



THE ROAD TO PEACE: USING SURVEYS TO PROMOTE THE PEACE PROCESS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2003-2004 KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES
AND PRACTICES (KAP) SURVEYS ON THE SRI LANKAN PEACE PROCESS

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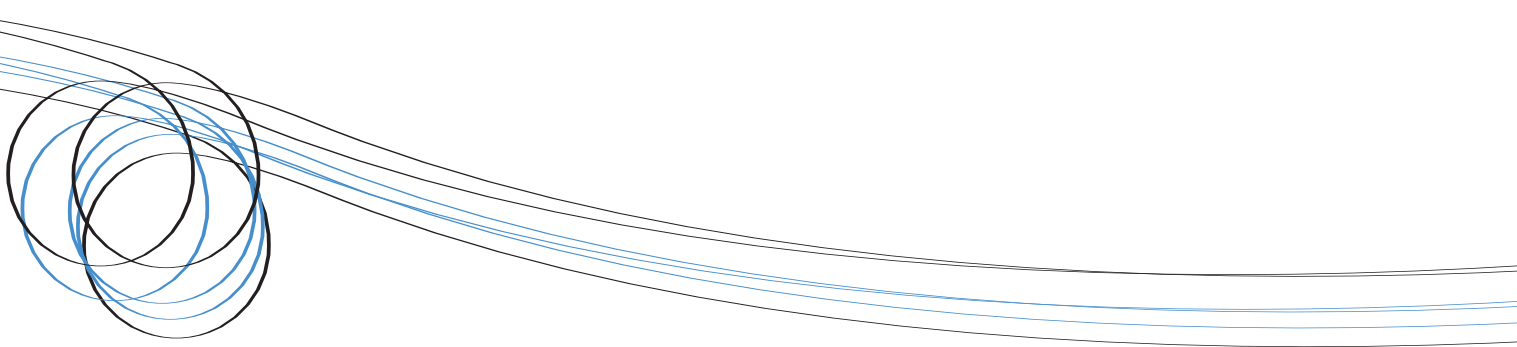
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THE COVER

Road in Jaffna: In 2002 the road to Jaffna reopened after years of being closed due to civil war in Sri Lanka. The AED Peace Support Project has supported the production of a teledrama series "Take This Road" that depicts the story of three families, from the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities, whose paths cross on a visit to Jaffna that was made possible as a result of the opening of the A9 road.

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INDIA

NEPAL

BHUTAN

BANGLADESH

SRI LANKA

PREFACE

AED's Sri Lanka Peace Support Project has broken new ground in thinking about peace-making as a multi-stakeholder engagement process. The three-year-old project has mobilized and linked constituencies for peace using a wide range of tools including television programming, virtual negotiation spaces, and people's fora, as well analytic tools such as opinion polls.

For the innovative use of surveys, our thanks goes to the primary authors of this document Professors Steven Finkel of the University of Virginia and William Mishler of the University of Arizona. For the purposes of AED's work in Sri Lanka, they created a remarkable survey instrument—the Knowledge Attitudes and Practice (KAP) Survey described in the following pages—that can detect allies and potential spoilers in the peace-making process. Consequently, the survey data have not only mapped the peace constituencies in Sri Lanka, but have also served to catalyze social dialogue and help forge new alliances. To conduct the surveys, AED was fortunate to work with an extraordinarily dedicated and professional local organization—The Center for Policy Alternatives/Social Indicator—who participated in the design and analysis and conducted the peace surveys.

The purpose of this publication is to share the design of these remarkable peace polls in the hope of adding peace surveys to the peace-maker's standard box of tools. As these pages show, peace polls provide a picture of the social landscape. And even more importantly, they are powerful tools for social change.

Credit must be conveyed to Gwendolyn Bevis, Hannes Siebert and Chanya Charles who helped develop the Sri Lanka Peace Support Project as well to our Project Manager in Colombo, Kim DeRidder. This document has been enhanced by interviews with experts in the field conducted by AED's Melanie Brehaut. Paula Whitacre edited the document and Anne Quito designed the publication. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to USAID for its steadfast support of this undertaking, and the substantive guidance and input of Mark Silva of USAID/Sri Lanka.

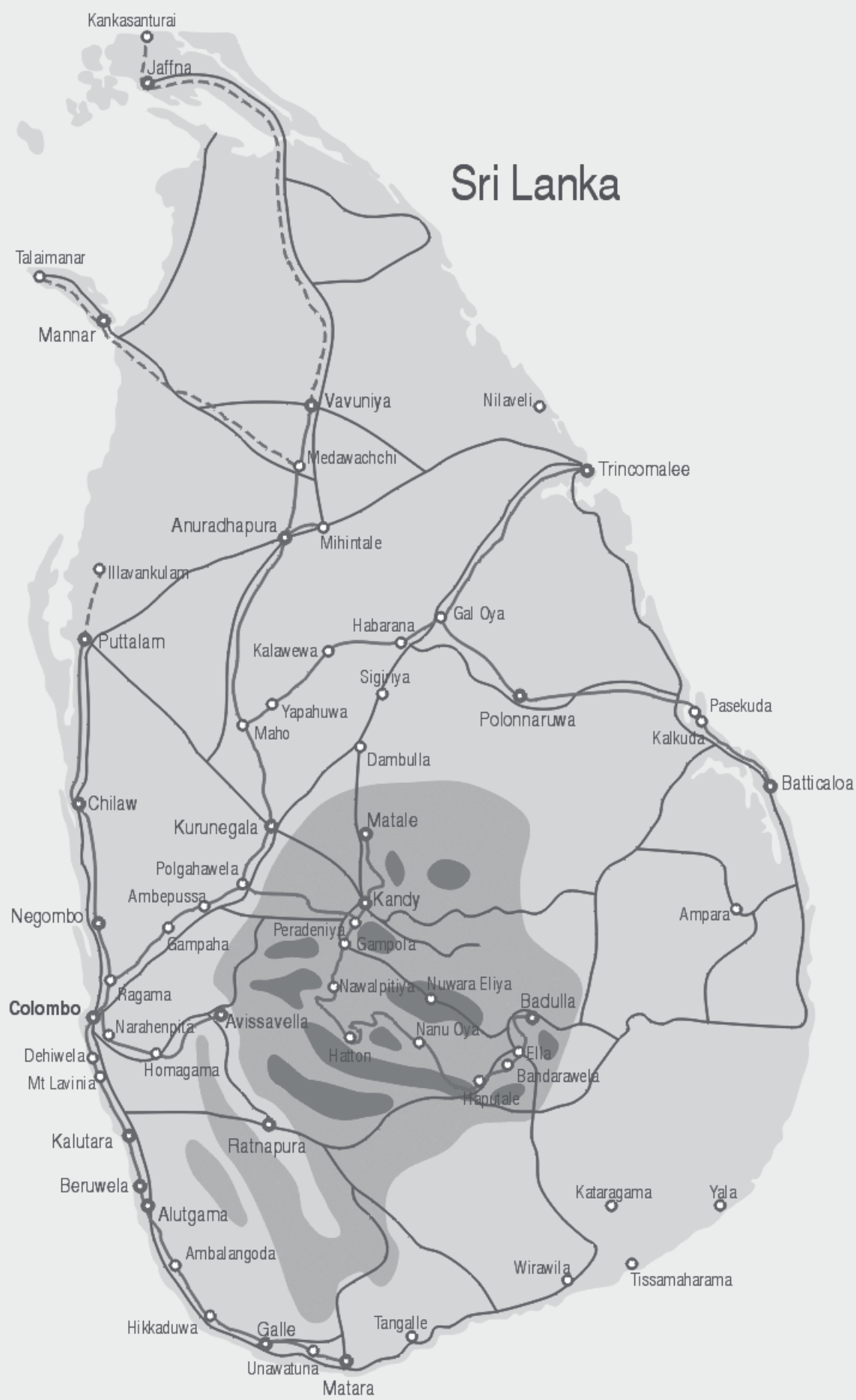
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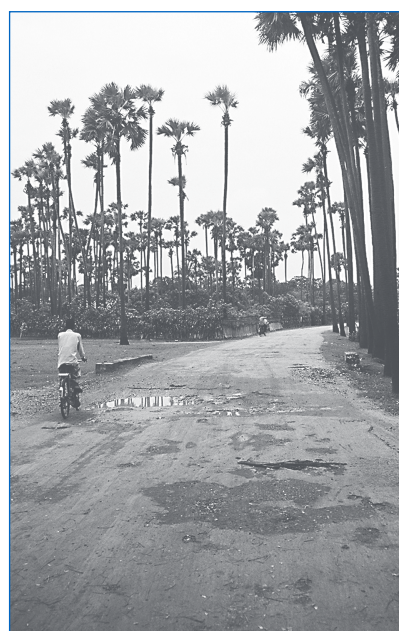
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THE AED SRI LANKA PEACE SUPPORT PROJECT

The citizens of Sri Lanka long for a just and lasting peace. Having endured two decades of civil war while suffering 65,000 casualties, massive economic disruption, and untold heartache, Sri Lankans today overwhelmingly embrace the current ceasefire and express an abiding desire to see a permanent peace agreement negotiated between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite a strong desire for peace, however, Sri Lankans express many different and often conflicting opinions about what a final peace agreement should include. A permanent agreement will require difficult negotiations and potentially painful compromises from all parties. This requires that those at the negotiating table avoid easy stereotypes and understand the attitudes of citizens on all sides of the conflict, what the different groups hope to achieve in a final peace agreement, and, especially, what they are willing to sacrifice to achieve their aspirations. It also requires that negotiators understand what beliefs citizens are willing to fight to protect.

The Sri Lanka Peace Support Project (SLPSP), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), aimed to create and sustain a multistakeholder process in support of Sri Lanka's transition towards peace. SLPSP was designed in 2002 primarily to provide technical assistance and support to the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) Peace Secretariat as its negotiating team engaged in a peace dialogue with the LTTE following the Cease Fire Agreement of February 2002. The project had additional resources to increase and improve the quality and extent of civil society participation in

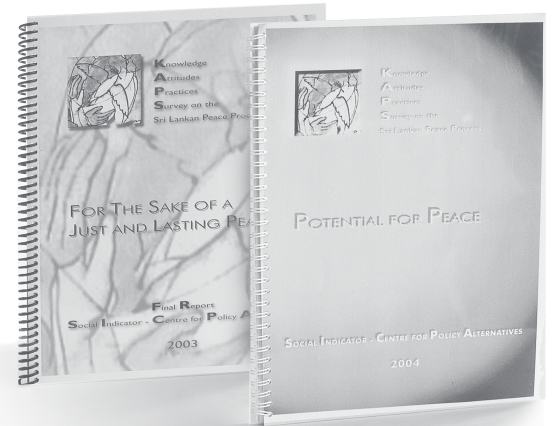


the peace process. In its sixth month, and in discussion with USAID, the project shifted focus to civil society's role, with the idea of re-engaging with the GoSL as time and opportunities emerged.

SLPSP's civil society component encompassed developing participatory multi-stakeholder dialogues, improving the quality of information about citizen concerns and aspirations through social research, improving the quality of media coverage and reporting, encouraging greater empathy among stakeholders through creative use of mass media, and, to an extent, promoting multi-partisan collaboration in peace efforts. The project's multi-stakeholder strategy recognized that a peace process has multiple levels or tracks: Track One (those involved in the negotiations), Track Two (leaders of stakeholder group organizations and national-level civil society, private sector, and media organizations), and Track Three (grassroots-level constituencies and local leaders). SLPSP worked across each track to build sustainable local capacity for multi-stakeholder communication and participation in the peace process. For example, it helped link Track One to the other two tracks by persistently stressing the need for an inclusive process for all activities. The project also introduced new technologies to the peace process that continue to be used to facilitate dialogue and information-sharing. Relationships with local partners in government, political society, civil society, and the media serve as a solid foundation for further peace programming.

AED believes that one of the project's most important efforts was the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) Surveys on the Sri Lankan Peace Process. Knowledge about the dimensions of public opinion can promote peace in conflict settings, as donors, political actors, and members of civil society seek to understand the public's views on the conflict so that specific proposals and overall peace agreements can elicit the highest levels of public support. Survey research, such as the KAP surveys, is a series of well-established and proven methods to obtain this knowledge and understand the nature of public opinion at any moment, its underlying dynamics, its probable future directions, and the prospects for persuading or leading public opinion in a desired direction. We have used this process to spark social dialogue.

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES SURVEYS



Two KAP surveys have taken place to date, both conducted through the Centre for Policy Alternatives' nonprofit polling arm, Social Indicator (CPA/SI), with technical support from SLPSP consultants Professors William Mishler of the University of Arizona and Steven Finkel of the University of Virginia.¹ The first survey, known as KAP-I, was carried out in the country's government-controlled areas: 21 districts and half of two additional districts, out of 25 districts in all. In June 2003, 2,980 individuals in these districts were interviewed face to face. The questionnaire surveyed support for specific proposals that might be included in a final agreement, as well as citizens' willingness to protest a final agreement that they considered unfair. Analysis of the data went beyond standard ethnic labels to obtain more nuanced information on who supports and opposes the peace process, and why. Factors examined included demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, education), geography, political values, party affiliation, interaction with other ethnic groups, and political involvement and knowledge, as well as ethnicity.

