinces in that the offices selected for the audit are all situated in areas of high concentration of Tamil speaking population, and it may be presumed that proportionately there are more Tamil speaking officers in these offices than in the offices located in areas in which the Tamil speaking population is lower. It appears that Tamil language capacity in government offices is utterly inadequate almost everywhere outside the North East.

LACK OF COMPLIANCE

Some heads of institutions were unaware of the circular No.28/97 dated 27.1.98 issued by the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs and Plantation Industries on the subject 'Delegation of responsibility for implementing the Official Languages Policy'. There appears to have been no effective follow-up after this circular was issued. The Ministry, I this circular, while conceding that the major constraints are lack of qualified staff and institutional arrangements, has placed responsibility on the Heads of Departments, without giving any consideration to providing the staff and other facilities required to implement the provisions of the law.

Many heads or local heads of departments follow the more comfortable path of making ad hoc arrangements as and when this need arises, and may find it convenient to go with the existing system rather than provide for the use of the Tamil language in the administration. Providing for the use of Tamil would result in an increase in the workload of the office, and also necessitate more Tamil speaking staff and equipment. Apart from lack of proficient staff at all levels, one of the main problems has been a disregard of relevant Government

instructions issued from time to time. For instance, the cabinet decided on 02.05.1991 that forms of all government institutions should be made available in three languages Sinhala, Tamil and English on the same paper and that all old forms not satisfying this criteria should be withdrawn. The Secretaries of all Ministries and Provincial Councils were held responsible for implementing this decision. It is disappointing to note that even after the lapse of nearly 7 years, out of 148 forms available with the Government printer only 30 are available in all three languages.

SOME CRITICAL ISSUES

A noticeable feature of our recommendations below is that we avoid proposing what may appear to be the obvious and easy remedy f re-employing retired Tamil speaking public servants so as to immediately ease the shortage of Tamil speaking capability in the public services. We avoid this for several reasons, the chief of which is that such palliatives tend to take root, generating lobbies that ensure that "immediate, interim" extends into medium and long term and, in the end, contributes to aborting any significant restructuring. Moreover, even if the objectives of full bilingualism and trilingualism are not achievable in the near future, movement towards these objectives must begin now. Any measure that delays the required restructuring, even temporarily, is therefore counter productive in the long run.

Before we go on to the recommendations, we need to examine some critical issues, particularly in relation to the central recommendation we make below (see short term and long term measures) regarding the linguistic composition of the public service s in the various offices all over the Island. We explored the alternatives of concentrating Tamil speaking cadres in the North East, and Sinhala speaking cadres in the other seven provinces (as at present) as against

achieving prescribed minimum levels of linguistic mix in every office from Point Pedro to Dondra Head. We opted for the latter for reasons given below.

We first need to examine the implications of the lack of direction by the President under Section 22 (1) of the constitution that a second or third language should be an additional language of administration and public record in an A.G.A. division. The disabilities arising from one's mother tongue not being used as a language of administration and public record are very clear. If affects not only day to day administrative transactions but also very special activities such as the registration of births, deaths and marriages and the conduct of court cases. While it may not always be pragmatic to fully meet the linguistic requirements of very small minorities, where the minority language of that division is spoken by a significant proportion (say, over 12 ½ % of the population of that division) the case for such declaration is very strong.

All the offices covered by the audit area in A.G.A. divisions that qualify for a Presidential directive under section 22 (1) of the Constitution. Most A.G.A divisions in the Trincomalee, Kandy, Matale, Nuwaraeliya, Badulla and Ratnapura districts also fall into this category. But Most A.G.A divisions elsewhere would not, i.e., they may be mostly over 87½ % of one language group. Of the 238 A.G.A divisions that existed at the time of the 1981 census, 126 were over 871/2 of Sinhalese speaking, 59 others were over 50% Sinhala speaking, 42 were over 871/2 Tamil speaking and 11 others were over 50% Tamil speaking, in terms of our recommendation: of the 238 A.G.A divisions, 126 would be administered mostly in Sinhala, 42 mostly in Tamil, and the remaining 70 fully bilingually.

