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# THE DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM INITIATIVE IN SRI LANKA: AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM OPTIONS

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Final Report

*Bureau for Private Enterprise  
U.S. Agency for International Development*

*Prepared for: Bureau for Asia, Near East and Europe  
Office of Technical Resources  
Human Resources Division*

*Prepared by: Ernst & Young*

*Sponsored by: Private Enterprise Development Support Project II  
Project Number 940-2028.03  
Prime Contractor: Ernst & Young*

*April 1990*

**Ernst & Young**

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	i
Preface . . . . .	ii
1.0 Executive Summary . . . . .	1
2.0 The Context for DPI in Sri Lanka . . . . .	3
2.1 Political Violence and the Crisis of Sri Lankan Democracy . . . . .	3
2.2 Sri Lanka's Democratic Development in Historical Perspective . . . . .	5
2.3 The Implications of the Historical Record for DPI in Sri Lanka . . . . .	6
3.0 Current USAID/Sri Lanka Programs for Democratic Pluralism . . . . .	9
4.0 An Analysis of Opportunities for Intervention to Promote Democratic Pluralism in Sri Lanka . . . . .	10
4.1 Macroeconomic Factors . . . . .	10
4.2 Distributional Considerations . . . . .	11
4.3 Social Structure . . . . .	14
4.4 The Organization of PVOs and NGOs . . . . .	15
4.5 Voice . . . . .	16
4.6 Choice . . . . .	19
4.7 Governance . . . . .	20
4.8 Democratic Attitudes and Values . . . . .	21
5.0 Democratic Pluralism and Economic Growth in Sri Lanka . . . . .	23
6.0 Program Recommendations . . . . .	25
6.1 Recommendations for USAID/Sri Lanka . . . . .	25
6.2 Discussion . . . . .	30
7.0 Performance Measures . . . . .	32
Appendix I -- NGO/PVO Checklist for DPI . . . . .	35
Appendix II -- Further Explanation of Performance Criteria . . . . .	36
Endnotes . . . . .	40

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## PREFACE

As announced in December 1990, the Asia, Near East and Europe (ANE) Bureau's Democratic Pluralism Initiative (DPI) -- the program designed to address the "Open Societies" side of the Bureau's "Open Markets-Open Societies" strategy -- represents a major new policy thrust for USAID/Sri Lanka. This report is meant to serve as the basis for USAID/Sri Lanka's DPI strategy, to be developed in FY 1990.

Sri Lanka's unique history of support for democratic institutions, which are currently undergoing enormous strain, presents A.I.D. with an excellent opportunity to make key interventions in democratic pluralism. Sri Lanka may be at a critical juncture in history with respect to its ability to maintain and strengthen its democratic institutions. A.I.D.'s contributions to Sri Lanka over the next few years could very well prove to be vital to the country's democratic future.

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spite of its remarkably developed democratic institutions, Sri Lanka has faced severe challenges in recent years in its effort to transform the elitist democratic system installed during the colonial period into a more broadly based, populist democracy. Conflict among Sri Lanka's major ethnic groups and classes, exacerbated in recent years by high unemployment among Sri Lankan youth, has severely threatened the country's democratic development and will continue to do so for some time to come. Given this context, the DPI assessment team believes that USAID/Sri Lanka's DPI program should focus primarily on stabilizing and maintaining Sri Lanka's existing democratic institutions rather than on expanding or improving these institutions.

USAID/Sri Lanka's current portfolio of programs strengthens the basis for stable democracy in Sri Lanka by improving the economic health of the country, creating employment, and supporting the diversification and privatization of the economy. In addition, the mission supports a number of programs that more directly strengthen democratic institutions in Sri Lanka. The DPI assessment team has examined how these various programs might be modified to increase their contribution to democratic pluralism. We have also identified several new program initiatives that would serve this goal. Recognizing that the mission's resources are limited, we have attempted to identify ways in which efforts to promote democratic pluralism could be incorporated into existing mission projects.

The DPI assessment team has examined opportunities to promote democratic pluralism in Sri Lanka from three perspectives: the nature of Sri Lanka's political economy, the state of its democratic development, and the structure of private voluntary and non-governmental organization in Sri Lanka. On the basis of these analyses, we recommend in this report that a number of USAID/Sri Lanka programs be modified or enhanced in certain ways and that a few new program initiatives be considered. (Beyond USAID/Sri Lanka, related U.S. government agencies, such as USIA and Peace Corps, should be encouraged to initiate activities recommended in this report that fall within the purview and expertise of the organizations.)

In the area of political economy, the most serious threat to democracy in Sri Lanka is the high unemployment rate. We make several recommendations below to address this problem. First, we recommend that USAID/Sri Lanka continue (and expand where possible) its employment creating efforts, bearing in mind the immediacy of the problem and the importance of targeting certain disaffected groups, such as the youth and Sri Lankan Tamils. Second, in order to facilitate the Sri Lankan government's own employment creation efforts, we recommend that the mission assist the appropriate

government ministry in developing a human resources analysis and planning facility. Third, we recommend that the mission offer to assist the Sri Lankan government in reforming its own employment practices by establishing a more rigorous merit-hiring and merit-promotion system. We also recommend that the mission continue its support for the government's privatization program, which contributes to democratization in a number of ways, and we recommend that it consider undertaking a program to strengthen and depoliticize Sri Lanka's labor unions.

Several of the recommendations made below are aimed at enhancing the development of democratic institutions and practices in Sri Lanka. We recommend that USAID/Sri Lanka expand its support for human rights organizations and for certain non-governmental research organizations which are studying the country's pressing social, economic, and political problems. In addition, we recommend that the mission complement this latter effort by taking certain steps to expand communication and dialogue among the relevant societal actors on these pressing problems and that it begin a new program to develop an effective national public opinion surveying capability. One of the most important obstacles to democracy in Sri Lanka is the tension and distrust that exist among the major ethnic groups and classes. In order to reduce this tension and distrust, we recommend that the mission expand its efforts to promote instruction of the English language, which serves as a "link language" among the major ethnic groups and a means of achieving social mobility. This should be done within the context of the country's commitment to trilingualism. We also recommend that the mission take every opportunity to promote tolerance, non-violent political values, and respect for the rights of others.

Certain modifications in USAID/Sri Lanka's programs to support private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would also help to promote democratic pluralism in Sri Lanka. We recommend that the mission develop a more aggressive outreach mechanism for its PVO/NGO programs and that it expand its PVO Co-Financing II project to include an explicit DPI component. The mission should also target certain important societal groups under its PVO/NGO programs; a checklist is provided in Appendix I of this report to facilitate this task. In particular, we recommend that the mission make a special effort to expand its activities in the northeastern part of the country among the Sri Lankan Tamils, who are highly disaffected and have not been adequately served by the mission's programs. Finally, we recommend that the mission provide a grant to either the Asia Foundation or the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute to carry out certain services that will facilitate democratization in Sri Lanka.