The second KAP survey, known as KAP-II, was conducted in July and August 2004, with a sample of 3,513 respondents from the same 21 districts that participated in the 2003 survey. In addition to understanding the changes in public opinion that occurred in Sri Lanka since the previous year, the survey was intended to take advantage of the lessons learned in KAP-I by exploring in greater depth the nature of public support for peace. Specifically, KAP-II examined a larger and more

1. Details about the two surveys can be found in two publications: Pradeep Peiris, Steven Finkel, Girish Gulati, and William Mishler, *For the Sake of a Just and Lasting Peace: Final Report of The Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Survey (KAPS) of Public Attitudes toward the Peace Process in Sri Lanka*, December 2003; and William Mishler, Steven Finkel and Pradeep Peiris, *The Potential for Peace: The 2004 Knowledge, Attitudes And Practices Survey On The Sri Lankan Peace Process*, November 2004.

diverse set of peace proposals advocated by different segments of Sri Lankan society as well as examined in greater depth the sources of public support for peace, including an expanded focus on personal experience with the conflict and the individual's perceptions of the specific costs and benefits associated with a permanent peace settlement or a return to armed conflict. In addition, KAP-II included a section on public reaction to the July 2004 suicide bombing of a police station in Colombo and the split within the LTTE leadership. KAP-II also used more recent innovations in survey research techniques to explore the conditions under which individuals from different ethnic groups might be persuaded to embrace the compromises necessary for a just and lasting peace.

“KAP surveys are most importantly a starting point for building trust among society.”

—Pradeep Peiris, Unit Head
and KAP Survey Coordinator,
Social Indicator

The information from the surveys was designed to help the government craft a package of peace proposals that can draw broad political support. It has also helped governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to develop communication campaigns that target specific audiences and focus on different groups' specific interests and concerns. Since difficult compromises are inevitable, the achievement of a just and lasting peace requires the concerted efforts of the GoSL, LTTE, NGOs, and other stakeholders to explain and defend to their supporters both the fairness of the negotiation process and the necessity of the compromises made to achieve an agreement.

ASSESSING CURRENT PUBLIC OPINION

An understanding of public opinion and its underlying dynamics is critical to understand the range of feasible public policies from which the government realistically may choose. This is true even in authoritarian regimes, but it is especially so in more democratic regimes where political elites depend upon public support for their survival. Although the opinions of political elites may more directly influence public policy, public opinion both influences the elites' policy calculations and constrains their options if they want to be re-elected or to marshal sufficient public support to sustain the policies they choose.

In terms of the peace process in conflict settings, it is therefore imperative to understand what the public thinks and the intensity of those views, so that

politicians and other political elites know the constraints they face regarding the levels of popular acceptance of current and potential peace proposals. In addition, understanding current public opinion can inform them about possible coalitions for peace among different social, regional, and ethnic groupings, and about potential strategies for mobilizing support for peace among different individuals and groups in the overall population.

Public Beliefs, Preferences, and Knowledge About the Peace Process

At the most basic level, surveys show what the public thinks about the peace process: that is, what citizens believe, what they think is good or bad, right or wrong, what they like or dislike, and what they know about the conflict and about specific proposals to achieve a peace agreement. They also provide the context within which citizens' attitudes and beliefs are shaped, what they have experienced, and how they view these experiences.

The most basic information that surveys can provide is the distribution of public support on a variety of proposals for peace. Knowing which peace proposals are consistent with public values and widely endorsed and which are inconsistent with those values and broadly opposed by the public is vital for peace negotiators and their advisors. For example, in KAP-I and KAP-II, an overwhelming majority of citizens from all ethnic groups and all regions of the country strongly favored a peace agreement to end the war. At the same time, however, there was considerable variation in the level of support for particular peace proposals. In both surveys, between 60 and 70% of respondents opposed plans to give some regional governments more power than others, an idea known as “asymmetric federalism” favored by the LTTE as a way to increase power in areas in the North and East that they control. Two-thirds of respondents also opposed amnesty for individuals who may have committed illegal acts of political violence during the war if they testify before an official peace commission, and nearly as many opposed an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) in the North and East, the LTTE's main current demand. At the same time, however, many proposals registered extremely high levels of public support, including the return of Muslim homes and lands as part of a comprehensive peace agreement (over 90% support in KAP-II), the placing of LTTE heavy weapons under the control of a neutral international force (85% support in KAP-II), and, somewhat surprisingly, the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces (64% support in KAP-II).

It is important to note that the proposals tested in surveys need not only be the ones currently on the negotiating table. Surveys can provide useful information about proposals that could be considered at some future point or, if the results show significant levels of public support, immediately integrated into peace negotiations. Both KAP surveys, for example, asked about possible institutional arrangements that have been applied in other countries with ethnically oriented social conflicts. There were substantial levels of public support (upwards of 60% in both surveys) for a quota-type system in which each ethnic group would have the right to elect a certain number of its members to Parliament. KAP-I revealed significant opposition to a system of a rotating Presidency in which members of each ethnic group would hold the office in succession. In this way surveys can provide information about the contours of public opinion on existing peace proposals as well as suggest possible promising (and unpromising) avenues for the future.

Surveys also reveal what people believe about the conflict itself—what it is about, who is to blame, how severe are its costs, and what benefits would result for themselves and society if a peace agreement could be achieved. The results frequently are not obvious or expected. In an ethnically based conflict such as Sri Lanka's, one might expect attributions of blame for the conflict to vary substantially by ethnic group with each group's members blaming the other groups for causing the war. While KAP-II confirms that Sinhalese respondents are more likely than members of other ethnic groups to blame the conflict on LTTE violence, the more impressive observation is that nearly three-quarters of Sinhalese reject this explanation and blame the war either on their own discrimination against the Tamils (17%), on government policies promoting Sinhalese nationalism (also 17%), on ethnic intolerance more generally (16%), or on a myriad of other causes (totalling 22% in all, but none cited more than 5% of the time). Among Tamils and other minorities, between 30 and 45% blame discrimination against the Tamils or the Government's nationalist policies, but this means that a majority of each minority group places the blame more broadly on a variety of other factors, including their own behavior.

Similarly, the KAP surveys help provide an understanding of citizens' personal experiences with the conflict. While virtually no one has completely escaped the war's consequences, KAP-II confirms that different groups and parts of the country have experienced the war very differently. Citizens in the North and East have been on the front lines, while those in the South and West have had relatively less direct

contact with the fighting. Overall, two out of five Sri Lankans report either that they or a family member have participated in the fighting. This number swells to 60% when close friends and neighbors are included. More than 45% of citizens report that family, friends, or neighbors have been killed or injured in the conflict. One-quarter say they have lost property in the war, and 28% feel that their rights and liberties have been diminished. When added up, four out of five Sri Lankans have suffered one or more direct negative consequences of the war and nearly 40% have had three or more negative experiences. Predictably, these experiences vary significantly by region and ethnic group. Virtually all Tamils and Muslims (95%) report suffering multiple consequences of the war, while only one-third of Sinhalese have been similarly affected. In contrast, fully one-third of Sinhalese report no direct experience with the war, whereas virtually no one in Sri Lanka's minority communities has been as completely unaffected. Understanding such large contextual differences is potentially critical to understand attitudes toward the peace process itself.

The different experiences with the war result in different perspectives on the costs and benefits of war and peace. Virtually all Sri Lankans think that a peace agreement will provide significant benefits to the country and also believe that a return to war would have disastrous results, but the groups emphasize different costs and benefits. Tamils and Muslims and those in the Northern and Eastern provinces who have borne the brunt of the conflict overwhelmingly emphasize the costs of war and the benefits of peace in terms of the level of violence and limits on personal freedoms. Sinhalese respondents and those more removed from the front lines are much more likely to emphasize economic costs and benefits. Knowing what different groups value or fear about the conflict and the peace process allows those supporting it to customize appeals for peace in terms that will resonate most strongly with particular groups or in particular areas of the country.

Surveys can also provide important information about people's level of knowledge about the conflict, and how this knowledge relates to support for peace and specific peace proposals. In Sri Lanka, the KAP surveys indicate that the public has a reasonably high level of knowledge about the peace process and about politics in general. A sizable number could identify the LTTE leader, an Interim Self-governing Authority (ISGA) as the LTTE's precondition for negotiation, Norway as the principal mediator in the current peace talks, and the leader of an LTTE breakaway group whose existence complicates peace negotiations. A majority can

name the Prime Minister and the party that received the most votes in the previous national elections, and a near-majority is aware of the official size of the majority needed to amend the constitution. As discussed below, knowledge about politics and especially about the peace process is relatively strongly related to support for peace. This result suggests that in Sri Lanka, one key avenue for increasing public support for peace agreements is to increase the public's knowledge about the process.

At the same time, however, surveys can also point out areas where the public's knowledge is less well developed. KAP-I showed some confusion about the basic contours of a "federal" solution, a key demand of the Tamil and Muslim minorities. This is apparent from the evidence that a growing majority of citizens favor "increasing the power of regional governments even if it means reducing the power of the central government," while a clear majority of citizens also oppose

"federalism" as part of a peace agreement in Sri Lanka. As a result

of these findings, KAP-II explored the public's preferences

regarding federalism in more detail by asking individuals

to consider 10 different policy areas and to express

whether they believed that the national or regional

governments should have the most power in those

areas, or whether the two levels of government

should share power equally. The results indicated a

clear demarcation about policy areas in which they

felt the national government should hold sway—

national defense, foreign policy, taxation and economic

policy-making—and areas where they felt the regional

governments should at least share equal amounts of power—

such as education, culture, transportation, and natural resources. In

this way the survey provided information about which areas federalism proponents

may advocate for shared powers, and identified areas where work is needed to

mobilize popular support for a strong regional role.

"I think more NGOs working with regard to peace and democracy realize that information provided is of particular relevance in terms of their strategizing for the future"

—Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Executive Director
Centre for Policy Alternatives

The Intensity of Public Preferences

Clearly, not all opinions, attitudes, and beliefs are the same. Different individuals

can hold the same opinion or attitude but with very different levels of intensity.

While one person may view a specific peace proposal as a desirable but not

necessary component of a peace agreement, another may view the same proposal

as absolutely fundamental, rejecting out of hand any agreement that does not

explicitly include it. Gauging intensity is therefore important to learn what individuals may be willing to fight to achieve and what they may be willing to compromise for the sake of peace through negotiations. Gauging intensity is also important because it shows which attitudes and beliefs are most deeply entrenched and unchangeable and which may be most susceptible to change in response to reasoned arguments and persuasion.

Surveys can be used to measure the intensity of peace-related public preferences in several different ways. KAP-I measured public support for specific peace proposals with a simple five-category response scheme: “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” This scale is standard in survey research to ascertain both the direction and strength of popular opinion. In the case of peace-related attitudes, however, there may be an important distinction between what individuals may prefer in an ideal situation and what they may be willing to support as part of a comprehensive peace settlement. It may be interesting to know that, for example, 80% of a given ethnic group “strongly agrees” with the establishment of a regional government with nearly equal powers as the national government in defense and foreign policy, but such a proposal may be so politically unrealistic that this finding is of limited practical use for negotiators or other political elites. It may be more useful to know what individuals will accept for the sake of peace: that is, to ascertain the level and strength of support for proposals that individuals may endorse as part of an overall peace agreement. For this reason the peace questions in both KAP surveys began with the phrase “For the sake of a peace agreement, please tell me whether you would strongly agree, agree...strongly disagree with the following proposals?” This phrasing directly cues the individuals to think of the proposal in terms of the larger peace process, and hence provides a measure of intensity of public preferences on the issue as they relate specifically to a possible peace settlement, not to some ideal political or social arrangement.

KAP-II extended this idea by presenting a different set of response categories when gauging support for specific peace proposals. Instead of the standard “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” scale, the response categories were phrased explicitly in terms of what individuals may be willing to accept for peace, even if they do not support the proposal in principle. For these questions, the response categories were “Absolutely Necessary for Peace,” “Desirable but Not Necessary for Peace,” “Undesirable but I could Accept it for Peace” or “Absolutely Undesirable.” These categorizations have been used successfully in surveys related to the peace process

**“The KAP survey
creates an opportunity
whereby the real voice of
the Sri Lankan people is
made available to
policymakers.”**

– Kim DeRidder
SLPSP Chief of Party

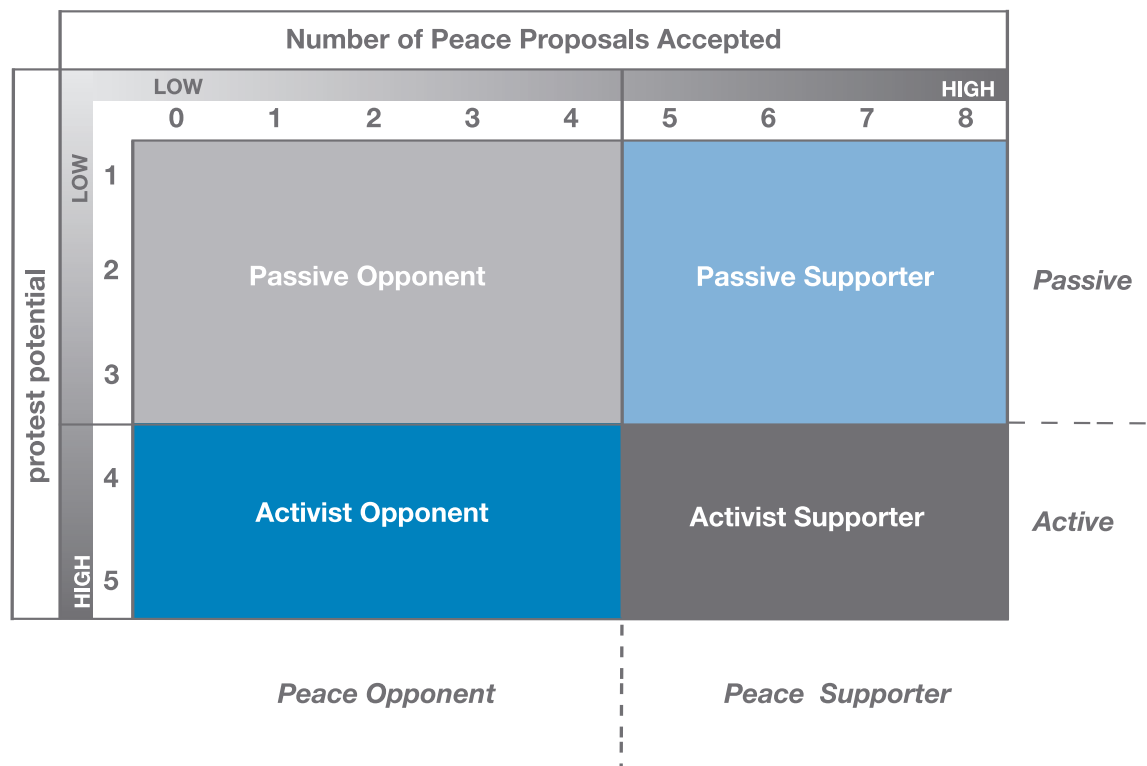
in Northern Ireland. In Sri Lanka, the results showed this was a highly useful way to assess the intensity of preferences on peace proposals, and specifically the possibility that individuals might accept proposals that they may not prefer in an ideal sense. For example, some 48% of respondents were opposed in principle to the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, but one-quarter of these individuals could “accept the proposal for peace,” indicating a “hard-core” opposition to the proposal of just over one-third of the population. Similarly, some 25% of the population is opposed to LTTE heavy weapons placed under the control of a neutral international force, but 40% of these respondents could “accept” it for peace, leaving only one in seven Sri Lankans unequivocally opposed to the idea.