We have recommended significant language capacity even in A.G.A division in which the population proportion of the language concerned is less than 12½ %.

But what if the proportion is very small, say, 2%? While the Constitution guarantees the same rights even to very small minorities, there may be inescapable restrictions in respect of some transactions on account of pragmatic considerations. For example, though registration of births, deaths and marriages and the conduct of court cases may be in a different languages, the entitlement to certified copies of certificates, transaction facilities in the courts and the transaction of official business in one's own language cannot be denied. But full language capability may not be available everywhere, and there maybe delays. So long as such services are available in the language of choice of the member of the public and so long as the rules are the same everywhere and apply equally to the Sinhala and Tamil languages, there should be no problem. But this requires that significant capabilities in both languages, and in English too, are available in every office in the Island.

Problems may arise if such services are not available as, in fact, at present in many offices all over the Island. In the case of Sinhala language capability in the North East, the major problem in increasing the capacity by posting more Sinhala speaking officers may be the current security situation. The main contributory cause in respect of lack of Tamil language capability in the other seven provinces is the absolute shortage of Tamil language capability in the public services on account of very considerable under recruitment for many years. The other major factor relates to Sri Lanka's education system contributing very little to bilingualism and trilingualism among the student population. Even such bilingualism as is produced through schooling is Sinhala-English or Tamil-English rather than Sinhala-Tamil.

Save in exceptional cases, the capacity to develop new language skills to the extent of drafting a long letter or a memorandum is very limited. For many public servants what most available language training programmes can do is to

provide oral and some elementary reading skills in a second or a third language. While these skills may be very useful in dealing with the public, they are not adequate for all purposes.

It must noted that on account of our educational system failing throw up adequate numbers of bilingual and trilingual personnel, the public services are compelled to create Sinhala-Tamil bilingualism only partly through language training but mainly through mixing Sinhala speaking and Tamil speaking public servants in every office. Such mixing has its disadvantages in terms of internal communication but, in the long run, genuine bilingualism and trilingualism could emerge through such mixing. More translators and also in facilitating internal communication.

Formal language training to public servants in a language other than the mother tongue could make it possible for that public servants to perform certain functions in that language, but it will take some time for full language capability to develop. This process is not ideal, but there is no alternative, particularly because the shortage of recruits with full Sinhala-Tamil and Sinhala-Tamil-English language capability at the point of intake may continue.

In the circumstances, available scarce bilingual and trilingual capacities may need to be concentrated mostly but not exclusively in areas where there is a large mix of population of different linguistic groups. But the other areas too need all three linguistic skills so that minimum services can be assured in all three languages.

In case where even the minimum necessary language capability is not available to provide the services to the public are entitled, some special ad-hoc

arrangements may need to be made. Some creative suggestions have been made and one, or two of these may be worth considering. Where several public offices are located in the same building or in adjoining buildings, if may be possible to make temporary arrangements to share scarce language capability. Where the offices are scattered, they could have different office days in which those who speak the minority language would be catered to in their language, and special arrangements could be made for a small bilingual team to circulate among the offices, covering up to five locations per week. A central agency (the Provincial Council) could coordinate such arrangements.

Such ad-hoc arrangements cannot be satisfactory and carry many disabilities including those related to disciplinary control, logistics, travel costs, etc. These can at best be temporary palliatives. As quickly as possible every office must gain the required language capability within its own cadre. There is no satisfactory alternative.

Even when more language capability becomes available, it may be tempting to concentrate such capacity exclusively in areas in which there are large concentrations of population who speak that language on grounds of "efficiency" measured by the number of heads of population served. But this would be unwise. People need to have due access to the public services wherever they live. This issue relates to the unfortunate development in the Eighties and Nineties of virtual mono-ethic areas, whether caused by "ethnic cleansing" or by people voluntarily migrating to escape an unfavourable social environment. The public services could provide a stabling nucleus for healthy ethnic mix and do much to help to create a favourable environment for different ethnic groups to co-exist. This would be a significant positive externality arising from the implementation of our recommendation to ensure a minimum degree of linguistic mix in every government office in the Island.