## 2.0 THE CONTEXT FOR DPI IN SRI LANKA

### 2.1 Political Violence and the Crisis of Sri Lankan Democracy

The past decade in Sri Lanka has been marked by explosive politicization. The major issue has been the search for "identity" on both the individual and the national level. Unfortunately, this search has taken place within a climate of pervasive violence.

Violence is deeply rooted in Sri Lanka. At the individual level, it has been manifested in the country's rapidly growing suicide rate, which is now the highest in Asia, and in the rapid growth of violent crime in Colombo and in economically stagnant parts of the country. This personal and interpersonal violence reflects the sharp discontinuities in the lives of many Sri Lankans caused by the rapid socio-economic change that has occurred in recent decades. Education has outpaced employment opportunities for many Sri Lankan youth and has failed to bridge the gap between the elite and the newly educated. The delayed age of marriage has created a large pool of disaffected youth who are available for mobilization by radical groups. In a society noted for intricate bonds of caste, family, and residence but without the Western concepts of individualism and egalitarianism, status inconsistencies between different aspects of their lives have led many Sri Lankans to become severely disoriented.

But it is the collective violence stemming from this background of personal and interpersonal experience that has gained the attention of both Sri Lankans and the outside world. Two types of collective violence have occurred. The first is conflict over the country's national identity. Fundamental differences over this issue have pitted ethnic communities against one another, especially the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil communities, which are sharply distinguished along religious, linguistic, and regional lines. In recent years these differences have led to bitter and violent conflict. Other ethnic communities -- Muslim Moors, Indian Tamils, Burghers, Christians, and others -- are also concerned about their status and identity in Sri Lankan society.

While this crisis stems mainly from Sri Lanka's ethnic composition, British colonial policy contributed substantially to it as well. In 1931 the British introduced Westminster political institutions, universal adult suffrage, and regular elections. Britain's education and staffing policies over-represented certain ethnic minorities in top government, business, professional, and academic positions. In time, the search for identity and the competition for power among ethnic groups led the majority Sinhala community to use the democratic institutions installed by the British to redress these inequities and try to impose their language and national identity on the smaller ethnic communities.

The goal of the Sinhala leadership was neither assimilation nor segregation but rather to secure recognition of the Sinhala as the dominant community in Sri Lanka. This was done through language, education, and employment policies which were designed to enhance the standing of the Sinhala community. Although some of the smaller ethnic communities accepted these practices, the Sri Lankan Tamils did not. The Sri Lankan Tamil leadership became increasingly radicalized, eventually demanding a separate state and resorting to violence.

The communal violence reached its peak in the mid-1980s, by which time the Sri Lankan government seemed to have opted for a military solution to the problem. This solution was blocked by the entrance of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) into the conflict in 1987. The presence of the IPKF and its growing conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrilla group seem to have persuaded all parties of the futility of further fighting. In early 1990 there appears to be at least a temporary consensus on the idea of a pluralistic accommodation in one state rather than either one "tribal state" or two separate nations. It is unclear whether this consensus will last after the departure of the IPKF.

The second type of collective violence has been a struggle by certain disaffected groups against Sri Lanka's dominant social and political class, which is largely urban, highly educated, English-speaking, and relatively wealthy and spans the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil communities. The position of this class has also been supported to some degree by claims to caste superiority by the Vellala among the Tamils and the Goyigama, Karava, and Salagama among the Sinhala. The dominance of the Sinhala ruling class was challenged by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which mounted rebellions in 1971 and again in the mid-1980s. The JVP consisted mainly of Sinhala-speaking, lower class, lower caste, rural youth who felt disenfranchised and who suffered from high levels of unemployment. In Tamil areas the challenge came from several groups, with the LTTE, who represented a similar "disinherited" stratum, eventually becoming the dominant force.

The outcomes of these challenges have been quite different. The LTTE has effectively taken control over the Tamil areas in the north and east. The Vellala caste has apparently accepted the inevitability of wider and broader political participation. In Sinhala areas the JVP has largely been exterminated by the Sri Lankan security forces and by vigilante groups. In early 1990 the remnants of the JVP were asked to surrender in return for a promise of rehabilitation or trial for their crimes. The JVP effort has, however, led to a consensus within the Sinhala community that political, economic, and social institutions must be reformed to give a greater role in decision-making and more benefits to young people, especially those from the poor, rural areas that spawned the JVP. It remains to be seen whether these reforms will be

carried out now that the immediate threat from the JVP has passed.

## **2.2 Sri Lanka's Democratic Development in Historical Perspective**

The modern liberal democratic systems that most developed countries now enjoy are the result of a long and difficult historical process. They represent the product of two historical tendencies, one universal and ancient and the other recent and still incomplete in most societies. The first or tribal democratic tendency grows out of the aspiration of all peoples to run their own affairs. In this primitive form, democracy emphasizes the political equality of people in the group and the right of majorities to determine group policy. The key concepts are self-determination and majority rule. Throughout most of history this natural desire has been frustrated by the imposition through force of the rule by the few over the many (in most cases imposed through military conquest by one group of the territories of others) and the difficulty of effectively organizing democratic polities larger than those of relatively small groups living in one place. For example, without the concept of elections for representatives, Athens was probably as large as a democracy could be.

The liberal strand of democracy is much more recent, developing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, primarily in the United Kingdom, Western Europe, and the North American colonies. The key concepts that are added to the primitive base by liberal democracy are the right of everyone to be treated as an individual, to have the right to pursue as an individual his own interests, to organize with others in that interest, and to hold and express his opinions freely. Liberal democracy is founded on tolerance for others and the protection of minorities against majorities.

The history of modern Western democracies has seen a spreading acceptance of the technology of extending primitive group democracy to ever-larger groups -- the nation states -- through the representative technologies developed in the eighteenth century. It has also been characterized by the slow and uneven struggle between an expanding franchise and the growing acceptance of liberal democratic principles that allow individuals and groups to live together within one democratic community in relative harmony, to treat people as autonomous individuals rather than representatives of groups. Catholics, for example, appear not to have been accepted by the national electorate in the United States until 1960. Although not complete, as the continuing struggle in Northern Ireland exemplifies, both of these aspects of democracy have become firmly established in what are now referred to as the "traditional democracies."