Another way of assessing the intensity of public attitudes towards peace is to identify those in the population who support a relatively large and diverse set of peace proposals, and those who support a relatively small and narrow set of proposals. The reasoning here is that the more proposals and the more diverse the set of proposals that individuals support, the more that this set includes at least some proposals favored principally by members of other ethnic groups. Of course, such a measurement scheme is predicated on the existence of at least some proposals in the survey set that each rival faction in the conflict favors. KAP-II included questions about several proposals favored generally by the Tamil community (e.g., the establishment of an ISGA), several favored by the Muslim community (e.g., the establishment of a separate Muslim self-governing region), and several favored by the majority Sinhalese (e.g., the decommissioning of LTTE heavy weapons). Counting the number of proposals that an individual could at least “accept for the sake of peace” revealed surprising numbers of individuals who supported a substantial number of peace proposals. More than 70% accepted at least four proposals, and more than 30% say they would accept six or more of the eight proposals. Individuals who accepted at least five proposals were termed “Peace Process Supporters,” as they are likely to be accepting of at least one or two proposals desired principally by other groups. A majority (52%) of Sri Lankans fell into this category, including substantial majorities of the Tamil and Muslim community and over 40% of Sinhalese, impressive figures considering the popular perception of intense polarization and intransigence across ethnic lines of the conflict.

Another aspect of intensity is the extent to which individuals are motivated to act in some way as a result of their opinion, attitude, or belief. In conflict settings, measuring the behavioral component of peace-related attitudes is crucial, as it indicates the potential for civil strife, protest, or unrest if particular proposals are adopted or if an unpopular peace agreement emerges through negotiations. KAP-I asked individuals whether they would “protest against any peace agreement they perceived as unfair,” or whether they would “join an organization that was opposed” to such an agreement. KAP-II expanded the set of behavioral items to include questions about individuals’ willingness to vote against parties that they perceived as supporting an unfair agreement and their willingness to approve “any means necessary, including violence, to defeat it.” Indicative of the intensity of feelings, nearly 70% of citizens in KAP II said they would protest against a peace agreement they considered unfair; 80% say they would vote against any political party supporting an unfair agreement; 75% say they would vote against any party seen as a “spoiler” of the peace process; and 40% say they would even approve the use of violence if necessary to defeat an unfair peace agreement. Combining the four questions into a single Peace Protest Potential scale, 60% of all citizens, including majorities of all ethnic groups, are identified as Peace Process Activists, in the sense that they are willing to protest widely against an unfair or spoiled peace agreement. Thus, Sri Lankans seem to be relatively more accepting of a variety of peace proposals than the conventional wisdom suggests, but are perhaps more willing to contest an unfair agreement than may have been expected.

Combining the direction of public attitudes toward the peace proposals with behavioral intensity led to the creation of the “KAPS Peace Process Typology” consisting of four broad categories of citizens: “Activist Supporters” of the peace process who support a majority of the peace proposals and are willing to protest against an unfair or spoiled peace agreement; “Activist Opponents” of the peace process support only a minority of the peace proposals and feel strongly enough that they are willing to protest any agreement they consider unfair; “Passive Supporters” of the peace process support a majority of the peace proposals but are unwilling in most cases to protest an unfair agreement; “Passive Opponents” of the peace process oppose the majority of the peace proposals but are unwilling in most cases to protest against an agreement they do not like. Approximately one-quarter of Sri Lankans fell into each of the four “Peace Types” in KAP-I; KAP-II showed some movement towards accepting more peace proposals, but also registered higher levels of potential peace activism.

PEACE TYPOLOGY



The Peace Typology provides a very useful summary of attitudes toward the peace process, combining both the direction and the behavioral intensity of public opinion across a series of proposals into a single measure. This measure can then be tracked over time to assess trends in peace attitudes, and, at any given point in time, can be examined within different ethnic, regional, demographic, and political groupings to identify where the most intense levels of opposition and support exist for a potential peace agreement. By identifying the potential “spoilers” of a peace agreement, where they live, and how they get their political information, it may be possible to target these pockets of potential opposition to a peace agreement and to develop customized public education programs to persuade them to accept a broader range of proposals or at least to reduce the intensity of their opposition.

The Extent of Ethnic, Regional, and Partisan Consensus and Division

In Sri Lanka, the strength and persistence of ethnic cleavages are palpable. Ethnic divisions largely determine regional and partisan divisions. Nevertheless, ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are not monolithic. While the average or median member of each ethnic group may be far apart in attitudes toward war and peace, there can be substantial variations within groups, so that opinions in the different groups overlap at the margins. Surveys can provide important information regarding the degree of both inter- and intra-ethnic consensus on peace, and hence point to ways that political elites may fashion majority coalitions that could accept particular peace agreements.

For example, the conventional wisdom in Sri Lanka is that the Tamils overwhelmingly support a peace agreement as a way to end the conflict and achieve some meaningful degree of independence and regional self-determination. Conversely, the traditional view is that the Sinhalese majority largely opposes any peace agreement whose provisions might be interpreted as threatening the territorial integrity of the country or their privileged position. Muslims typically are viewed as being somewhere in between, eager for an end to the war but opposed to increasing LTTE control over the Northern and Eastern provinces. While the KAPS data certainly confirm the existence of significant differences in attitudes toward peace, especially between the Sinhalese and the minority populations, the data also demonstrate that these differences are exaggerated.

There are only minor differences in support for peace among Sri Lanka's minority groups. Eighty-five percent of Tamils, 80% of Muslims, and 78% of "Up-Country Tamils" (Tamils of Indian descent according to Census categorizations) support the majority of peace proposals included in the survey. Majorities of all three groups support virtually all eight proposals except for creation of a Muslim self-governing region, which only 43% of Tamils support. Sinhalese respondents accept fewer of the proposals, but in KAP-II, there is majority Sinhalese support for five of the eight proposals and 43% of Sinhalese support five or more of the eight, including at least several of the proposals most important to Tamils or Muslims.

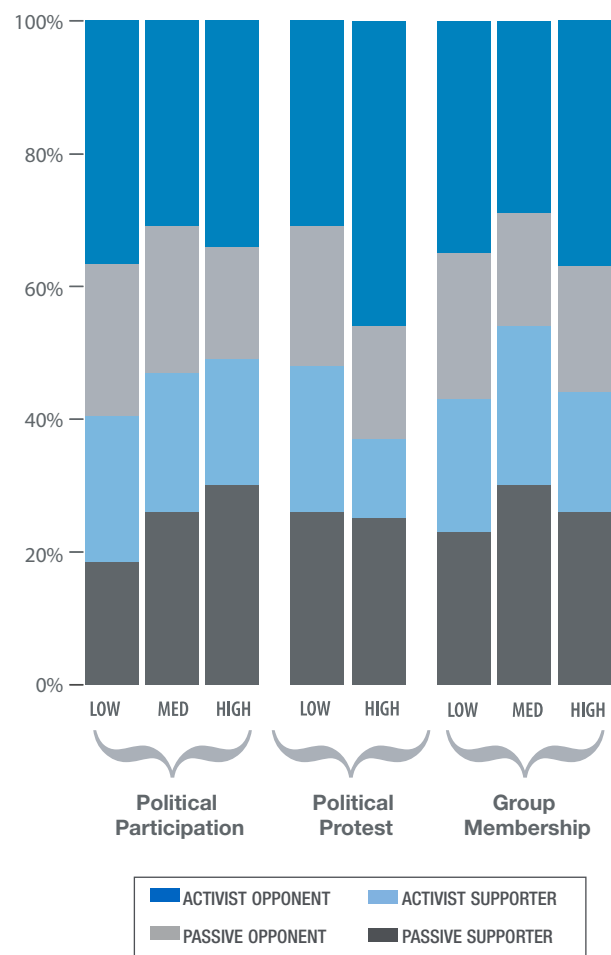
The diversity within the Sinhalese community is especially apparent in the Peace Process Typology. The largest group of Sinhalese is identified as Activist Opponents of the peace process, as conventional wisdom suggests. But this group comprises less than one-third of all Sinhalese. Indeed, the second-largest group of Sinhalese is Activist Supporters. Overall 55% of Sinhalese are classified as either Activist or Passive Opponents of the peace process, but this means that 45% are either Activist or Passive Supporters, a much larger and more significant base of support for peace within this critical ethnic group than previously believed.

Greater levels of consensus across ethnic groups were also seen in the examination of federalism and the perceived responsibility of national or regional government in specific policy areas. As described above, there were clear differences in individual preferences for a greater national role in certain areas, and preferences for a greater regional role in others. What is perhaps most surprising, though, is the strong level of agreement across ethnic groups. Majorities or near majorities of each Sri Lankan ethnic group believe that regional governments should have equal or primary control over areas such as education, transportation, and religion and culture, indicating that even Sinhalese respondents endorse a significant amount of power-sharing in many policy areas. Similarly, some 40% of Tamil respondents and overwhelming majorities of Sinhalese and Muslim respondents endorse at least equal amounts of national responsibility in areas such as national defense and foreign policy. The divergence in public opinion primarily centers on how much, if any, authority regional governments should have in this latter group of policy. Even here, however, public opinion appears somewhat permissive, as one-quarter of Sinhalese respondents favor an equal role for the regional governments, along with one-third of Muslim and nearly one-half of Tamil respondents. This suggests that compromise solutions that provide some, though less than an equal, role for

regional governments in these areas, and an equal or greater than equal role in the more specialized areas related to regional land use, education, culture and the like, would likely enjoy significant support across the entire Sri Lankan population.

Similarly, KAP data contradict the perception that peace process spoilers in Sri Lanka are concentrated in the Southern Province and especially in the nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) political party. According to the surveys, the largest number of Activist Opponents reside in the North Central province, which has been on the front lines of the fighting. Even here there is substantial diversity, with a majority of citizens in this province either supporting the peace process or being only Passive Opponents. Similarly, although it is true that JVP has a larger percentage of Activist Opponents compared to the other major political parties, the KAPS-I data indicate that nearly one-third of JVP supporters are supporters of the peace process and nearly one-quarter are Activist Supporters of peace. The evidence of this diversity should encourage Sinhalese political leaders who support the peace process that they have considerably more latitude among individuals in their own ethnic group to engage in peace negotiations and to consider difficult compromises than the conventional wisdom might lead them to believe.

SRI LANKAN PEACE TYPES BY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, POLITICAL PROTEST AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP



Beyond Ethnicity: Other Factors Affecting Peace Attitudes

While the strength and persistence of ethnic cleavages in Sri Lanka is undeniable, the KAP surveys clearly demonstrate considerable variation within ethnic groups. The data provide strong evidence contradicting popular stereotypes about the size and rigidity of ethnic, territorial, and partisan differences in attitudes toward peace. To understand these differences it is necessary to go beyond ethnicity and consider more generally who supports and opposes particular peace proposals and who is most likely to actively oppose a settlement that is considered unfair. In this regard, the KAP surveys provide the data to test a series of potential explanations or hypotheses about the sources of support and opposition to a negotiated peace agreement.

Demographic Difference: Gender, Age, and Education

The search for explanations “beyond ethnicity” typically begins with demographics on the assumption that experiences associated with gender, age, education, and income predispose individuals to think very differently about war and peace. In fact, contrary to expectations that women are more committed to peace than men, KAP-I and KAP-II find no gender differences in support for the peace process. Women are slightly more likely to be passive and men more likely to be activists on both sides of the issue, but these differences are small. Similarly, the youngest and oldest cohorts of Sri Lankans are not significantly more likely than others to support or oppose peace, although younger citizens are somewhat more activist while older voters tend to be more passive. Peace attitudes also do not vary substantially with income. The only demographic differences that appear to relate to the peace process are education and urban versus rural residence. Citizens with higher formal educations and those living in urban areas are significantly more likely to support the peace process and to be Activist Supporters, whereas lesser educated and rural residents are much less likely to support a broad range of proposals.