There is also the question of numbers – will there be enough in each linguistic category of public to be posted as recommended to all divisions in the Island? There will be no shortage of Sinhala speaking public servants in most categories, but there will be a shortage of Tamil speaking public servants in most categories, the absence of special recruitment. An inescapable short-term measure in language specific special recruitment. But will such recruitment create new imbalances?

The linguistic breakdown of A.G.A divisions is set out in Table 6. Outside the North East, most A.G.A divisions may have more than 87½ % Sinhala population and, in respect of offices in these areas, the minimum number of Tamil speaking public servants required will be 10 % of the cadre in that division. In several other A.G.A. divisions, larger proportions of Tamil speaking cadre would be necessary. We do not have up to date statistical data to work out the precise details but it is clear that, overall, the minimum number of Tamil speaking public servants required would be much more than available now, but much less than would have been available if proportional recruitment as prescribed in Public Administration Circular No.15/90 of 19 March 1990 had been followed. Our proposal is therefore arithmetically feasible, though it might take special recruitment to achieve all the targets. Our proposal is compatible with the Sinhala speaking component of the public services confirming to be not less than 75 %.

Finally, there is the question of Municipal administration. Section 22 (1) of the constitution provides for Presidential directives in respect of selected A.G.A divisions. Perhaps there is good reason to follow the rules recommended above in respect of Municipal and Urban Council administration too. Our experience in auditing the Colombo Municipal Council Secretariat has convinced us of the need for Tamil Language capability in the Municipal Secretariat. It may be

noted that nearly half the population served by the CMC is Tamil speaking, whereas the proportions of Tamil speaking officers in the Secretariat is only 2 %. In fact in Colombo trilingual capability essential. This may be true of several cities and major towns all over the Island.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the administration is to meet the needs of the Tamil speaking people, there should be a sufficient number of Tamil proficient officials in state institutions and corporations. The officials needed will be translators, clerks, typists and others as well as departmental grades, such as police personnel at all at levels. Recruitment of adequate numbers of Tamil speaking staff is essential. But this cannot be done overnight. The team realizes that immediate, short term and long term measures are needed.

The first need is a consensus between the Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Salaries and Cadre Committee and the Official Languages Commission on the immediate, short term and long-term measures needed to implement Tamil as an Official language. Based on our language audit, we have formulated following proposals for consideration.

Immediate Measures (to be taken within the next few weeks)

a) Identify constraints like lack of equipment, documents etc, and take immediate measures to purchase the equipment needed, print the documents, etc, using available funds or savings under other items in the budget.

b) Convert all monolingual name and direction boards into trilingual name and direction boards. The cost of doing this will be minimal and it is unlikely that any additional resources will need to be collected for this exercise.

c) Withdraw all forms in the Department that are not trilingual, destroy them and have the forms printed by the Government Printer in all three languages on the same paper. The Government Printer will need should be asked to give top priority to this work.

d) Instruct all public servants to comply with Government policy in regard to the use of the national languages, particularly reminding them of widespread failure to implement Tamil as official language.

e) A circular setting out the language policy of the government in relation to the use of Tamil may be jointly drafted by the Ministry of Public Administration and the Official Languages Commission, and circulated to all offices and sub-offices. The Circular should detail the obligations of the public servants in relation dealings with Tamil speaking persons.

Short Term Measures (to be taken during the course of the year 1999)

a) Identify the departments and the service grades that need fresh recruitment of Tamil speaking officers to enable full implementation of the languages policy of the Government. This identification may be done by the Ministry of Public Administration in consultation with the Official Languages Commission within a three of four months time frame.

b) The Official Languages Commission could seek government approval for the special recruitment of the required numbers of Tamil speaking cadres. The new appointments may be set off against existing vacancies and, if there are not enough vacancies, additional posts could be created on the understanding that other recruitment would be suspended till the excess disappears through natural wastage.

c) Thereafter Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration could call for applications from suitable candidates, specifying the special Tamil language provisions required in respect of oral, reading and writing skills at the point of recruitment. In this recruitment, preference should be given to those with skills in a second or third language.