This history suggests that as democracy spreads to developing societies, or societies that have long histories of nondemocratic

government, we can expect that the majoritarian, tribal aspects of democracy will be relatively stronger than the liberal democratic aspects. We can expect, in other words, that the new democracies will repeat the history of democratic development that the traditional democracies went through in their own societies. This is the case in the South Asian states that have been struggling since independence to institutionalize democracy.

At independence Sri Lanka was blessed with an operating parliamentary, representative democracy that incorporated within it many elements of the constitutional, liberal democracy that had been given to it by the British. However, at this time the democratic system was essentially an elitist system in which the general public had not yet grasped the degree to which the new system made possible popular egalitarian rule. (This approximated the condition in the United States until the presidency of Andrew Jackson.) Soon, however, the effective political arena broadened and the elite political leaders found it necessary to adopt ever more populist positions if they were to retain their political dominance.

In this process it is not surprising that Sri Lanka's political leaders had to play to an electorate that had not yet accepted the tolerant, individualized attitudes of modern liberal democracies. Politics came to center around the leaders' need to satisfy the ethnic and material demands of the majority Sinhala community. In the face of the resulting institutionalization of what appeared to be discrimination, members of the minority Tamil community felt compelled to defend themselves. They developed political organizations to counter ethnic legislation and the majority violence that accompanied the social and political deterioration of their position. The problem was later exacerbated by the government's inherited and politically driven tendency to control large sections of the economy and to subsidize lavishly (for a country with its level of economic resources) the basic educational, medical, and nutritional needs of the populace. The high level of political intervention meant that the stakes involved in the political contests and in the ethnic struggles were much greater than they would have been in a more privatized society in which jobs, careers, status, and even survival are less dependent on governmental decision.

### 2.3 The Implications of the Historical Record for DPI in Sri Lanka

The foregoing analysis suggests that Sri Lanka is likely to continue to be plagued by serious problems of ethnic tension and that Sri Lankans will continue to use violence rather than democratic means to resolve political issues. This is the predictable accompaniment of democratic development in a country without extensive experience in constitutional democracy, where two or more ethnic groups have a long history of conflict, and where

a high proportion of young adults are single, mobile, unemployed, and deeply frustrated. Nevertheless, this situation should be identified as the primary barrier to Sri Lanka achieving a secure and modern democratic polity with political equality and respect for human rights.

A strategy for helping Sri Lanka overcome this barrier must emphasize the continuation and enhancement of liberal and civic education which emphasizes individual rights and respect for the rights and opinions of others. To some degree the liberal civic culture can only be achieved through generations of experience in accommodating the interests of others and the acceptance of nonviolent means of resolving political conflict. But it is also possible for peoples to learn through directed education and acquaintance with the way of life in the traditional democracies to accept constitutionality. With increased communication among peoples and the prestige of the modern liberal democracies throughout the world today, it should not be necessary for the peoples of developing democracies to evolve at the same slow pace as characterized the history of the Western democracies.

Experience with third world democracies in the last thirty years suggests that a gradual or sharp turn away from democracy is a continual threat in Sri Lanka. A gradual retreat from democracy would result from the renewed development of authoritarian trends already manifested in the country's recent history. As in analogous situations such as Malaysia or Kenya, this will be justified by reference to the danger of tribalism destroying the state in the absence of a strong authoritarian system. A sharp turn away from democracy would be likely to result from the combination of violent and fanatic ideological movements feeding on widespread discontent with the performance of the democratic system. An analogy might be found in the destruction of democracy in Ghana or the attempts to destroy it today in Peru. The ultimate reason for such reversals is that important elements of the population have not come to regard democracy as inevitable, or necessarily as the best system for their country. On elite levels this may stem from distrust of the general public's ability to support the necessary steps to stabilize or improve the country; on popular levels, the reversal would be made possible by the relative disinterest of large parts of the public in key aspects of democracy, such as freedom from imprisonment for the expression of unpopular views. Nationalistic assertions that democracy as presently expressed in a country is a foreign import or an expression of cultural imperialism may also appear. Often the system that replaces democracy is described as a more authentic "democracy."

These observations suggest that the democratic system in Sri Lanka would be in considerable danger of failing even without the political violence and ethnic strife that has occurred in recent years. If we assume that the best school for democracy is

democracy itself, and that the maintenance of a reasonable level of democratic performance is the best way to move toward a stable, modern liberal democracy, then the goal of USAID/Sri Lanka should be primarily to support the continuation of the imperfect democratic system that exists in Sri Lanka rather than to attempt to improve it. Of course, in so far as failures in the current system and its social and economic performance are laying the basis for the overthrow of democracy, policy prescriptions for preserving and improving democracy would be much the same. However, taking the negative approach that the prevention of democratic decline is the main issue, USAID/Sri Lanka might wish to consider more carefully the strengths that exist in the present system and be less concerned with the ways in which the system is not yet fully perfected.

From this viewpoint, the primary problems that are likely to destroy the present imperfect democracy in Sri Lanka are economic failure, the continuing violence and counter-violence on which authoritarianism and extremism flourish, and the tearing apart of the country by its ethnic problems. Many of the ordinary problems that we and others have noted in the analysis of Sri Lanka's democracy should, then, be regarded as secondary. These secondary issues include government interference with and control over portions of the print and broadcast media, a powerful executive branch, a relatively ineffective legislature, and the inability of the judicial system to protect citizens' rights in the current climate of violence. Based on the mission's limited resources, this way of considering priorities is significant.

In this context it is important to remember that we are interested in the state of democracy and the future of democracy in all areas of the country and among all groups, not just within the present governmental framework. It is significant that the JVP and the LTTE insurgents are revolutionary elitist organizations that have shown little interest in pluralistic democracy of the egalitarian tribal variety, let alone modern liberal democracy. Therefore, USAID/Sri Lanka should look for opportunities to develop more democratic attitudes and practices within these groups and the larger publics on which they are dependent. Many of the programs that we are considering in other parts of this report will have some impact on these groups, but it is necessary for the development of pluralistic democracy in the country as a whole to see if there are not programs that may be targeted specifically at these groups. This consideration is particularly important if Sri Lanka becomes to all intents and purposes divided, and we wish to make democracy possible in the country's constituent parts.