Ethnic Identity and Interaction

Another set of explanations for the diversity of attitudes within ethnic groups focuses on the strength of ethnic identity and the extent of ethnic interaction. Those with the strongest ethnic identities are presumed to be the least willing to compromise for peace. In fact, the KAP data do show that those with stronger ethnic identities are more likely to be activists in the peace process, but contrary to expectations they are somewhat more likely to support a larger and more diverse

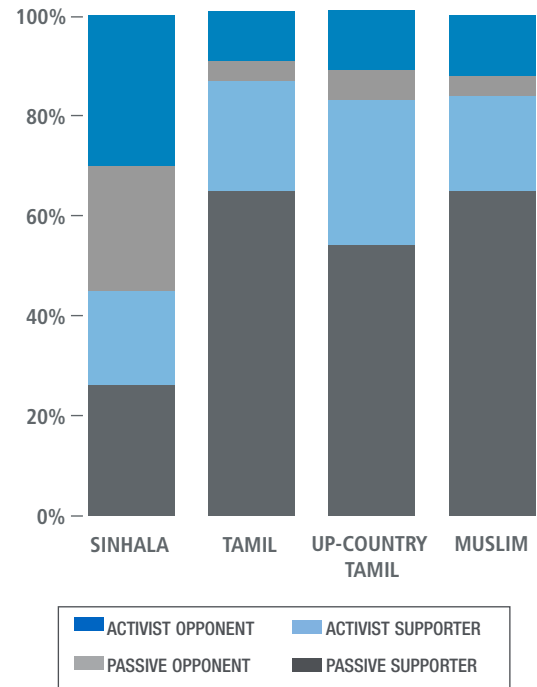
set of peace proposals. The big differences in ethnic attitudes for peace, however, are linked to ethnic knowledge and interaction. The KAP surveys demonstrate very clearly that citizens who know the most about other ethnic groups and have the most regular contact with other ethnic group members are much more likely to support a broad and diverse set of proposals and to be activists. KAP data also show that the ability to speak another group's language is especially important in promoting peace process support and activism—a finding that has important long term implications for resolving Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

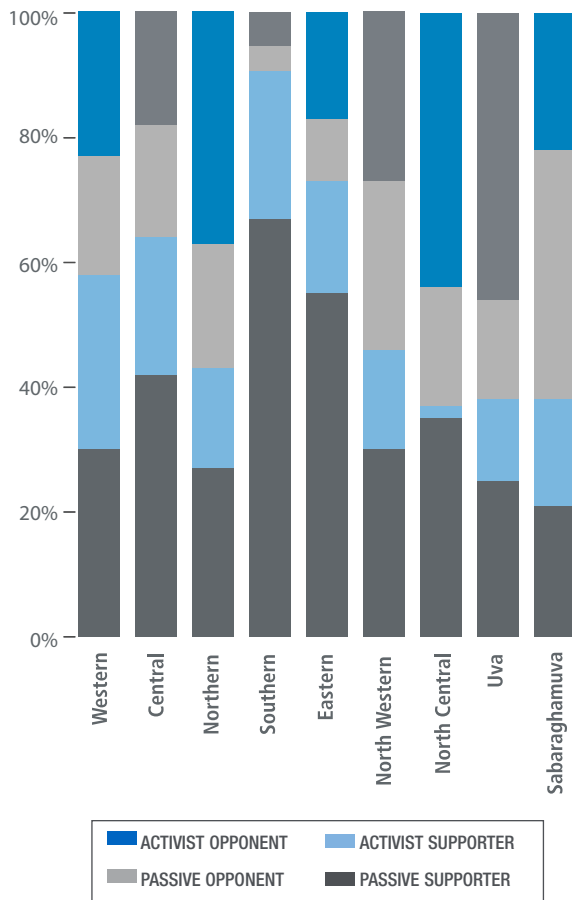
Democratic Values

While democracy is valuable for its own sake, an additional advantage is that those who hold more democratic attitudes are supposed to be more willing to compromise their differences with others. The evidence generated confirms the importance of democratic attitudes for the peace process in Sri Lanka, but also shows that support for democracy in Sri Lanka is the proverbial “mile wide but inch deep.” While virtually all Sri Lankans embrace the idea of democracy in the abstract, KAP-II shows that a majority of citizens also say the country would be better off if governed “by a strong leader who does not have to bother with elections (52%)”; fully 93% favor having “experts, not elected politicians, make decisions according to what is best for the country”; and more than one-third think it would be desirable to “have religious leaders rule.” Those who both support democracy in the abstract and who reject these alternatives are among the strongest and most activist supporters of peace in Sri Lanka. This finding supports those in the NGO and international donor community who believe that democracy building and peace promotion are complementary tasks.

The KAP surveys also show that citizens with greater political knowledge and interest, and especially those more knowledgeable about the peace process, are more supportive of that process and more activist. Those who are more active in conventional political activities in Sri Lanka, however, are modestly less supportive of the peace process. Rather than indicating that political activity reduces support

SRI LANKAN PEACE TYPES BY ETHNICITY



SRI LANKAN PEACE TYPES BY PROVINCE

for the peace process, these data may mean that Sinhalese who are least supportive of peace simply take greater advantage of existing opportunities to participate in politics. At the very least, this finding suggests that those supporting the peace process need to attend more regularly to everyday politics, rather than simply being prepared to protest a peace agreement that they do not like after it is enacted. And it is further evidence that civic education and peace promotion are inextricably linked.

Trust and Social Capital

There is considerable discussion in the NGO community about the importance of social capital for making democracy work. Citizens working together in a variety of social, community, and professional groups are supposed to build interpersonal trust that spills over into trust for political institutions and allows those institutions to reach compromises on controversial issues.

Whatever the importance of social capital for democracy, the KAP results suggest that social capital and political trust have little effect on public attitudes for peace. This actually is a positive finding in the Sri Lankan context, since the evidence shows relatively little social capital in Sri Lanka. Relatively few citizens belong to social groups and those who do are only slightly more supportive of the peace process. The KAP surveys show surprisingly high public trust in Sri Lankan political institutions, but this is largely unrelated to attitudes toward the peace process.

War Experiences and Peace Benefits

As noted above, Sri Lankans have had different levels of involvement in their country's conflict. Muslims, Tamils, and others living in the North and East where the heaviest fighting has occurred are much more likely to have suffered directly than citizens living in the relative security of the South and West. Not surprisingly,

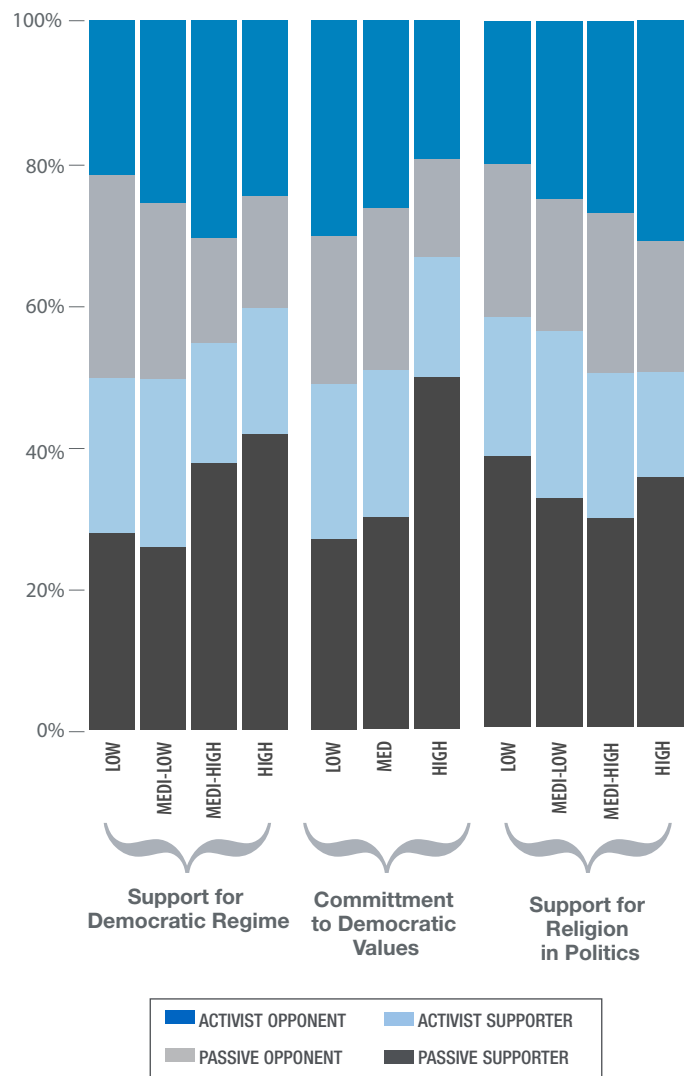
those who have suffered the most and most directly are the most committed to achieving a peace agreement and are most willing to accept a large and diverse set of proposals if that is what is needed to reach an agreement. They also are most willing to protest an unfair or spoiled agreement. Similarly, those most convinced that a peace agreement will have positive benefits and those most fearful of the costs of renewed conflict are most supportive of the peace process. While virtually everyone in Sri Lanka sees some benefits to peace and has some fears about the resumption of war, those whose hopes and fears focus on the costs and benefits of war and peace in terms of political violence, human rights, or individual freedom are much more supportive of the peace process than those who tend to see the costs and benefits mostly in economic terms.

Multivariate Portraits of Peace Supporters and Opponents

While there are subtle differences between Muslims and Tamils, and between “Sri Lankan” and “Indian” (Up-Country) Tamils, these differences pale in comparison to the large gap between the Sinhalese and all others. Nevertheless, even ignoring ethnic differences, many of the factors described above can still account for a substantial part of the variance in support for the peace process and in levels of peace protest or activism. Particularly notable in KAP-II in this regard are the very strong effects of five factors: Peace Process Knowledge, Support for Democratic Values, Extent of Ethnic Interaction, Extent of Formal Education, and Youth (age less than 25 years).

On the whole, younger citizens with higher formal education who have regular contact with other ethnic groups (and speak their language), support democratic values, and

SRI LANKAN PEACE TYPES BY SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC REGIME, COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND SUPPORT FOR RELIGION IN POLITICS



have high levels of knowledge about the peace process are the most supportive of a broad and diverse set of peace proposals and most willing to engage in protest over an agreement that is unfair or against any party that obstructs the peace process. This simple portrait suggests a strategy for promoting peace in the short run through the development of peace and civic education programs designed to increase public knowledge of the peace process and public commitment to democratic values. In the longer term it suggests the value of promoting policies increasing ethnic interaction and creating a genuinely bilingual society. That the young and better educated also are among the most committed to peace provides a measure of optimism about the future. If a peace agreement can be achieved in the short term, factors like these may help to sustain the peace in the longer term.

PERSUASION FOR PEACE: USING SURVEYS TO CHANGE PUBLIC OPINION

In addition to reflecting current opinion, the goal of public opinion research in conflict settings is to help change public opinion in ways more favorable to peace. Knowing that certain proposals are more popular than others, or more popular across different ethnic groups than others, is valuable information for policy makers or negotiators in crafting peace agreements. It may be wise, for example, for initial discussions between the contending parties to focus on areas that enjoy widespread public support, before moving on to more divisive issues. Similarly, knowing where and among which demographic or partisan groupings opposition to peace is most concentrated can help generate specific appeals or public information campaigns to mobilize or intensify support for the peace process. Knowing the patterns of media usage for supporters and opponents of the process can also help specify radio, television, or newspaper outlets that will have greater chance of reaching the target audience for given peace messages.

Surveys can also test more directly the ways to change public opinion about peace. They can assess the effectiveness of different messages in altering public opinion in ways more favorable towards peace. Some new methods in survey research can provide information to respondents to see how they react; others present different messages to different individuals and compare their responses; still others present messages that are specifically designed to counter the opinions that a given individual had expressed earlier during the survey interview. All these methods share a conception of surveys as a dynamic conversational process between the interviewer and the respondent, a process that can mimic the actual or potential rhetoric of political elites about the conflict and suggest ways that individuals may

be persuaded to endorse specific proposals and internalize more favorable overall attitudes about the peace process. KAP-II used three such tests: Peace “Bundles,” Peace “Frames,” and Peace Counterarguments. Each illuminated how individuals opposed to some aspect of the peace process can be moved to more favorable positions.

Peace “Bundles”

One way to persuade individuals to accept specific proposals for peace is to link them with other proposals into a larger peace package or “bundle” that explicitly calls for compromises or trade-offs. The idea is that individuals may be willing to accept a package of two or more proposals even if they do not favor each one separately. Given that peace agreements by definition contain multiple bundles of proposals, the testing of specific peace bundles in a survey research context can produce useful information regarding which packages will elicit greatest public support, as well as useful information on ways to present peace agreements to the public to produce the most acceptance.

For example, a contentious issue in the Sri Lankan peace process is the presence of so-called “high security zones” in the Northern and Eastern provinces, which many in the country, and especially in the Sinhalese community, believe are necessary to protect individuals in those areas from LTTE violence. Only 40% of all Sri Lankans, and only 30% of Sinhalese, accepted the “dismantling of high security zones in the Northern and Eastern provinces” when this question was posed in the KAPS-II survey. In a later section on peace bundling, however, respondents were informed that “sometimes proposals are more acceptable when they are put together as packages,” and then a question linked the dismantling of high security zones in the Northern and Eastern provinces with a more popular proposal among Sinhalese, the placing of all LTTE heavy weapons under the control of a neutral international force. Given this trade-off, support for the bundle rose to 70% among Sinhalese, indicating that individuals in the majority community could accept a peace package that offset a highly unpopular proposal with one that they generally support. The end result was that the large initial difference between ethnic Sinhalese and ethnic Tamil respondents on the high security zone issue was nearly wiped out when the issue was combined in the peace bundle, as 74% of Tamils also accepted the bundle. Thus the bundling strategy in this case produced not only large movement in Sinhalese opinion, but also a package that would yield a high degree of consensual acceptance within both major ethnic groups.