d) The Ministry of Public Administration should post the officers according to the needs of each Department. The Official Language Commission should, before postings are made, be consulted in working out the rules governing language competency in the respective offices. It should be possible to complete this process and make all necessary appointments within 199.

e) Training programmes in Sinhala, Tamil and English should be initiated island-wide to enable all categories of officers to gain proficiency in at least two and, if possible all three languages.

f) All indication and selected training courses should incorporate modules relating to the language policy of the state and awareness of relevant provisions of the Constitutions.

g) Public awareness should be built of the right of every person to transact business with any government office in any part of the Island in Sinhala, Tamil or English, and of the obligation cast on the offices and officers concerned to provide such service including replying of any record, registration, publication or other document in the language chosen by the applicant.

h) In order to motivate officers to gain proficiency in all three languages, a new incentive scheme should be introduced consisting of fixed sums of passing the relevant examinations and a monthly allowance for using the additional language in day to day work. The incentive allowance must paid only to those officers who work, inn addition to their normal duties, in a language other than their first language. There should be a strict check on this payment add appropriate norms should be established. Those who draw the monthly allowance should be available for posting outstation as required.

i) After providing the staff, there should be periodic monitoring. Due consideration should be given to public complaints. The Official Languages Commission should bring to the notice of the President any

shortcomings or any lethargic attitude in any Ministry / Department for action that the President may deem fit.

j) President directions may be made as appropriate under Section 22 (1) of the Constitution, introduced through the Sixteenth Amendment, which reads as follows:

"Sinhala and Tamil shall be languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka and Sinhala shall be the language of administration and be used for, maintenance of public records and the transaction of all business by public institutions of the provinces of Sri Lanka other than Northern and Eastern Provinces where Tamil shall be used".

"Provided that the President may, having regard to the proportion which the Sinhala or Tamil linguistic minority population in any unit comprising a division of an Assistant Government Agent bears to the total of population of that area, direct that both Sinhala and Tamil or a language other than the language used as the language of administration in the province in which such area may be situated be the languages of administration for such area".

It is noted that both Sinhala and Tamil are languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka but only one language or the other may be the language of public record in a particular province unless there is a Presidential declaration to the contrary. It is suggested that early action should be taken under the above paragraph to proclaim the appropriate areas I which a second or third language should also be used as languages of public record so that effective strategies for implementation of the official languages policy of the Government can be worked out. It is suggested that in any province in which the language of administration and public record in Sinhala, Tamil is declared

as an additional language of administration and public record in those A.G.A divisions of the province in which the proportion of Tamil speaking persons is not less than 12½ % and, likewise, in any province in which the language of administration and public record is Tamil, Sinhala is declared as an additional language of administration and public record in those A.G.A divisions of the province in which the proportion of Sinhalese is not less than 12½%.

Long Term Measures

The team has not visited any offices in the North East or in the Central, North Central or Southern Provinces, and is not in a position to report in respect of these regions. Our survey has covered any offices in the Western, North Western, Uva and Sabragamuwa provinces. A consistent pattern has emerged of glaring lack of Tamil language proficiency in virtually every office audited at all levels, although many of those offices serve populations of which very substantial proportions are Tamil speaking.

The highest priority should be given to correcting oral, reading and writing language deficiencies. Unless this is done, the legal requirements in respect of using the Tamil language in administration cannot be met. It is essential that the specific language capacity of each unit of the public services must be such as to meet the needs of the population in the language medium they are most comfortable with.

While the citizens have the same rights in all parts of the Island, it may not be pragmatic to seek to ensure that every office in every A.G.A divisions has the same level of competency in all three languages. Most offices may have Sinhala or Tamil as the language of official record: many may have both: a few may have English too. But all offices need to have minimum competency to transact

office business in all three languages. We therefore make certain proposals below to ensure that these requirements could be met.