### 3.0 CURRENT USAID/SRI LANKA PROGRAMS FOR DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM

USAID/Sri Lanka is currently implementing a number of programs which fall within the purview of DPI. The DPI assessment team has examined these programs in some detail and believes that each of them makes a valuable contribution to the promotion of democratic pluralism in Sri Lanka. In section 6.0 of this report we make recommendations about how some of these programs could be modified in certain ways to increase their contribution to DPI. USAID/Sri Lanka's current DPI programs include:

- institutional strengthening of local NGOs, to further civic participation and self-help development;
- support for women's organizations, to articulate the concerns of women and further their participation in society;
- support for private researchers and institutions, to undertake policy-oriented studies on Sri Lanka's pressing social, economic, and political problems;
- support for chambers of commerce and other private sector organizations, to articulate the private sector position on economic policies;
- decentralization of government control to local organizations, such as farmer organizations to manage major irrigation systems;
- "human rights" activities, to inform Sri Lankans of their civil and political rights and establish legal aid services, as funded from A.I.D./Washington's Human Rights 116(e) program;
- support of a housing program that promotes organization and decision-making by the poor about their residential areas;
- support of Thrift and Credit Cooperation Societies, which are highly decentralized in decision-making; and
- a Rehabilitation Assistance Program which is helping to rebuild the war-torn northeastern part of the country.

## 4.0 AN ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM IN SRI LANKA

### 4.1 Macroeconomic Factors

The overall health of a country's economy, as embodied in macroeconomic trends such as the rate of economic growth, the unemployment rate, and the inflation rate, has an important bearing on its prospects for democratic pluralism. High rates of economic growth raise living standards and therefore help reduce political unrest, facilitating the establishment or maintenance of democracy. Conversely, slow or negative economic growth, as well as high unemployment or inflation, can increase political unrest and therefore often undermine democracy. High rates of economic growth also make possible improvements in education and media activity, which more directly facilitate democracy. Through their impact on economic growth, unemployment, and inflation, broader macroeconomic trends such as interest rates, fiscal levels, the rate of capital accumulation, and the trade balance indirectly affect the prospects for democracy as well.

For a poor country, Sri Lanka has unusually high health standards, a very high literacy rate, and fairly extensive and sophisticated media activity. These factors have been critically important foundations of the country's democratic tradition. Although further improvements in the level of wealth and in these other factors would certainly enhance democracy in Sri Lanka, they do not appear to be a high priority in this regard. Similarly, although the inflation rate has increased in the last few years, it has not yet reached the level of the early 1980s and is not yet high enough to constitute a serious threat to democracy.

The most serious macroeconomic threat to democracy in Sri Lanka at the present time is unemployment, which hovers close to 20 percent nationwide and is much higher in some regions of the country and among Sri Lankan youth. (The distributional aspects of the unemployment problem are discussed in section 4.2 of this report.) In light of Sri Lanka's large government budget deficit and growing inflation, traditional fiscal and monetary measures can make little contribution to solving the unemployment problem. Sri Lanka's large, persistent trade deficit suggests that devaluation of the rupee and further textile quota concessions by the United States might conceivably help to address the unemployment problem. However, these measures are well outside of the purview of USAID/Sri Lanka activities.

It is clear that the main focus of efforts to reduce unemployment in Sri Lanka must involve rather far-reaching social, economic, and political reforms. Since the most desirable types of employment are the white collar and blue collar occupations associated with modern industry, efforts to expand the modern industrial sector are an attractive possibility. Aided by foreign

donors, the Sri Lankan government has been making a concerted effort in recent years to promote modern industry, most notably by reforming its tariff structure, enacting a privatization program, and stimulating foreign investment with duty-free industrial zones.

In light of the urgency of the unemployment problem and Sri Lanka's severe capital shortages and other economic constraints, employment-creating efforts in the near future should concentrate primarily on labor-intensive industry. USAID/Sri Lanka is currently engaged in a number of projects that promote labor-intensive industry. We believe that these projects, though limited, make a useful contribution to the promotion of democracy in Sri Lanka by virtue of their employment-creating effects.

The World Bank has identified the size and inefficiency of the public sector as an important cause of Sri Lanka's unemployment problem and has urged the Sri Lankan government to undertake a number of specific reforms to address this problem. USAID/Sri Lanka is currently helping the Sri Lankan government to address one aspect of this problem by supporting its privatization efforts. In a related area, the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth<sup>2</sup> has recommended that changes be made in the hiring and promotion practices of the Sri Lankan government, which is by far the largest employer in the country. We believe that these latter proposals have substantial merit and that a project to facilitate this should be given careful consideration by A.I.D.

As discussed in section 5.0 of this report, the intra-societal violence that has plagued Sri Lanka in recent years has adversely affected its economy and therefore aggravated the unemployment problem. If the current relaxation of tensions persists, increased economic growth and a decline in the unemployment rate are likely to result, further enhancing the prospects for democratic pluralism in Sri Lanka.

#### 4.2 Distributional Considerations

In a society with sharp ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional, educational, or class differences, inter-group tensions can easily escalate and undermine democracy. This is especially likely to occur when inequalities in wealth, in the distribution of certain resources, and in the consequences of government policies parallel these differences. In order to promote democratic pluralism in sharply divided societies, careful consideration should therefore be given to the distributional consequences of government policies. Moreover, policies that reduce inter-group inequalities can play an important role in promoting democracy in such societies.

As discussed in section 2.0 of this report, the fundamental cleavage in Sri Lankan society and the most urgent threat to

democracy in Sri Lanka is the cleavage between the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil communities. This basic cleavage is reinforced by the linguistic and religious differences between these two communities and to a large extent also by their regional distribution, with the Tamils living mainly in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The Sri Lankan Tamils have traditionally enjoyed a higher standard of living than the Sinhala, further reinforcing this fundamental cleavage.

Several other important cleavages exist in Sri Lankan society, compounding the problems posed by the Sinhala-Tamil cleavage. Within the Tamil community, the distinction between Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils is potentially very problematic. Sri Lanka's Indian Tamils, who live and work mainly on the estates in the central region of the country, are potentially a volatile force in Sri Lankan politics. Sri Lanka's Muslims are ethnically and religiously distinct from the Sinhala and Tamils, and many Muslims live in the eastern part of the country in close proximity to both Sinhala and Tamils. Any effort to address distributional inequalities between the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil communities must clearly take into account possible adverse effects on the Indian Tamil and Muslim communities, and on the smaller ethnic communities that live in Sri Lanka.

Two other basic cleavages exist in Sri Lanka today, overlapping partially with the Sinhala-Tamil cleavage. First, an alarming gap has developed in the last few decades between Sri Lankan youth who are currently in their late teens and early twenties and older Sri Lankans. As discussed in the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, Sri Lankan youth in this age cohort have become dangerously alienated because they experience high rates of unemployment and because they feel they have no voice in domestic political matters. Since the membership of the Tamil and Sinhala-based guerrilla groups has been drawn mainly from this age cohort, the grievances of the Sri Lankan youth are very explosive. Second, important regional differences exist in the living standards of Sri Lankans, particularly in income levels and unemployment rates.<sup>3</sup> The most important such difference is between Sri Lanka's major cities and certain rural areas, especially in the southern part of the country, which is populated mainly by Sinhala.