Several points about peace bundles are worthy of note. First, the bundle must be phrased explicitly in the language of trade-offs or compromise. In this case, the wording read as follows: “The LTTE would place all of their heavy weapons under the control of a neutral international force, in return for which the Government would eliminate all High Security Zones from the Northern and Eastern Provinces”. Thus the “bundling” concept goes further than a formulation of whether a respondent would accept a proposal “for the sake of” a general peace agreement; in the bundling questions the respondent is forced to make a specific trade-off and accept both proposals as part of a single peace package.

Second, the responses to the peace bundle may be compared in different ways to the responses given to the individual proposals that make up the bundle. As noted above, the percentage who would accept the bundle might be compared with the percentage who would accept the “least popular” component of the bundle, in this case the elimination of high security zones. One could also compare the percentage who would accept the bundle to the percentage who would accept both of the individual proposals when considered separately. The goal of this process is to generate public support for both components of the overall peace package, and so the relevant baseline is the percentage of the public who favor both proposals in the absence of the bundling process. In the above example, just over 30% agree with both the elimination of high security zones and the placement of LTTE weapons under international control, indicating that the bundle generated a “persuasion effect” of nearly 40 percentage points. Finally, one could compare the percentage who would accept the bundle to the percentage who would only accept the “most popular” component of the bundle. Here, over 85% of Sri Lankans favor the decommissioning of LTTE weapons; compared to the 71% who accept the bundle, it is clear that at least 14% of respondents have intense enough opposition to the elimination of high security zones that they will not “give it up” even in return for something that they find otherwise highly desirable. Comparisons such as these provide useful information about the extent to which bundling may favorably persuade segments of the public towards peace.

A variety of issues and potential bundles should be presented to respondents, and the bundles should match as closely as possible the actual trade-offs and proposals debated in a given conflict situation. With bundles involving the same proposals, it is also possible to determine which specific pairing of proposals will produce the greatest level of public support. In KAPS-II, for example, the decommissioning of LTTE weapons

was bundled with several other proposals, including the LTTE's principal demand of an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) in the Northern and Eastern provinces. This proposal by itself was favored by 35% of Sri Lankans, only 5 percentage points fewer than favored the elimination of high security zones. Nevertheless, the bundle was accepted by only 42% of respondents, some 30% fewer than accepted the guns–high security zone bundle. Evidently, opposition to the ISGA was of such intensity that bundling it with even a very popular proposal persuaded very few additional Sri Lankans to support it. Such a finding indicates that individuals in conflict settings can make relatively sophisticated estimates of the trade-offs involved in peace packages, and that only certain bundles will lead to public acceptance of proposals that were initially opposed when considered in isolation. This is critical information for peace negotiators as well as those who wish to “sell” peace packages to a potentially recalcitrant public.

Peace “Frames”

Another way that individuals may be persuaded to accept proposals for peace is to encourage them to think about the peace process or the conflict situation from a particular perspective or point of view. Peace “frames” provide meaning to events or make connections between different aspects of a public issue or controversy. The frame identifies what is most important about the controversy, with public opinion about the issue following more or less directly from the considerations that are cued or activated by the frame itself. For example, ethnic separatist conflicts may be viewed through multiple perspectives such as the frame of “justifiable response of ethnic minorities to past oppression,” the frame of “violent and illegal secessionism that will weaken the nation-state,” and others. Given frames’ effects on public opinion, advocates on each side of social and political controversies often fiercely contest them, as political elites attempt to craft rhetorical strategies that will enable “their” frame to become the dominant lens through which the public understands an issue. Individuals accepting the “past oppression” frame, for example, would tend to be much more likely than others to support proposals that establish a federal or two-state solution to the conflict, while individuals accepting the “illegal secessionism” frame would be much more likely to support proposals that call for disarmament before serious negotiations begin.

KAP-II attempted to apply these ideas to peace surveys, under the assumption that activating certain frames or perspectives could potentially persuade individuals towards more supportive peace attitudes. That is, it was assumed that opposition to peace proposals could be overcome if individuals could think about the conflict

“It’s a very positive account in terms of what surveys can do in illuminating public opinion on issues of conflict, and also about persuading people to be more accepting of the sorts of compromises needed to bring the conflict to resolution.”

—William Mishler, University of Arizona and KAP survey consultant

in ways that triggered sympathy for other ethnic groups, or that activated considerations of the benefits to one’s own group or the country as a whole of ending the violence and reaching a peaceful settlement. If different peace frames persuade individuals to support the peace process, then elites can adopt rhetorical strategies that emphasize the perspectives in the most successful frames to increase public support for specific proposals or peace packages.

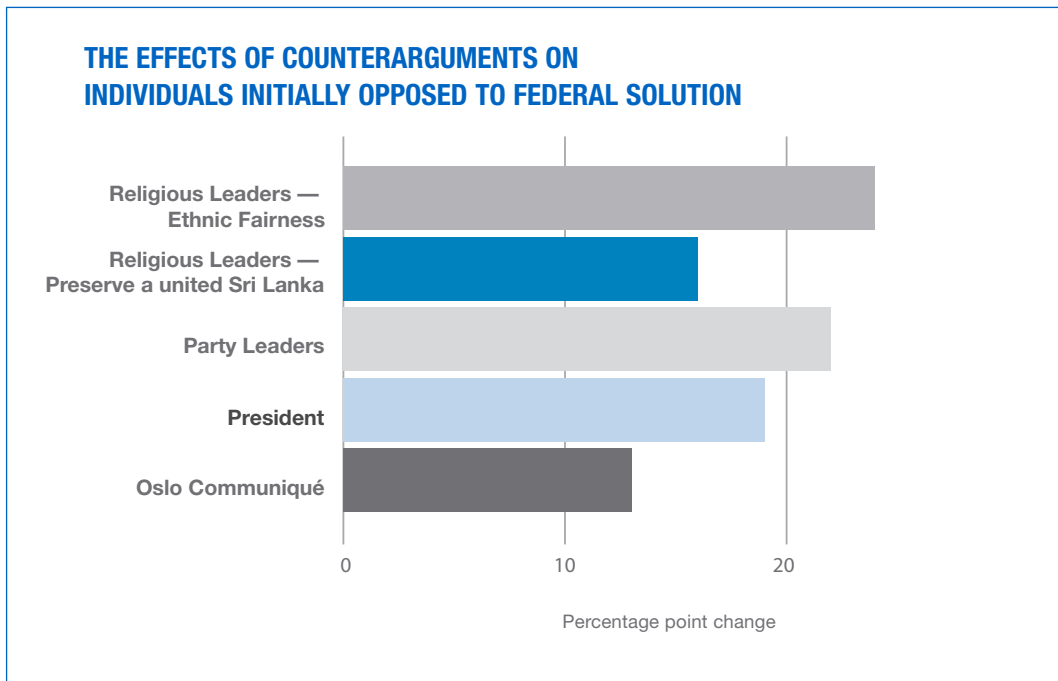
Testing the effects of frames in a survey situation is relatively straightforward, though it does require advanced technical capabilities in survey administration discussed in the next chapter. The procedure is to present individuals at random with different introductory statements about the conflict that serve to contextualize or frame the way that respondents view the situation before they answer questions on specific peace proposals or bundles. For half of the sample, no specific information was given before respondents were asked about a series of peace proposals; thus these individuals are the “control” group against which the other respondents are compared. These other respondents randomly heard four different introductory “frames” to the conflict situation:

“Now I’m going to ask you about some more specific peace proposals that have been discussed recently...”

...Many of these proposals have been developed to address long-standing grievances of Sri Lanka’s ethnic minorities and their desire for greater self-government.” **ETHNIC GRIEVANCE FRAME**

...Many of these proposals have been developed to permanently end the violence that has taken thousands of lives and injured or displaced thousands of others from their homes over the past several decades.” **END VIOLENCE FRAME**

...Many of these proposals have been developed so that Sri Lanka can develop economically, benefit from foreign assistance, and provide all citizens with an improved standard of living.” **ECONOMIC GAIN FRAME**



...Many of these proposals have been developed to prevent the break-up of the country and ensure the permanent unity of Sri Lanka.” **PREVENT BREAK-UP FRAME**

The frames captured the main ways that the Sri Lankan public and political elites view the conflict and the peace process, as well as the main ways that different ethnic groups view the conflict. Hence, the frames show how Sinhalese respondents react when stimulated to take the Tamil perspective and view the conflict in terms of the long-standing grievances of the country’s ethnic minorities, or how Tamil respondents react when stimulated to take the Sinhalese perspective of preventing the break-up of the country. The other frames directed toward ending the violence and stimulating economic gains may have more universal appeal.

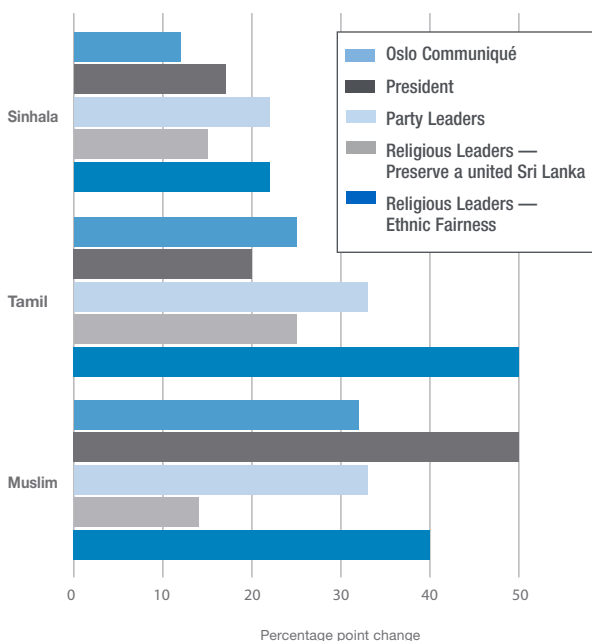
The results of the framing experiments in KAP-II were much weaker than those for the peace bundles, yet there were several significant and substantively interesting effects. Stimulating Sinhalese individuals to think about the conflict in terms of ethnic grievances, for example, produced a 9% increase in support for the ISGA. Similar to the bundling process described above, the framing process increased support for this proposal from about one-quarter of the Sinhalese community to nearly one-third. The use of the ethnic grievance frame also increased Sinhalese support for the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, as did the

end violence frame and, to a lesser extent, the frame of promoting economic growth and development. In general, the frames of ethnic grievance and economic gain most strongly affected Sinhalese responses. In contrast, Tamil responses to the “ethnic grievance” frame were often less conciliatory towards the demands of other ethnic groups, indicating that heightening an already strong sense of ethnic grievance served to intensify Tamil opposition to proposals perceived as benefiting other ethnic groups. For Tamils, the most promising rhetorical frame was that of ending violence.

Framing experiments are a promising means of exploring the persuasibility of peace attitudes. But the experience from KAP-II suggests that a one-sentence introduction is probably not sufficient to activate most frames adequately in an individual’s mind. Especially in ethnically oriented conflicts, the existing frame through which most individuals view the conflict is likely to be relatively well entrenched, and overcoming this pre-existing frame necessitates a more sustained strategy of introducing counter-frames that can persuade individuals to adopt more favorable attitudes towards peace. Showing any movement in public opinion from the mild experimental manipulations introduced, however, shows that framing does matter in the persuasion process, and that elites can benefit from the information

supplied in surveys to crafting specific frames and appeals that can produce the largest positive changes in opinion towards peace.

THE EFFECTS OF COUNTERARGUMENTS ON INDIVIDUALS INITIALLY OPPOSED TO FEDERAL SOLUTION BY THE THREE MAJOR ETHNICITIES



Peace Counterarguments

A third way that surveys can examine the potential for persuasion towards peace is perhaps the most direct included in the KAP surveys to date. In this experiment, individuals were asked a general question about a federal solution to the Sri Lankan peace conflict. Then, depending on their initial answer, respondents were presented with a randomly selected counterargument that attempted to “talk them out” of their initial view. The counterargument technique is based on the view that individuals do not necessarily have one fixed opinion on peace or other policy issues; rather they are actively processing new information and arguments and adjusting their views

accordingly. In this view, the individual's first response to a policy question is something of an "opening bid," representing an initial position that may be altered through persuasive new appeals. Of course, this reflects the give and take of political argument in "real world" settings, and as such the technique can be seen as a survey-based laboratory to examine the effectiveness of different appeals, arguments, and counterarguments in changing minds.

The procedure for using surveys to test counterarguments is straightforward, but, again, requires some advanced skills in survey administration. First, all respondents were asked:

"Some people think that a federal solution, in which power is shared between the national and regional governments, is necessary to any peace agreement. Others disagree and prefer the current centralized system. How about you? Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree that a federal solution is necessary to any peace agreement?"

Then, depending on the response, the interviewer attempted to talk respondents into changing their positions. Individuals who either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that a federal solution was necessary then heard a counterargument with possible disadvantages of federal systems:

"Would your opinion be different if you knew that some party leaders feel that federal systems have higher taxes, and regions have less influence in important national decisions affecting defense and foreign affairs? In that case, do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree that a federal solution is necessary to any peace agreement?"