It is suggested that the various A.G.A divisions may be categorized in terms of the language composition of the population as follows:

   I. Not less than 87½ % Sinhala speaking

  II. Not less than 871/2 % Tamil speaking

 III. Not less than 50 % Sinhala speaking and not less than 121/2 % Tamil speaking

 IV. Not less than 50 % Tamil speaking and not less than 121/2 % Sinhala speaking

Norms may be prescribed in respect of each A.G.A division above determine the minimum requirement of cadres classified in terms of language proficiency as follows:

1) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in Sinhala (this will comprise mostly but not exclusively those whose mother tongue is Sinhala; a special high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for those whose mother tongue is not Sinhala)

2) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in Tamil (this will comprise mostly but not exclusively those whose mother tongue is Tamil;

a special high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for those whose mother tongue is not Tamil)

3) Officers fully proficient and who can correspond in English (a high level proficiency examination could be prescribed for this purpose)

4) Officers who have passed the prescribed proficiency examinations in Sinhala other than the special high level examination referred to in (1) above. (this will comprise mostly those whose mother tongue in Tamil)

5) Officers who have passed the prescribed proficiency examinations in Tamil other than the special high level examination referred to in (2) above (this will comprise mostly those whose mother tongue is Sinhala)

6) Officers not included in (3) above but with minimum proficiency in English (proficiency examinations could be prescribed for this purpose)

It is suggested that every A.G.A. division classified under (i) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (1), 10% (2), 10% of (3) and 15% of (5). All the divisions of Colombo district excluding the Colombo AGA divisions would fall into the category and would require a minimum of 10% Tamil speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

Similarly every A.G.A. division classified under (ii) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% (2), 10% of (1), 10% of (3) and 15% of (4). All the divisions of Batticalo district would fall into the category and would require a minimum of 10% Sinhala speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

It is proposed that every A.G.A. divisions classified under (iii) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (1), 25% of (2) and 10% of (3). Colombo AGA division would fall into this category and would request a minimum of 25% Tamil speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

Likewise every A.G.A. divisions classified under (iv) should have staff in all cadre grades of at least 50% of (2), 25% of (1) and 10% of (3). Nuwara Eliya AGA division would fall into this category and would require a minimum of 50% Tamil speaking staff to meet the recommended norm.

Perhaps similar norms may be prescribed in respect of each Municipal council and Urban Council administrations based on the linguistic composition of the population within the council limits.

In addition, there may be particular institutions that may require high proficiency in English and for which enhanced minimum proportions of categories (3) and (6) could be prescribed as required. The total numbers of Tamil speaking cadres required to meet the above norms are well within the numbers that would have been available if the principle of proportional requirement set out in the relevant Public Administration circulars had been followed. Requirement policies that ensure adequate language competencies in Sinhala, Tamil and English would be compatible with the principle of proportional recruitment.

To supplement cadre requirement designed to achieve the desired language balance, language training programmes should be strengthened and expanded to enable larger numbers to gain greater proficiency in a second and, preferably, a third language. In fact the Ministry of Defense has initiated 12

weeks residential training programmes in Kotmale and Gampaha for police and armed force personnel. Such programmes are long overdue and should be extended to all grades of the public service. How ever it must be kept in mind that while such training could boost the numbers in categories (4), (5) and (6) above, and service to the public could be improved thereby, the impact of such training on expending categories (1). (2) And (3) will be slow and negligible.

There must be no misconception that language training could be a substitute for recruiting adequate numbers of officers fully proficient in respect of oral, reading and writing skills in the different languages; there is no alternative to providing for the appropriate balance of language skills at the point of intake. The language composition of all new recruits should be such as to move towards fully meeting all aspects of language competency (oral, reading and writing) in all units of the public services within five years. The schemes of recruitments should be such to give additional weight to those with skills in a second or third language.

Implementation & Monitoring

Remedial measures, however comprehensive may not yield the desired results without an effective implementation and monitoring system, backed by political will. Our findings suggest that, by and large the problems arise less from defects in legislative provision (though some of the Articles of the Constitution appear to contain ambiguities/ contradictions, notably Articles 22 (1) and 24 (1), and more from neglect in implementation, monitoring and enforcement at various levels.