The basic cleavages in Sri Lankan society have been aggravated by Sri Lankan government policies in the last few decades. In section 4.5 of this report, we discuss the destructive effects of the government's decision in the 1950s to de-emphasize use of the English language. The government's social and economic policies in the last few decades have generally discriminated against the Tamils, fueling their resentment. Its economic development programs in this period have been concentrated primarily in the Colombo area and in the Mahaweli region and have been weakest in the rural south. The government's fiscal and economic development policies, together with a variety of other factors, have also

slowed employment creation in the last few decades, adversely affecting Sri Lankan youth. To its credit, the government has recognized these problems in recent years and is currently making significant efforts to address them.

In light of the foregoing discussion, three interrelated kinds of distributional considerations should figure prominently in A.I.D.'s democratic pluralism initiative for Sri Lanka. First, consideration should be given to the distributional impact of USAID/Sri Lanka projects, both in the formulation stage and in the implementation stage. Although many kinds of projects clearly cannot be tailored to achieve the desired distributional impact, some certainly can; and efforts should be made to ensure that projects do not exacerbate inter-group tensions. Second, the mission should consider funding projects that help to rectify some of the inter-group inequalities that exist in Sri Lanka. Third, to the extent that it is possible and prudent, the mission should incorporate into its policy dialogue with the Sri Lankan government a sensitivity to distributional considerations. We strongly endorse the efforts that USAID/Sri Lanka has made to incorporate distributional considerations into its existing projects. In section 6.0 of this report we made several recommendations for further actions which embody distributional considerations of this sort.

From a distributional standpoint, the most pressing issue in Sri Lanka today is the need for employment creation targeted at disaffected groups, especially at the youth and at Sri Lankan Tamils and rural people in the south. Accordingly, it is critically important that economic development policies in Sri Lanka be designed with careful consideration of the distributional effects of employment creation. As discussed in section 4.1 of this report, the urgency of the unemployment problem and economic constraints suggest that employment-creating development efforts in Sri Lanka in the near future should be focused mainly on labor-intensive industry.

In regional terms, the greatest employment needs appear to be in the northeastern and southern parts of the country, where political unrest is most severe. However, employment-creating development projects targeted at these regions should be designed to take into account the possibility that large-scale violence might reemerge in these areas. For example, it would be prudent to implement small-scale projects in these regions for the time being rather than large-scale projects that would become attractive targets if violence resumes. Development projects targeted at the northeast and the south should be designed and implemented in a balanced fashion, giving equal attention to these two regions so as not to provoke charges of discrimination. At a lower priority, there is clearly a need to generate non-agricultural employment in the plantation areas in order to provide greater opportunity for the impoverished Indian Tamils who live in these areas. More

generally, in light of the rural-urban disparities that have emerged in Sri Lanka, employment-creating development efforts should be concentrated primarily in rural villages and towns that have not yet received much development assistance rather than in the major urban areas of the country.

The Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth contains a variety of proposals for targeting employment creation at disaffected groups, especially at the youth and the rural population. We believe that USAID/Sri Lanka should seriously consider assisting the Sri Lankan government in implementing some of these proposals. We recommend in section 6.0 of this report that the mission consider helping the Sri Lankan government establish a human resources analysis and planning facility to improve its employment-targeting and manpower training efforts.

#### 4.3 Social Structure

A country's social structure has an important bearing on its prospects for democratic pluralism. A social structure that is diverse and relatively balanced is more conducive to democracy than one that is polarized into a small elite and a large, relatively powerless mass. In particular, the existence of a relatively large middle class is often cited as an important basis for democracy. A social structure that features multiple, cross-cutting cleavages rather than mutually reinforcing cleavages is likely to experience less inter-group conflict and therefore have better prospects for democracy.

Because roughly half of its work force is employed in agriculture, Sri Lanka has a small middle class and a small industrial working class. However, since most large-scale productive enterprises are owned by the government, it also does not have the kind of large, powerful economic elite that exists in many comparable underdeveloped countries. As discussed in section 4.2 of this report, Sri Lankan society is riven with mutually reinforcing cleavages, the most important of which separate the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil communities. The social structure of Sri Lanka therefore does not appear to be particularly conducive to democracy. Indeed, it is surprising that democracy has been so strong in Sri Lanka in light of its relatively inhospitable social structure.

Two sorts of changes in social structure would strengthen the basis for democracy in Sri Lanka. First, a larger middle class is needed. Second, more extensive "horizontal" cleavages are needed which cross-cut rather than reinforce the existing "vertical" ethnic, rural-urban, and regional cleavages in Sri Lanka. The most effective way to achieve both of these changes is to promote the expansion of modern industry throughout the country. This would generate the white collar and skilled blue collar occupations that

form the basis for a middle class and would create "horizontal" class cleavages and commercial ties which reduce the salience of "vertical" cleavages.

Changes in social structure clearly are long-term processes. Moreover, as discussed in section 4.1 of this report, the urgent need to create employment and the many economic constraints that Sri Lanka faces suggest that the development of labor-intensive industry is the most immediate economic priority for the country. Consequently, although USAID/Sri Lanka should be mindful of the beneficial impact that expanding modern industry would have on the country's social structure, it should not regard this as an immediate priority in its DPI strategy.

#### 4.4 The Organization of PVOs and NGOs

With over 50,000 local-level PVOs and NGOs in Sri Lanka, a strong basis exists for organizing Sri Lankans to enhance their political power. Some of these organizations provide "horizontal" bonds which cross-cut ethnic and other interest groups, particularly in the south and central parts of the country. Strengthening these PVOs and NGOs, especially those that cross-cut volatile interest groups, can clearly improve the prospects for democracy in Sri Lanka.

There are several weaknesses in the current organization of PVOs and NGOs in Sri Lanka. First, organizational activity in the northeast has been hampered by the violence that has occurred there in recent years. Similarly, ties between organizations in the northeast and organizations in other parts of the country appear to have been severed or cut sharply in many cases. The isolation of organizations in the northeast appears to have created deep suspicion there of national organizations that desire renewed contact and cooperation with them.

Second, while some PVOs and NGOs have programs to benefit disadvantaged groups such as the youth, women, rural people, and the poor, they rarely give decision-making or leadership positions to members of these groups. One exception seems to be organizations that were set up by the Sri Lankan government as an intrinsic part of the planning or implementation of its policies or by political parties. For example, in the government's housing program, organizations of shanty-dwellers were created which gave shanty-dwellers a significant role in decision-making. In Mahaweli, farmer and water management organizations have been established which play a similar role. Other PVOs and NGOs have occasionally developed ties to these organizations which create "horizontal" bonds among interest groups.