Most important were cases in which individuals either "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with the initial federalism question, or who "neither agreed nor disagreed" with the question. They heard one of five potential counterarguments, selected at random. The statements were designed to capture real arguments that different stakeholders advance in favor of federalism in Sri Lanka, and also to vary the source of the argument in order to determine which political or social actors could be most influential in articulating successful appeals for a federal solution.

The five counterarguments were as follows:

OSLO: “Would your opinion be different if you knew that the government and the LTTE agreed to a federal solution in the Oslo Accord of 2000?”

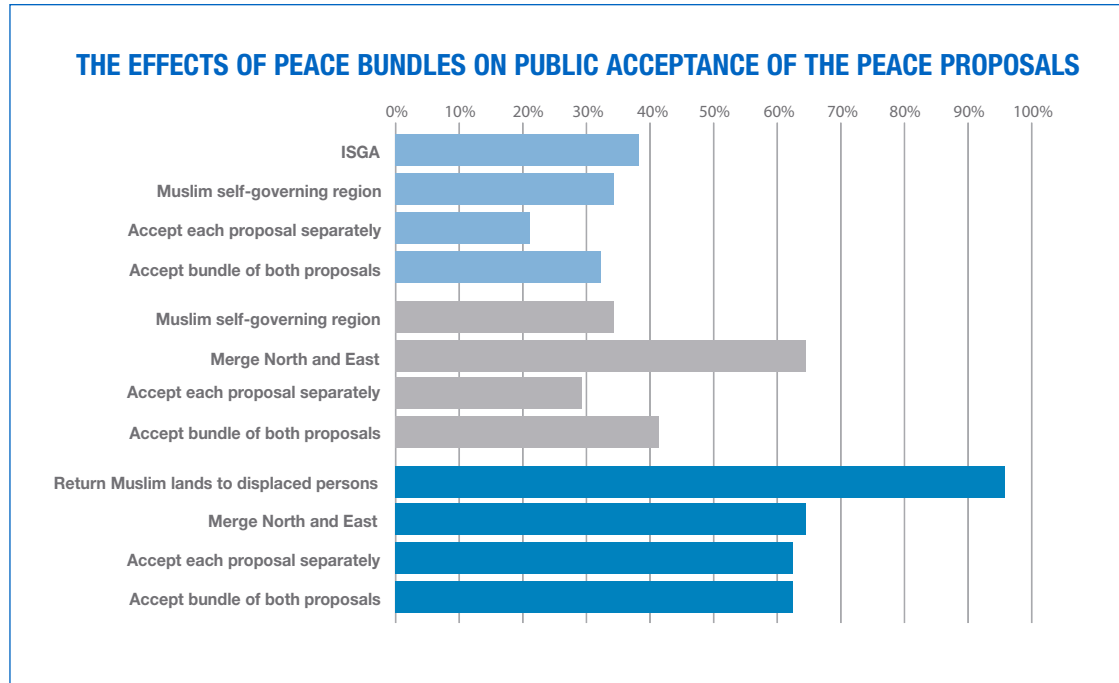
PRESIDENT: “Would your opinion be different if you knew that President Kumaratunga advocated a federal solution in her 1994 peace proposal?”

PARTY LEADERS—REGIONAL CONTROL: “Would your opinion be different if you knew that some party leaders feel that a federal solution would give your region greater independence from the national government and more control over its economic and other affairs?”

RELIGIOUS LEADERS—PRESERVE COUNTRY: “Would your opinion be different if you knew that religious leaders feel that a federal solution is the only way to avoid a separate state in the North East and preserve a united Sri Lanka?”

RELIGIOUS LEADERS—ETHNIC GROUP FAIRNESS: “Would your opinion be different if you knew that religious leaders feel that a federal solution is the best way to ensure that all ethnic groups are treated fairly and equitably?”

The results indicate that counterarguments can be highly effective in moving public opinion. In this case, opinions on federalism are relatively malleable, with about one-third of all respondents changing their minds after hearing a single counterargument. This indicates much room to influence public opinion as the issue unfolds in concrete peace negotiations. Second, and perhaps less optimistically, the KAP-II results showed that opinion changes were asymmetric—it was easier to talk individuals out of their initial support for a federal solution than it was to talk individuals out of their initial opposition. This asymmetry suggests that pro-federalism opinions will need more sustained reinforcement in order to withstand what may be the “natural” proclivities of many respondents against a federal solution.



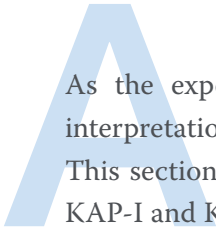
Finally, the results indicate that the most successful counterargument in favor of federalism is that attributed to religious leaders who argue that a federal solution is necessary to ensure fairness to all of Sri Lanka's ethnic groups. This counterargument produced a change in nearly one-quarter of those who initially opposed federalism. Another powerful counterargument, from party leaders who argue that federalism will increase regional autonomy and independence, produced a change in 22% of all initially opposed respondents. In contrast, counterarguments based on the past positions and agreements of the negotiating parties (the government, the President, and the LTTE) proved much less powerful persuasive stimuli. The appeals that resonate most strongly with Sri Lankan respondents are those centered around issues of ethnic fairness and regional autonomy, and those articulated by trusted social elites.

“Not only are you asking questions, you are also educating the people, and I think this is important. A lot of people might not have thought about [an issue] before they were asked, and this might even start a thinking process, a kind of public discourse.”

—Gudrun Kramer, Policy Director, Austrian Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution

The KAP experience shows that the counterargument procedure can be an effective means of exploring the dynamics of public opinion and the potential for “persuasion for peace.” If possible, the content and the source of the argument should both be randomly assigned, such that (as used here) religious leaders sometimes articulate arguments based on ethnic fairness and sometimes based on regional autonomy, as would party elites, the President, or other potential sources. This helps determine which appeals made by which specific actors would have the greatest potential persuasive power. And, as with the framing experiment above, more elaborate counterarguments should be employed than one-sentence manipulations. But the evidence in these initial tests suggests that this technique can provide highly useful information to political elites, donors, and civil society groups about the specific ways that they can craft appeals to talk individuals into (and out of) opinions that support the peace process.

CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN CONDUCTING SURVEYS IN CONFLICT AREAS



As the experience in Sri Lanka shows, survey design, implementation, and interpretation must address political and technical issues to elicit useful results. This section describes some of these issues and how they were dealt with in the KAP-I and KAP-II surveys.

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conflict situations are politically sensitive by definition, and these sensitivities affect survey content, sampling, and analysis. They also point to the necessity for stakeholder buy-in at all stages of the process.

Political Sensitivities

In a conflict situation, the various parties know that knowledge is power in their negotiations and, therefore, are reluctant to share information about their members' attitudes and values that the other side in negotiations might use. Political sensitivities are likely to be especially acute in electoral democracies such as Sri Lanka, where ending the conflict and achieving peace almost inevitably become domestic political issues on whose management the government's electoral fortunes substantially depend. In Sri Lanka, the UNP and SLFP, the two largest Sinhalese parties, have jockeyed for position on the peace issue for many years with the JVP, the third largest party, happy to appeal to its nationalist base by playing the role of peace process spoiler. Minority parties are less likely to face electoral challenges on peace, but are no less eager than the government and opposition parties to manage information about their members that might be used against them in negotiations.

Apart from domestic considerations, conflicts often are rife with international sensitivities created by the geopolitical and economic interests of other nations and the involvement within the country of international and other national agencies and organizations. These sensitivities have been substantially heightened in the post-9/11 context, given the increased focus of the United States on terrorism and

the tendency of those involved in civil wars to be labeled as terrorists by both the local government and the United States. In this regard, the United States has labeled the LTTE as a terrorist group for some time, which prevents anyone supported by U.S. funding from direct contact with the group or its members.

Political sensitivities affect almost all aspects of the survey process from developing the questionnaire and constructing a sampling frame to analyzing the data and disseminating the results. In questionnaire design, the issue is not only which questions to include or exclude (each side has issues that they would prefer not make its way onto a survey), but also how to word the questions asked. Should, for example, a question be phrased about public support for “granting amnesty to those involved in the conflict,” which would apply to government soldiers and to LTTE cadre, or should it ask about support for “granting amnesty to those who committed illegal violence against civilians in the conflict,” which government supporters would interpret as amnesty only for the LTTE since they view violence by soldiers as legal by definition?

In addition to content, quality surveys depend upon the construction of a national probability sample that requires equal access to all parts of the country. But in conflict areas, large parts of the country may be controlled by anti-government forces that typically are suspicious of outsiders, especially those who want to enter the territory to conduct a survey. Under these circumstances, one either must negotiate access with the insurgents or settle for a sample that excludes a segment of the country. In Sri Lanka, the LTTE substantially controls several provinces, making it necessary to exclude these areas from the sampling frame. To compensate for this, Tamils in non-LTTE areas were “over-sampled” and Tamil responses in former LTTE areas were compared with those from areas never controlled by the LTTE. However, the absence of LTTE areas in the sampling frame remains one of the principal weaknesses of the survey and a focal point for critics of the results.

Political sensitivities also weigh heavily on the analysis of the data. A telling example occurred early in the construction of the Peace Typology, which, as described earlier, distinguishes four groups of citizens based on how many peace proposals they accept and how willing they are to protest what they perceive as an unfair agreement. Initially those who supported a majority of proposals and expressed high protest potential were called “Militants,” while those who opposed a majority of proposals and expressed high protest potential were called “Spoilers.” Tamil and

Muslim respondents fell heavily in the Militant categories, while Sinhalese respondents were disproportionately identified as Spoilers. When this preliminary typology was first unveiled at a public meeting, Sinhalese members of the audience immediately attacked the labels, arguing that it is possible to oppose the specific peace proposals presented in the survey while still strongly supporting peace. Tamils similarly objected to the “Militant” label as unnecessarily pejorative. No amount of explanation could change minds, and once the issue was raised, almost nothing else in the report was of interest except for these controversial labels. After many efforts to find alternate language, the labels “Activist Peace Process Supporters,” often shortened to “Activist Supporters,” and “Activist Peace Process Opponents,” shortened to “Activist Opponents,” were considered acceptable. The word “Spoiler” was retired altogether. But even these modified labels continued to be problematic and generated controversy among government supporters.

Although it is possible to anticipate and control for political sensitivities in the analysis and reporting of the data, the proverbial genie is out of the bottle once the data are made public. The KAP-I and KAP-II final reports were carefully written and thoroughly vetted prior to publication to avoid the most obvious political controversies. Although there have been some minor flaps, the reports have been generally well received and devoid of major controversy. However, once made public the reports became grist for the highly partisan press, which routinely reports data out of context; presents only one side of an argument that is carefully balanced in the report itself; “spins” a different and partisan interpretation of data; and otherwise misrepresents, distorts, and in extreme cases, completely fabricates arguments and evidence that is then falsely attributed to a source. Of course, since the press reports of the KAP surveys were much more widely circulated and read than the reports themselves, there was considerable room for political mischief if dissemination was not carefully managed.

Stakeholder Buy-In

Because of political sensitivities, principal stakeholders in the peace process must “buy in” to the survey from the start. In Sri Lanka, this was achieved through a multistage process. First, Social Indicator (SI), the nonprofit survey research firm selected to conduct the survey, assembled an advisory committee that met periodically during the construction and analysis of the survey instrument to help identify political sensitivities and find ways around them. Second, when the project consultants first visited Sri Lanka before the survey was constructed, they met with

many of these stakeholders, including government officials and civil servants, members of the media, and members of the large NGO community, to discuss very generally the uses of social surveys in conflict situations before people could become concerned about specific questions or wording. They also met individually and in small groups with a diverse set of leaders, journalists, and academics to identify the key peace proposals desired by different sides so that the KAP surveys would ask about a full and fair set of proposals.

A preliminary questionnaire was shared with the SI advisory committee for their reaction, which included a fair degree of word-smithing. For example, there is no direct translation into Sinhalese of the English word “compromise,” a critical concept in the survey. The advisory committee suggested contextually appropriate, alternative ways of getting at the concept. USAID representatives, the U.S. Ambassador, and a USAID advisory group of NGO leaders also reviewed the questionnaire. This step was valuable both to ensure the quality of the questionnaire and engage the support of those groups when the KAP results were later produced.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research team is responsible for the ultimate success of the survey. The KAP process relied on three areas of expertise: Sri Lankans with a solid grounding in all facets of the conflict and attempts to resolve it, who could help fashion appropriate questions and potential responses; experts (in this case, two from the United States) in social science survey research methods; and a nonpartisan, credible organization to carry out the survey itself.

The Role of Local and U.S. Academics

The quality of survey research depends heavily on the quality of the sampling frame and the questions asked. Developing a sampling frame is a largely technical undertaking that a good survey research firm can be trained to undertake. Developing a quality questionnaire is a more difficult enterprise. While it is relatively straightforward to construct a poll designed to provide simple descriptive information such as how many people support candidate X as opposed to Y, the design process becomes much more difficult when the purposes of the survey, as in peace-related research, are more complex. For example, the purpose of the KAP surveys was not only to understand the level and intensity of support for the peace process in Sri Lanka, but also importantly to understand why different groups support or oppose the process, and how they might be persuaded to become more supportive.

Designing a questionnaire capable of answering the “why” and the “how” questions requires more than technical survey knowledge. It requires a solid grounding in local politics and a sophisticated understanding of public opinion and political behavior theory and research, attributes that commercial survey research firms generally do not possess. In Sri Lanka, Social Indicator is a highly capable survey research firm operated by a talented team of statisticians and other technically trained personnel. No one in the firm, however, has significant credentials in political science or the social sciences more generally. In order to conduct a KAP survey, therefore, SI required the assistance of both Sri Lankan political specialists and specialists in public opinion and behavior. SI found the first in its parent organization, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), whose ranks include lawyers, journalists, and political activists intimately familiar with Sri Lankan politics.