It is proposed that the Official Languages Commission should be fully empowered to give directions to all state institutions in matters relating to the

implementation of the laws and regulations and state policy in respect of the status and use of Sinhala, Tamil and English in all official matters. The Official Languages Commission should work out a monitoring system based on periodic reports received from all state institutions through the respective Ministries. The Chairman, Official Languages Commission should be required to prepare an Annual Report on progress in respect of all three languages.

In addition, it is recommended that there should, for the next five years, be an annual Tamil Language Audit conducted by an organization outside the public services commissioned to review the status of the Tamil language in the seven provinces outside the North East on the basis of sample surveys. This report should be submitted to the Chairman, Official Languages Commission who should forward it together with his observations, the Official Languages Commission report referred to in the paragraph above, and his recommendations for corrective action to Her Excellency the President.

Devanesan Nesiah
Project Director

30 December 1998
DG/-

APPENDICES

TABULAR SUMMARIES

TABLE 1- LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION IN INSTITUTIONS AUDITED
IMPLEMENTATION – PRESENT POSITION

Parameters	Motor Traffic	Labour	Town hall	Parameters	Div/Sec/Col:	Div/Sec/Pass:	Div/Sec/Kal:
Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Reception and Internal guidance	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Marginal	Reception and Internal guidance	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Telephone	Marginal	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Telephone	Unsatisfactory	Marginal	Satisfactory
Forms	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Forms	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Direct dealings counter, desk field	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Direct dealings counter, desk field	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Documents	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Marginal	Documents	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
Publications	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Publications	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal

Parameters	P/O Watt:	P/O Hal:	P/O Kal:	P/O Ratn:	Parameters	Educat. Badulla	Educat. Putt:
Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Marginal	Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Reception and Internal guidance	Marginal	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Marginal	Reception and Internal guidance	N/A	Unsatisfactory
Telephone	Marginal	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Telephone	Marginal	Unsatisfactory
Forms	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Forms	N/A	
Direct dealings counter, desk field	Marginal	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Marginal	Direct dealings counter, desk field	N/A	Marginal
Correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Documents	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Documents	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Publications	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Publications	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Parameters	Police St. Passara	Police St. Puttl:	Parameters	Gen.Hosp. Badulla	Gen.Hosp Ratnapura
Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	Satisfactory	Marginal
Reception and Internal guidance	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Reception and Internal guidance	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Telephone	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Telephone	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Forms	Marginal	Marginal	Forms	N/A	N/A
Direct dealings counter, desk field	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Direct dealings counter, desk field	Marginal	Unsatisfactory
Correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Correspondence	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Documents	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Documents	N/A	N/A
Publications	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Publications	N/A	N/A

TABLE 2

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION BY PARAMETER

Parameters	Good	Satisfactory	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Not Applicable
Directions, Signs, Names and Notices	-	06	05	05	-
Reception and Internal guidance	-	03	04	08	01
Direct dealings counter, desk field	-	04	05	06	01
Telephone	-	03	06	07	-
Correspondence	-	03	-	13	-
Forms	-	07	-	-	04
Documents	-	04	04	06	02
Publications	-	04	06	04	02
TOTAL PERCENTAGE		34 (26.6)	35 (27.3)	49 (38.3)	10 (7.8)

N.B : Figures indicate the number of Institutions in each category.

TABLE 3

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION BY INSTITUTION

Institution	Good	Satisfactory	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable
Motor Traffic	-	-	05	03	-
Labour	-	-	05	03	-
Colombo Municipality	-	-	05	03	-
Div.Secy. Colombo	-	01	01	06	-
Div.Secy Passara	-	03	02	03	-
Div.Secy Kalpitiya	-	06	02	-	-
Post Office Wattala	-	03	03	02	-
Post Office Haldamulla	-	08	-	-	-
Post Office Ratnapura	-	03	03	02	-
Education Office Badulla	-	01	04	03	03
Education Office Puttalam	-	-	01	06	01
Police Station Passara	-	01	04	03	-
Police Station Puttalam	-	01	01	07	-
General Hospital Badulla	-	01	03	03	03