Third, organizations that link producers to markets are often

ineffective. Organizations of this sort that have been set up in the Mahaweli are often sponsored or explicitly organized by government ministries. The nationalized plantations have their own special marketing provisions. One of the most criticized features of the government's free trade zones is the absence of economic linkages between these zones and producers or suppliers in the remainder of the island.

Fourth, there are relatively few organizations with civic orientations that transcend the specific interests of their constituents. Exceptions include the Sri Lanka Foundation, environmental organizations, population planning organizations, human rights organizations, and research organizations such as the Marga Institute and the International Center for Ethnic Studies. Voluntary organizations with a civic orientation are important in strengthening democracy, especially if they promote "horizontal" linkages.

Finally, there are only a few "umbrella" organizations which link disparate ascriptive organizations. The few that exist seem to have been established only recently.

USAID/Sri Lanka has made considerable efforts to strengthen civic and umbrella organizations in Sri Lanka. We believe that these efforts have played an important role in promoting democratic pluralism. We recommend that they be continued and expanded where possible.

#### 4.5 Voice

A basic aspect of modern liberal democracy is that people are able to develop and express politically relevant opinion and knowledge, and organize to consider and promote ideas or interests individually or collectively. Sometimes this "voice" aspect of democracy is referred to as "the free flow of information," an expression that highlights the fact that people in a democracy must have access to the facts before they can make reasonable and effective judgments on their collective future. The freedoms included under this heading are freedom of the news media, organization, assembly, and demonstration. They also include freedom from fear of imprisonment, dismissal, or other personal loss as the result of expression of these rights. Normally, one thinks of these freedoms vis-a-vis the government. However, restraints on "voice" can be based on the actions of nongovernmental as well as governmental forces.

Formally, Sri Lanka has a long record of respect for the civil freedoms grouped under "voice." The high level of literacy and political organization in the country, together with an independent judiciary and strong legal profession, provides a basis for these rights that is unusual for an LDC. The most obvious deficiency has

been the lack of independent broadcasting services, a deficiency tempered by the tradition of fairness that characterizes most government services in Sri Lanka. It is also unfortunate that one of the three major newspaper publishing groups is owned and controlled by the government. The existence of many other publications covering the political spectrum renders this government presence much less important than the broadcasting monopoly. However, the perceived pressures of the government on all media through control over newsprint and advertising, occasional periods of censorship, and resulting self-censorship are more worrisome. Problems of self-censorship have been exacerbated by attempts by revolutionary movements and other violent forces to intimidate reporters and editors through warnings, executions, and the destruction of facilities. Both governmental and nongovernmental pressures on the media have increased in the violent climate of recent years and can be expected to decline or perhaps disappear altogether when the country is again secure.

Sri Lanka exhibits considerable nongovernmental organizational activity, especially in the areas of religion, politics, and labor. As discussed in section 4.4 of this report, many local-level PVOs and NGOs exist and serve a variety of interests, including advancing the equality of women, protecting the environment, and improving human rights. Constraints on human rights activity through intimidation and violence have been severe, but the persistence of human rights organizations lays the basis for an expansion of effective work in this area should security be reestablished in the country.

As in other areas, the greatest impact on improving the "voice" of the Sri Lankan people will come from programs aimed at reducing the threat of political violence. This violence is related to, but not exclusively the result of, tensions between ascribed groups (ethnic, class, caste, and geographical) and unemployment among the youth. USAID/Sri Lanka should continue to look for programs that will address these causal factors and the attitudes and values that make the resort to violence so common in Sri Lanka.

Support for privatization of the economy will help diversify sources of information. The more diversified the economic base, the less dependent people will be on the government or on political leaders for information. This should result in greater freedom in both political expression and organizational activity. Privatization should eventually lead to reduced government involvement in the media. Indeed, the government is currently planning to privatize one of the major television networks. Further development of independent broadcasting services would clearly be desirable. Sri Lankan human rights groups serve educational, critical, and representative (ombudsman) functions that should be supported and extended to help modify the cycles of revolt and repression that perpetuate fear.

Since the most critical inhibitor of free expression in recent years has been violence stemming from ethnic tension and other causes, beyond economic measures to create employment, program emphasis should be placed on direct approaches to the twin problems of ethnicity and violence.

Strengthening English as a "link language" is an indirect approach to solving these latter problems in which USAID/Sri Lanka is already involved. Language has been a key issue in strife related to ethnic, class, and rural-urban disparities. The association of English with colonialism led to its replacement after independence with Sinhala, the language of the majority Sinhala ethnic group. This led many members of smaller, English-speaking ethnic groups -- especially the Burghers -- to leave the country. The emphasis on Sinhala has also been a major grievance of the Tamil community, although Tamil has continued to be used in schools and is now accepted as a national language.

However, in spite of its official displacement, English has remained the language of the elite and the language used in international commerce and most technical specialties, as well as the "ticket" to overseas employment opportunities. Thus, the rapid expansion of education, based now on the national languages, produced a class of educated youth who felt excluded from the opportunities available to the English-speaking elite. Moreover, education in the national languages has narrowed the ideological range and quality of textbooks and other teaching material. De-emphasis on English also meant that, unlike previous generations, the newly educated did not "speak the same language." For most educated youth today, the neutral ground provided by an education in English no longer exists. In addition, opportunities offered by the greatly expanded system of higher education have fallen below expectations because most students have been compelled to study in fields where English is not required. These fields generally do not provide the most desirable employment opportunities.

To correct these problems, it is now widely believed that there should be a return to English language instruction for all students. The eventual goal of such a program is a trilingual population that, within the expanding world civilization, is effectively mobile both socially and geographically. Emphasis on English is particularly desirable because of its importance for economic development, irrespective of social and political concerns. However, in light of the past conflicts over language in Sri Lanka and the desirability that the main ethnic groups understand one another's language and culture, programs to enhance English language instruction should be integrated into a more general language education program that has trilingualism as its ultimate goal.

#### 4.6 Choice

"Choice" refers to the responsiveness of the political system to the desires of the governed. In modern democracies it is assumed that elections will be free and fair in the sense that they allow open competition among any groups or individuals who compete for leadership and that the resulting political power is distributed in proportion to the support that contesting groups or individuals receive at the polls. In addition to free elections, in a democracy elected leaders must actually rule the country. To the extent that special interests, military officers, foreign countries, or other extra-electoral forces have preeminent power, the country cannot be said to be democratically governed. Finally, in an ideal liberal democracy, "choice" requires that there be some degree of regional or local control over policy-making and that no significant groups be excluded from participation because they are in a minority. In other words, a democratic polity requires respect for both majority and minority rights, and, beyond this, a persistent search for consensus.