The expertise in survey methods and in research in public opinion and political behavior came from Professors William Mishler and Steven Finkel, U.S. political scientists hired by AED as survey consultants. Mishler and Finkel assisted SI in all phases of the survey, from sample construction to data analysis, but perhaps the most important contribution was in the construction of the questionnaire. Their knowledge of public opinion allowed them to identify the six broad potential explanations or hypotheses about the underlying causes of public attitudes toward the peace process, including democratic values, ethnic interaction, political engagement, and experiences with war. Their knowledge of research conducted in other countries contributed to survey questions that could be validly used in Sri Lanka. Just as they could not have designed a survey sensitive to Sri Lanka’s political context without the assistance of the CPA political specialists, so, too, SI and CPA could not have designed a survey that could effectively answer the “why” and “how” questions without the assistance of these social scientists.

The U.S. academic consultants were important to the project for another reason. They brought credibility to the project and legitimacy to the results. The fact that they have conducted numerous surveys in diverse parts of the world, publish extensively, and possess advanced statistical and methodological skills gave them stature in Sri Lanka, which made critics cautious at least about criticizing the technical aspects of the project and more willing to defer on such matters. Their technical skills, combined with the fact that they were clearly non-partisan and not affiliated with any of the parties in the conflict, means that the KAP reports enjoy greater legitimacy across a wider audience. Indeed, when the partisan press has

used KAP results irresponsibly, a response by SI or CPA setting the record straight and invoking the quality of the analysis usually has been sufficient to put the issue to rest.

Survey Firm Capacity

A survey project is only as good as the survey firm that carries it out. No matter how good the consultants or how sensitive the planning process, the results can be seriously undermined if the firm does not carefully implement the sampling frame. The project is doomed if the firm is careless in translating the interview from English into local languages; employs poorly educated or insufficiently trained interviewers; fails to properly supervise, monitor, and back check field work; is careless in coding and entering the data; or otherwise compromises standards in any of the myriad steps from the beginning to the end of the data collection stage. For this reason it is critical to engage a local survey firm with a commitment to quality work (and not just to the profit line) and with the technical and administrative skills needed to conduct sophisticated surveys.

Beyond technical experience, it also is important that the survey firm be nonpartisan and unaffiliated with any of the parties to the conflict. Because of the political sensitivities involved, the credibility of the survey firm is critical to the credibility of the results. Experience suggests that such high quality, nonpartisan survey firms do not exist in all countries, especially in the developing world. SI is unusual for the technical and administrative skills it possesses and for its clear commitment to do quality work. For this reason, AED will need to pay even more attention to capacity building in order to use surveys effectively in other conflict situations.

TECHNICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE SURVEY PROCESS

Surveys, particularly those conducted in conflict settings, pose technical challenges as well. In Sri Lanka, these challenges included sampling of all ethnic groups, compensating for areas of the country off limits to the survey, interviewer training, and missing data.

Sampling

Surveys in conflict areas present formidable challenges in generating representative samples of the adult population as a whole and particularly the politically relevant factions. Many challenges are common ones faced by survey researchers in all

developing contexts, such as the lack of reliable information on the numbers of individuals residing in particular areas of the country and the lack of sampling frames such as precinct lists or telephone exchanges for random digit-dialing purposes. But conflict settings present unique sampling challenges as well. As noted above, in many instances portions of the country are not under the control of the central government, and negotiating with the breakaway group or party that could provide access to those areas is likely to be difficult or, as in Sri Lanka, legally prohibited. Moreover, in conflict settings it is crucial but exceedingly difficult to obtain representative samples of each of the ethnic groups because population figures for ethnic groups can usually be obtained only at the level of a province or large district, and not at the level of neighborhoods, villages, or smaller aggregations. Thus, for example, the researcher may know that the proportion of Tamils in a given district is 10%, but not which villages, towns, or neighborhoods contain the vast majority of Tamils in that district.

The procedure utilized in Sri Lanka illustrates these potential problems well. The goal in KAP-I was to obtain at least 100 interviews from each of the country's 21 districts under the government's control; in KAP-II that figure was increased to 167 due to changes in the overall study design that allowed more interviews to be undertaken. Census information from 2001 provided the proportion of each ethnic group residing in all districts, except for the Northern and Eastern provinces where the most recent information came from the 1981 (pre-war) census. This procedure generated the desired number of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim respondents from each district. At this point, the ideal procedure would have been to randomly select small neighborhood units within districts (known as Grama Niladaris, or GNs) and begin a random-walk process until the requisite number of interviews with respondents from each ethnic group was completed. But given the high degree of ethnic segregation in the country, this procedure would have been prohibitively expensive and time-consuming, as many of the selected GNs, for example, contain no Tamil respondents, in which case Tamil-speaking interviewers would have traveled to those areas but completed no interviews. This procedure would likely have increased the time and expense necessary for fieldwork exponentially.

“One of the lessons learned is the importance of carrying out the survey through a local NGO as opposed to a professional survey organization, as it creates an opportunity for capacity building of a local NGO in this particular skill set.”

—Kim DeRidder,
SLPSP Chief of Party

Instead, the sampling relied on SI's own records of the "Sinhalese," "Tamil," "Muslim," and "Mixed" GNs from each district, based on experiences with surveys in the past. Given a total number of desired Tamil or Muslim respondents in a district, SI then randomly selected from their "known" list of Tamil or Muslim or Mixed GNs and sent the appropriate number of interviewers to those areas. This procedure, of course, may miss some GNs simply because they had not been included in previous studies, and thus it cannot be absolutely certain that all GNs had an equal (or known) likelihood of inclusion in the survey.

"If you do not have a skilled enumerator/field researcher, they [the respondents] will just go away halfway through the interview."

—Pradeep Peiris, Unit Head
and KAP Survey Coordinator,
Social Indicator

Equally important, the procedure results in one additional and important potential source of bias. Given that most GNs are designated to be "Tamil" or "Sinhalese," only Tamil or Sinhalese respondents are contacted in those areas. Consequently the sample contains very few, if any, respondents who are in the ethnic minority of a given GN: that is, the sample contains few Sinhalese who reside in majority-Tamil GNs, few Tamils who reside in majority-Sinhalese GNs, and so forth. These individuals may be significantly different than, for example, Sinhalese who reside in majority-Sinhalese GNs. To the extent that their peace-related attitudes differ (as would seem likely), the overall estimates of public opinion obtained in the KAP surveys will be biased as the number of these kinds of individuals increases.

There are no easy solutions to these problems, given the lack of reliable ethnic population figures at the GN or equivalent level and the budgetary constraints facing most survey organizations in developing contexts. What is necessary is at least to understand and acknowledge these potential sources of bias, and attempt as best as possible to minimize them in a given survey situation. In the Sri Lankan case, SI was encouraged to strengthen its record-keeping on ethnic GNs and especially to note instances of "mixed" GNs where both Sinhalese and Tamil-speaking interviewers can be sent. Hiring more multilingual interviewers can help minimize these problems as well, as the same person can interview respondents from the "majority" community in a given GN as well as the stray "minority" respondent who may be contacted.

One final technical issue related to sampling is important to note. It will often be necessary to over-sample certain ethnic or demographic groupings in a conflict setting. For example, if normal sampling procedures were used in Sri Lanka, then a random sample of 2,100 individuals would have yielded only about 330 Tamil respondents, or about 15 per district, and about 170 Muslims, or about 8 per district. These are clearly not large enough numbers from which to make reliable estimates of Tamil or Muslim opinion, especially when moving beyond ethnicity to examine the demographic and political correlates of opinion within each ethnic group. Over-sampling the groups by some known factor in order to produce the desired number of respondents from each ethnicity can alleviate this problem. In KAP-I, the goal was at least 500 respondents from each ethnic group, and more in KAPS-II, given the number of experimental conditions tested as outlined in the previous section. Over-sampling is a straightforward process, as long as the data are post-weighted by the inverse of the over-sampling factor when analyzing the data to produce estimates of the overall opinion of the Sri Lankan population. If estimates of opinion for only the Tamil, or only the Sinhalese population, considered separately are needed, these post-weights need not be applied, although the data may still require other kinds of weights to adjust for differential population or district size.

Interviewer Training

While bias can be introduced into surveys at virtually all stages of the process, from sampling procedures to question wording to the presentation of results, probably no stage is more prone to error than the face-to-face conversation that takes place between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviewers are the principal agents of the survey; they are the only ones who actually speak to respondents, ask them the agreed-upon questions in the agreed-upon order and format, and register their responses in standardized formats that allow for later tabulation and statistical analysis. If interviewers fail in any of these tasks, then the quality of the data that they gather will be worthless. For this reason it is absolutely essential for the survey organization, in collaboration with the project consultants, to devote considerable time and resources to the training of interviewers and to pre-testing the survey instrument. This is even more important in complex surveys related to peace, as the KAP experience made clear.

In both KAP surveys, interviewer training took place over several days before the data collection began. In these sessions, interviewers were informed about the basic

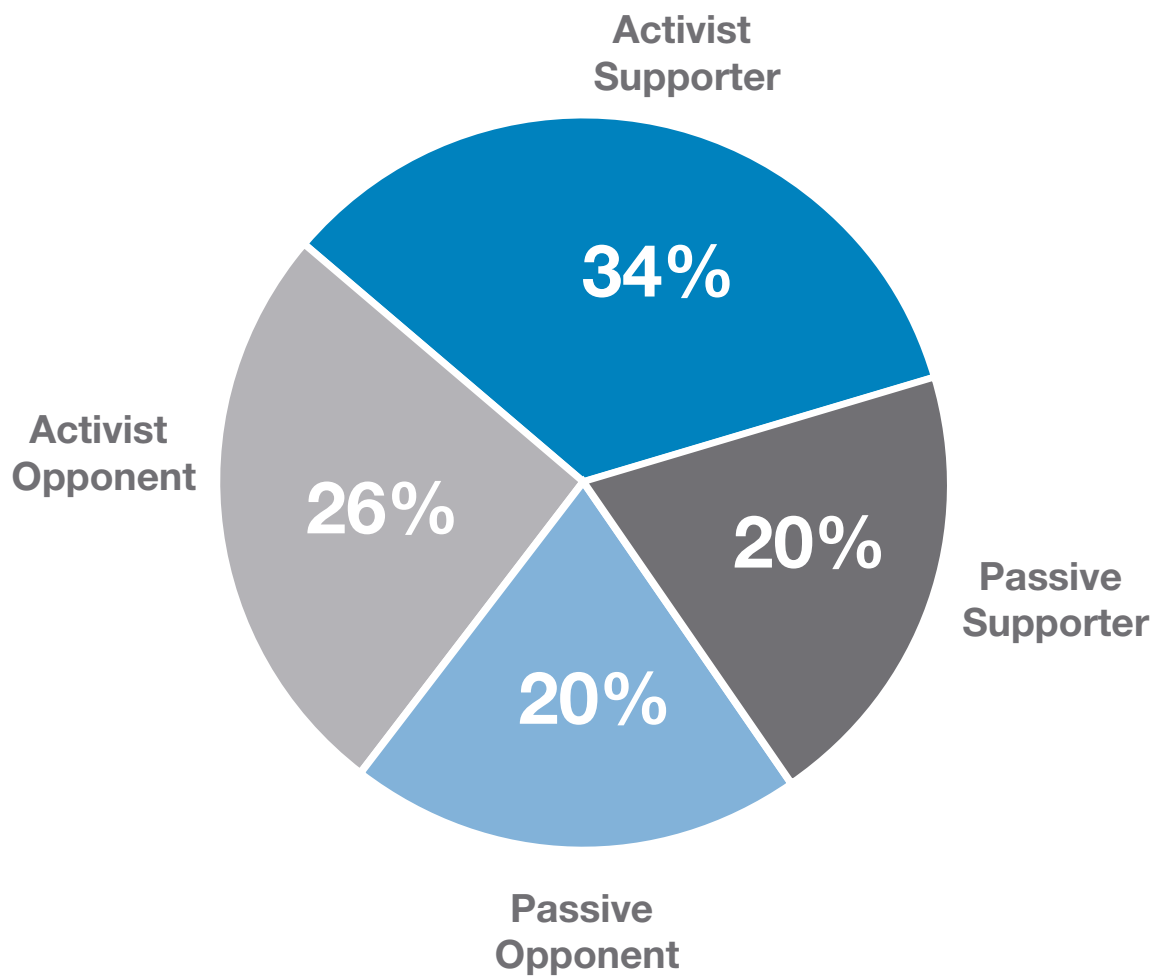
goals of the survey and the expectations that SI had for their performance. In KAP-II it was necessary to spend several hours on the design and implementation of the new “persuasion” modules. In contrast to “normal” surveys where the same questions are asked to every respondent in exactly the same way, in KAP-II’s persuasion modules, individuals were presented at random with different frames that introduced the set of peace proposal questions, and with different counterarguments depending on their initial response to a question related to federalism.

This kind of experimental manipulation within the survey context had never been done before in Sri Lanka, so the training was a concrete form of capacity building for SI and its staff. The SI team implemented these procedures perfectly in the data collection phase, as there was the exact number of completed questionnaires from each version as required by the design, and minimal problems reported by interviewers in the field. Interviewer training was a necessary and invaluable part of the overall survey process.