TABLE 4
LINGUISTIC BREAK DOWN OF OFFICE STAFF AND POPULATION SERVED

Institution Audited (limited to area covered by office)	Total staff of the institutions	No. fully proficient in Tamil	Percentage	Total population served by the institution	Tamil speaking population in the area served by the institution	Percentage
Wattala post office	43	01	2.3	109635	16814	15.3
Haldamulla Post office	26	01	3.8	39232	20250	52.0
Ratnapura Post office	213	01	0.5	89785	18627	20.7
Kalpitiya Post office	09	06	66.7	48704	26974	55.4
Passara Div.Secy's office	229	12	5.2	77122	39858	52.0
Colombo.Div.Secy's office	112	03	2.7	587647	264772	45.1
C.M.C	831	15	1.8	587647	264772	45.1
Badullazonal directors of education	72	06	8.3	268558	95800	55.4
Puttalam zonal directors education	57	14	24.6	185083	56297	30.4
Ratnapura General Hospital (Sub.Pro)	783	07	0.39	1382031	212840	15.4
Badulla General Hospital (Uva.Pro)	374	24	6.4	914522	213135	23.3

Dept of Motor traffic	413	10	2.4	14846750	3752457	25.3
Dept. of Labour	1489	122	8.2			
Kalpitiya Div.Secy'd Office	58	29	50	48704	26974	55.4
Puttalam Police Station	349	1	0.3	91525	31751	34.7
Passara Police Station	49	2	4.1	55599	22789	41.0
Total	5107	254	4.97	19332544	5064110	26.19

Source: Compiled from data suggested by the respective offices and the Department of Census and Statistics.

TABLE 5

LINGUISTIC BREAKDOWN OF DEPARTMENTAL STAFF AND POPULATION SERVEDE

Institution audited (covering the entire island)	Total Staff of the institution	No..fully proficient in Tamil	Percentage	Total population	Tamil speaking population	Percentage
Dept. of motor Traffic	413	10	2.42	14846750	3752457	25.27
Dept. of labor	1489	122	8.19	14846750	3752457	25.27

Source: Compiled from date supplied by the respective departments and the Department Of Census and Statistics.

Table 6

LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION OF AGA DIVISIONS

Sinhala speaking percentage	Over 87 1/2	50 – 87 1/2	12 ½ - 50	Under 12 1/2	Total
Colombo	7	1	-	-	8
Gampaha	11	2	-	-	13
Kalutara	7	3	-	-	10
Kandy	4	9	2	-	15
Matale	5	6	-	-	11
Nuwara Eliya	-	3	2	-	5
Galle	15	1	-	-	16
Matara	11	1	-	-	12
Hambantota	8	-	-	-	8
Jaffna	-	-	-	13	13
Mannar	-	-	2	2	4
Vavuniya	1	-	-	3	4
Mullaitivu	-	-	-	4	4

				3	3
Kilinochchi	-	-	-		
Batticaloa	-	-	-	8	8
Trincomalee	2	3	3	2	10
Ampara	5	-	-	7	12
Kurunagela	16	1	-	-	17
Anuradhapura	12	4	-	-	16
Polonnaruwa	3	2	-	-	5
Badulla	3	9	2	-	14
Moneragala	6	2	-	-	8
Ratnapura	5	7	-	-	12
Kegalle	5	5	-	-	10
Total	126	59	11	42	238

Source: Compiled from data supplied by Dept. of Census and Statistics.

Annexe II

Institutions Audited

Department of Motor Traffic, Colombo
Labor Secretariat, Colombo
Town Hall, Colombo
Divisional Secretary's Office, Colombo
Divisional Secretary's Office, Passara
Divisional Secretary's Office, Kalpitiya
Post Office, Wattala
Post Office, Haldamulla
Post Office, Ratnapura
Post Office, Kalpitiya
Education Office, Badulla
Education Office, Puttalam
Police Station Pasara
Police Station, Puttalam
General Hospital, Badulla
General Hospital, Ratnapura