Formally, Sri Lanka has had a well-developed system for democratic "choice" since independence, and even before. It has extensive experience with the operation of a legislature, political parties that govern or organize opposition, and free and fair elections that have allowed for the alternation of parties in power through democratic processes. This record is rare in LDCs.

However, there have been problems in the system's performance. The lability in constitutional forms has lent an element of confusion to the political order. The system has been changed from a classical parliamentary form to a system with an elected president and a much weaker legislature. It has been changed from a single member district system to a form of proportional representation. Referendums have been held not only to justify these changes but also to extend arbitrarily the period between elections. Whatever the justification for such changes, the lack of stability has undermined faith in the democratic system. This has also resulted from, and produced, a "winner take all" attitude that runs counter to the need to search for consensus and respect for minority rights. In addition, recent elections have occurred in an atmosphere of terror and intimidation that has made an accurate assessment of the popular will impossible in some areas of the country. Nevertheless, the demonstrated willingness of people to vote and the generally positive reports of international election observer teams suggest that the system continues to function relatively effectively in most parts of the country. Again, the problems in choice can be traced in large part to communal tension and violence.

In spite of the deficiencies in the "choice" area, we see little opportunity for outside intervention. If all parties concerned are

genuinely interested in a U.S. presence, it might be useful in special situations for the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, or other U.S. organizations to send observers to monitor Sri Lankan elections. However, the United States should be careful not to put such observers into a position where they will end up legitimating the election of groups that coercively control voters, as may occur in the next election in the northeast. Generally, we should assume that the political and opinion leaders of the country are well acquainted with the norms of democracy and well aware of the problems engendered by recent Sri Lankan history. They are now moving to address this history. In particular, they are moving to devolve power to lower levels of government, enhancing control over resources by both local and provincial levels of government. We believe that this is an area in which USAID/Sri Lanka should stand aside.

#### 4.7 Governance

"Governance" refers to the ways in which a political system is administered and thus overlaps with many of the considerations we have already addressed. For its level of economic development, Sri Lanka has been notably successful in promoting literacy and public health. Its high PQLI suggests that, in spite of many deficiencies, the administration has functioned democratically for the benefit of most sections of the population. However, this achievement has been based until recently on a populist, nationalist, and socialist approach that has failed to develop an economic base which could sustain the system. Since 1977 the government has attempted to move toward a more open, market-oriented economy. At first this produced results, but achievements have lagged well behind expectations. Today, the political and administrative systems confront severe economic and political problems.

A relatively neutral civil bureaucracy recruited largely on the basis of merit has apparently been replaced in some administrative areas by a spoils system. The administration of land allotments, university admissions, and government employment has been heavily criticized for its political favoritism and ethnic quotas. The significance of these problems is heightened by the government's large role in the economy and the "winner take all" attitude discussed above. The perception of administrative injustice has been a major cause of communal and violent conflict. On the other hand, we can assume that the success of the party system has been based on patronage, and this success might be undermined if political leaders no longer have anything to offer their followers.

It has been suggested to us that Sri Lanka lacks policy research facilities that are capable of making a positive impact on government, the legislature, the political parties, and public

discussion. This is due partly to the absence of institutions to which government officials and others can turn for advice or research support and to inadequate communication of the good work that is being done by Sri Lankan academic and research institutions. USAID/Sri Lanka should consider organizing groups to analyze how these deficiencies can be addressed. It is quite possible that a small effort in this direction would make a considerable improvement in the working of Sri Lanka's democratic system.

By all accounts, Sri Lanka's judicial system is independent and relatively strong and is backed by an effective and influential legal profession. However, recent ethnic and revolutionary struggles have put legal safeguards in abeyance for long periods, making it impossible for the system to guarantee constitutional rights. In part, the actions of the security forces that have denied the rights of citizens have been unavoidable. But the security forces and persons said to be secretly supported by them seem to have engaged in more killing, torture, and extra-judicial imprisonment than is warranted. Many of these human rights violations have been documented by national and international human rights groups, and are reported in the most recent State Department Report to Congress on human rights practices. The excessive reactions of the security forces have left a legacy of resentment and resorting to violence that will take years to overcome.

The country's security forces entered the 1980s ill-equipped by tradition and training to deal with the problems they faced, a deficiency that was exacerbated by the need to rapidly increase the size of these forces. Security operations under the civil strife have developed new and unfortunate traditions for forces whose mission is the defense of democracy. Human rights groups should be encouraged to maintain and further develop their educational, monitoring, and legal assistance activities to counter the overly repressive actions of the security forces. On the other hand, the security forces have not been able to effectively control violence without massive reprisal, and even then they have failed in the Northeast. This suggests that many young people have been taught that violence is an effective way to achieve political goals. This is also a tradition that will need to be overcome if peace is to be stabilized. These considerations suggest that Sri Lankan security forces would greatly profit from training programs designed to make possible more effective and yet more restrained response to terrorist or guerrilla actions.

#### 4.8 Democratic Attitudes and Values

A stable, modern, liberal democracy requires a population that is prepared to accept the results of elections, to respect the rights of others to hold and express their opinions, and to live peacefully with people of different cultures and values. As

suggested in section 2.0 of this report, it will probably be many years before the values and attitudes of the Sri Lankan people reach this point. The evidence suggests that communal identity and hatred of out-groups repeatedly overcomes more pacific and democratic values.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in the longer view, the most effective aid to democracy in Sri Lanka may be that which attempts to accelerate the democratization of the attitudes and values of its people.

Educational programs are the most effective way to achieve this goal.

Short of developing new educational programs, USAID/Sri Lanka might attempt to increase the emphasis in human rights educational programs on the rights of others and the need for toleration of different views and cultures. Similarly, in programs that promote English language or trilingual education, it may be possible to incorporate reading materials that incidentally promote tolerance, respect for others, and the importance of nonviolent political activity (a lesson of events in Eastern Europe that is often overlooked).

To adequately address the issue of changing attitudes and values, USAID/Sri Lanka should assist in the development of a capacity for comprehensive, nationwide public opinion surveys, which the country presently lacks. Such a capacity should ideally be developed in a way that allows representative national samples to be taken regularly on topics of interest. It should also use focus groups and in-depth surveys with much smaller samples to help in the development of general surveys and to explore more deeply the state of democratic values and propensities toward ethnic hatred and violence.