Missing Data

Part of the interviewer training in both KAP surveys involved the testing of the survey instrument. This step was designed not only to assess the length of the questionnaire and help train the interviewers in how to administer it, but also to show how “ordinary citizens” might respond to the questions and where they might be confused or offended. Interestingly, interviewers from different ethnic backgrounds and regions had very strong and different reactions to different sections of the questionnaire, which helped greatly in assessing sensitivities and revising the questionnaire.

The strong reactions of interviewers to certain questions was a portent of a problem that emerged in the data collection phase, and which may be common in surveys conducted in conflict settings. During the training, interviewers often expressed skepticism that individuals would be “willing or able” to answer certain questions; invariably these were the same questions that the interviewer him or herself did not like because of some perceived slight to one or another ethnic group’s positions on a peace-related topic. Despite repeated entreaties that the questions were not overly sensitive and that an objective interviewer could obtain the individual’s true feelings on virtually every topic addressed in the survey, some interviewers seemed to have their minds made up on this issue.

SRI LANKAN PEACE TYPES 2004 (NEW PROPOSALS)

Perhaps as a result, some of the questions in both KAP surveys had an inordinate amount of non-responses or “missing data,” sometimes reaching upwards of 20–25% of the overall sample. This is highly unusual in surveys conducted in “normal” settings. Three possible interpretations may explain these findings. First, many Sri Lankans truly do not have opinions on a variety of political and peace-related issues, whether because of a lack of interest, motivation, educational attainment, literacy, or cognitive ability. There is some evidence for this interpretation, in that the greatest number of “don’t knows” and “refusals” are concentrated among those uninterested in politics and at the lower levels of formal education. A second interpretation is that individuals in conflict settings do not feel entirely free to express their opinions on peace, especially to strangers conducting interviews. A final interpretation is that the interviewers themselves were reluctant to ask certain questions due to their own biases, or reluctant to engage in the standard procedures used in surveys to probe initially recalcitrant individuals in the hopes of eliciting the person’s true opinions. Most likely, all these processes are at work to some extent in surveys undertaken in conflict settings. They may be minimized to some extent through careful training of interviewers, so that they know how to deal with illiterate and uneducated respondents, how to make respondents in general feel at ease and unthreatened by the interview, and how to put their own political views aside and ask all survey questions dispassionately and with maximum effort made to elicit the views of all respondents, even those who may initially appear reluctant to express their opinion or claim to be unfamiliar with a given issue.

Comparability of Results Over Time

An issue for KAP-II not confronted with KAP-I was the necessity to ensure the comparability of results over time. Although previous SI surveys were used to provide some grounding for the KAP-I survey in 2003, it was basically developed from scratch. In contrast, KAP-II is largely driven by the same questions and concerns as motivated KAP-I. Both surveys seek to understand the nature and dynamics of public support for the peace process, although KAP-II also tries to understand how Sri Lankan opinion might be persuaded to be more accepting of peace. Persuasion aside, the basic difference between the two surveys is that KAP-II tries to take advantage of the lessons learned in KAP-I to better measure the nature and intensity of public support for peace and to probe better and more deeply the underlying causes of support and opposition to peace.

Inevitably when conducting multiple surveys over time, tension between stability and change arises. With a new survey comes the desire to add new questions or improve the way old questions were asked. On the other hand, there also is a desire to measure how much things have changed or stayed the same in the country over time, which requires consistency between surveys. A two-track process addressed these two desires while maintaining a high response rate and reasonable cost. First substantial new content was added to KAP II, although trying as much as possible to ask new questions in ways that would produce comparable results to those in KAP-I. Second, rather than keep all of the questions from KAP I, a subset of questions remained that allowed for the “splicing” of the results from KAP I and II together.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Once a survey has been conducted, with political and technical considerations adequately addressed, appropriate dissemination of the results is critical. The findings must be communicated clearly and impartially. How this was handled in Sri Lanka is described below.

Simplicity in Analysis and Presentation

Although a KAP survey can be a sophisticated social science survey that employs the most modern methods, including experiments, and is driven by advanced social science theory, the emphasis from the start must be to explain the survey and the results in simple language. The final report largely should eschew the language of hypothesis testing and statistical significance, although numerous hypotheses are tested and statistical significance is carefully monitored. Where necessary, the KAP reports rely on footnotes and appendices to clarify technical matters, although even these have been held to the essential minimum.

In reporting data, efforts should be made to use visually attractive graphs and figures, rather than tables loaded with visually impenetrable numbers. Similarly, when multivariate statistical techniques must be referred to, the results should appear in simple tables and even simpler prose. Reasonably attentive readers should be able to fully understand the results based on the prose alone, without the need to examine tables if they do not wish to do so. Similarly, tables and figures must be labeled so that most readers can grasp the story without having to look to the text for explanation.

Transparency and Early Release of Results

The KAP surveys benefited greatly from AED's decision to maximize public transparency and openness at all stages of the process. Conflict environments, by their nature, are rife with suspicion and mistrust. Developing the survey in secret and "springing" the results on the community at the end can exacerbate those suspicions. Unfortunately, this was difficult for those in some government agencies, both in Sri Lanka and in the United States, to understand.

As part of the KAP commitment to transparency and openness, the preliminary results were available to the community as soon as possible after data collection. Public presentations of some KAP-I preliminary results took place within a week of the completion of the data set. SI published a large topline report showing the basic distributions on all of the key variables about a month later. This early dissemination of data revealed some of the political sensitivities and allowed for a more nuanced and accepted final report. Early dissemination also allowed for the identification of some anomalies and unexpected findings in the data that could be addressed at greater length in the final report. In addition, the early release of data created something of a "buzz" in the peace community and a real anticipation of the final report.

SI also made a public commitment to share the raw KAP data with anyone who requests it. To date, no one has requested the raw data, although a variety of newspapers requested and received permission to reprint certain charts and figures. (Others have done the same without requesting permission.) Even if no one requests or reanalyzes the data, it is important to the credibility of the project that the ability for outsiders to do so is assured.

Unfortunately, due to political sensitivities on the part of the U.S. government, there were no public presentations of KAP-II preliminary results and its topline report, which was prepared within a month of the data collection, was not released before the final report. Although the KAP-I lessons were helpful in writing the KAP-II final report, this second report probably would be even stronger had a "test drive" to benefit from public feedback taken place before preparation of the final report.

KAP SURVEYS AND THE SRI LANKAN PEACE PROCESS

The findings of the KAP surveys are a rich source of data that, if used effectively, can benefit the Sri Lankan peace process. The KAP surveys have already had a significant impact on a wide range of stakeholders. For example:

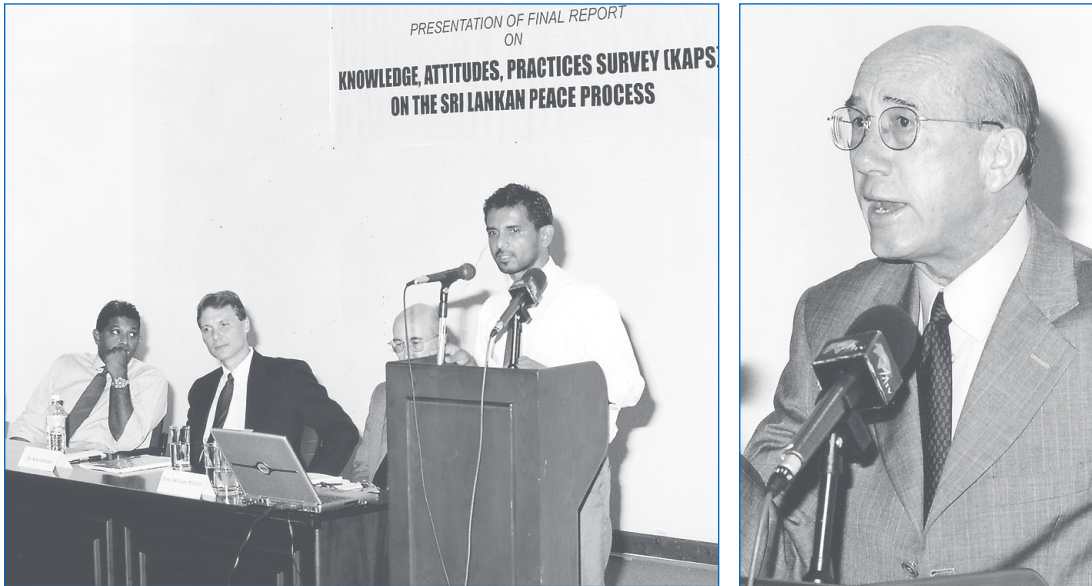
- They are holding stakeholders accountable to real world information, thus helping to circumvent the opportunistic behavior of claiming support of key constituencies on positions that heretofore have gone undocumented. In particular, the findings made it clear that a single political party cannot achieve peace—rather, peace can be achieved only by a joint effort from all stakeholder groups working together and in concert.
- They have informed NGOs and donor agencies who are using the findings to better target their support of the peace effort.
- They have proven to policymakers that surveys are usable, valid tools. At the outset of the project, government officials in particular expressed skepticism about the usefulness and quality of any survey conducted in Sri Lanka. These officials are now requesting more KAP data.
- They built capacity to conduct surveys in Sri Lanka, not only in the technical areas of enumerator training and statistical techniques, but also in the underlying social scientific ability to develop hypotheses about political phenomena and translate them into questionnaires and analytic formula.
- They became of great use and value to members of the media in reporting the peace process; more specifically, journalists participating in the SLPSP used the data in media workshops and newspaper supplements.

When the KAP-I final results were published in December 2003, and even as survey material was gathered, the survey became a common and highly utilized framework for debate and dialogue among key stakeholders in the peace process—policy makers, NGOs, political party leaders, and the media—on the concerns and aspirations of their constituents. The President and the Prime Minister requested early copies. Once released publicly, the findings quickly became the currency of discussion among political and civil society stakeholders active in the peace process. The project also worked with CPA/SI to support the re-analysis of its previously conducted Peace Confidence Index, a survey tool that measured the extent of public confidence in the ongoing peace effort.

More broadly, the experience here has shown the value of using KAP surveys in conflict settings, and some of the pitfalls to avoid. The lessons learned that can be applied in future KAP iterations in Sri Lanka, as well as elsewhere, include the following.

A KAP survey can reveal not only the nature of public opinion at any moment, but also useful information about proposals that could be considered at some future point or, if the results show significant levels of public support, immediately integrated into peace negotiations.

- The Sri Lanka KAP surveys combined the direction and intensity of public attitudes toward the peace proposals into a “KAPS Peace Process Typology” consisting of four broad categories of citizens. Although categories will vary depending on the context, they are valuable to differentiating public opinion. At the same time, care must be taken in describing and even labeling the categories, as was the case in Sri Lanka.
- Although in Sri Lanka (as elsewhere), ethnic differences are at the root of the conflict, it is important to delve deeper than ethnic affiliations. The data in Sri Lanka provided strong evidence that contradicted popular stereotypes about the size and rigidity of ethnic, territorial, and partisan differences in attitudes toward peace. To understand these differences it was necessary to go beyond ethnicity and consider more generally who supports and opposes particular peace proposals and who is most likely to actively oppose a settlement that is considered unfair.



Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Kim DeRidder, and Pradeep Peiris; Dr. William Mishler

- KAP-II used three tests as ways to change, not just record, public opinion: Peace “Bundles,” Peace “Frames,” and Peace Counterarguments. Each measured how individuals opposed to some aspect of the peace process could be moved to more favorable positions. The KAP experience shows that the counter-argument procedure can be a particularly effective means of exploring the dynamics of public opinion and the potential for “persuasion for peace.”
- Who conducts the survey is critical. The fact that Social Indicator was a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization avoided many controversies and established credibility.
- The principal stakeholders in the peace process must “buy in” to the survey from the start. In this case, the input of advisory committees, local experts familiar with the history and nuances of the conflict, and U.S. academics with expertise in social science research contributed to a more effective process.
- In questionnaire design, the issue is not only which questions to include or exclude, but also how to word the questions and the possible responses.

- No matter how good the consultants or how sensitive the planning process, the results can be seriously undermined if the survey firm does not carefully implement the sampling frame. But in conflict areas, large parts of the country may be controlled by anti-government forces that typically are suspicious of outsiders. It will often be necessary to over-sample certain ethnic or demographic groupings in these settings.
- It is absolutely essential for the survey organization, in collaboration with the project consultants, to devote considerable time and resources to the training of interviewers and to pre-testing the survey instrument. This is even more important in complex surveys related to peace, as the KAP experience made clear.
- Developing the survey in secret and “springing” the results on the community at the end can exacerbate those suspicions. The emphasis from the start must be to explain the survey and the results in simple language.
- Among the more important ways in which transparency has been assured in Sri Lanka is by SI’s public commitment to share the raw KAP data with anyone who requests it. Even if no one reanalyzes the data, it is important to the credibility of the project that outsiders have the option of doing so. In this regard, a modest investment in helping certain parts of the community learn how to use the KAP data would be beneficial. For example, a series of short “mini-courses” for academics, journalists, or civil servants could go along way to creating a critical mass within civil society capable of exploring KAP findings on their own and enriching the peace process debate in Sri Lanka.

Plans were underway for a KAP-III survey when the devastating tsunami hit Sri Lanka’s coast in December 2004. The Sri Lanka Peace Support Project and Social Indicator recognize that the aftermath of the tsunami—both the damage wrought and the rebuilding—implies a new political situation. The establishment of new institutions and procedures to guide the recovery and reconstruction will be critical because these will have a bearing on how the nation is rebuilt. This might make the KAP survey in 2005 the most important so far.



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