Such a public opinion capability would serve at least three purposes. First, it would make possible a more accurate focusing of educational programs directed toward children and adults in areas such as tolerance, ethnic understanding, and the undesirability of violence. Second, it would make possible more accurate measurement of what has been accomplished over time by programs with these objectives. Third, it would increase the "voice" of the general population (the silent majority) in government decisions, a role that polling has increasingly come to play in developed democracies. In doing so it would improve contact between the people and their leaders and make less likely the accumulation of unaddressed resentments. By pre-confirming electoral outcomes, effectively designed preelection polls can reduce the intensity of electoral contests and generate confidence in the fairness of outcomes. Thus, an opinion survey capability should serve to improve the capability of the democratic system in all areas -- "voice, choice, and governance," and should enhance democratic attitudes. It should also help USAID/Sri Lanka in assessing the state of democracy and the effectiveness of mission programs.

## 5.0 DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN SRI LANKA

Efforts to promote democratic pluralism in Sri Lanka are likely to affect the Sri Lankan economy and the country's prospects for economic growth in various ways. While some of these effects are likely to be beneficial, we believe that increased democratic pluralism may adversely affect the Sri Lankan economy in certain ways as well. We therefore suggest that A.I.D. avoid adopting an overly optimistic view of the relationship between "open markets" and "open societies" in which "all good things" somehow occur simultaneously and mutually reinforce each other. Rather, careful assessments must be made about how political change and economic change affect each other and about the tradeoffs that may emerge in seeking to promote both "open markets" and "open societies."

We believe that there are two main ways in which increased democratic pluralism will have a beneficial effect on the Sri Lankan economy. First, a substantial reduction in the overall level of conflict and in the prospects for renewed violence will greatly improve the general climate for economic growth in Sri Lanka. The violent unrest that has plagued Sri Lanka in recent decades has discouraged domestic and foreign investment, eroded the country's physical infrastructure, diverted human resources from more productive uses, and forced the government to spend heavily on its security forces rather than on more productive matters. Indeed, it is probably safe to conclude that these consequences of intra-societal violence have been the main hindrance to economic growth in Sri Lanka in the last two decades. Accordingly, any measures that significantly reduce intra-societal violence in Sri Lanka will also have a beneficial effect on the country's prospects for economic growth.

Second, promoting social pluralism, giving greater "voice" to economic interest groups, and increasing the effectiveness of "choice" and "governance" on economic matters will improve the efficiency and accountability of the Sri Lankan political economy and therefore should enhance economic growth. Several types of activities are particularly important in this regard. Activities that increase the role of businessmen, small-scale entrepreneurs, workers, and peasants in economic decision-making will improve the accountability of the decision-making process and therefore ensure that economic decision-making better serves society's interests. Similarly, activities that facilitate dialogue and communication among these four economic interest groups, government officials, party leaders, academics, and other intellectuals on economic and social issues will further improve the accountability of the decision-making process. Finally, efforts to improve the government's research and planning capabilities on economic and social issues will increase the effectiveness of its decision-making on these issues. Several of the recommendations made in section 6.0 of this report embody these considerations.

Although increased democratic pluralism can therefore have a beneficial effect on the Sri Lankan economy, it may have adverse consequences as well. If businessmen, small-scale entrepreneurs, workers, or peasants acquire a greater role in economic decision-making, they may use their increased influence to further their own narrow interests at the expense of other interest groups, undermining the interests of society as a whole. For example, wealthy businessmen might use their increased influence over the decision-making process to block efforts to improve the well-being of the poor; and workers might use their increased influence to gain wage increases that threaten the country's international competitiveness. Any efforts to increase the "voice" of economic interest groups should therefore also seek to promote responsible, civic-minded attitudes among these groups. Activities that facilitate dialogue and communication among groups can be particularly useful in generating the necessary compromise and consensus among these groups.

## 6.0 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents a number of program recommendations for A.I.D.'s democratic pluralism initiative in Sri Lanka, based on the analysis contained in section 4.0 of this report. We have made recommendations that we believe are cost-effective and emphasize areas in which A.I.D. has special expertise.

### 6.1 Recommendations for USAID/Sri Lanka

#### 1) Employment Creation

Given the urgency of the unemployment problem in Sri Lanka, USAID/Sri Lanka should pursue appropriate avenues for promoting employment creation, especially among the youth and in the more backward rural areas of the country. In order to generate employment as quickly as possible, we recommend that the mission promote the convening of a conference to discuss ways to generate immediate employment. The ideas discussed at such a conference might include housing construction, road repair, irrigation canal expansion, environmental programs (which might be attractive to certain foreign donors), and the use of television and radio to provide English language instruction to stimulate overseas employment. If the mission believes it is feasible, more direct efforts to promote employment in some of these areas might be made through the use of PL-480 counterpart funds.

As discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this report and in the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, long-term efforts to create employment should focus mainly on rural-based, labor-intensive industry. The mission is already carrying out several programs which serve this objective, including the Private Enterprise Promotion project and the Mahaweli Enterprise Development project. We urge that these programs be expanded as much and as rapidly as possible.

#### 2) Human Resources Analysis and Planning Facility

Following the discussion in section 4.2 of this report and in the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, USAID/Sri Lanka should assist the appropriate Sri Lankan government ministry in developing a human resources analysis and planning facility. This assistance might include computer equipment and software, financial support for appropriate human resources surveys, and perhaps training abroad in labor economics or a related field for a suitable Sri Lankan national. Much of this assistance could be provided under USAID/Sri Lanka's Development Studies and Training program. Study abroad for Sri Lankan nationals could be financed

either through this program or through the USIS Fulbright program.

### 3) Government Employment Practices

The World Bank and the Sri Lankan government's Administrative Reforms Commission have both identified the oversized and politicized government bureaucracy as a major impediment to reform in Sri Lanka. The Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth has argued that a major source of discontent among the youth has been the politicization of the government's hiring and promotion policies. USAID/Sri Lanka should consider offering to assist the Sri Lankan government in addressing this problem. One area in which the mission might make a particularly useful contribution is in helping the government to establish a more rigorous merit-hiring and merit-promotion system. Such an effort might be carried out under USAID/Sri Lanka's Development Studies and Training project. The mission should be mindful of the potential political consequences of such a program and should consult with the U.S. Embassy before approaching the Sri Lankan government about it.

### 4) Support for Privatization

An unusually large percentage of employment opportunities, particularly in white collar positions, are in the government sector. This transforms elections into "winner-take-all" struggles that threaten democratic stability. Moreover, the government's extensive control over organizations ranging from large manufacturing enterprises to rural cooperatives leaves few organizations that are independent enough to pressure and restrain the government. USAID/Sri Lanka's support for privatization, private marketing facilities, local initiatives, and cooperative organization helps to reduce these tendencies and therefore makes a useful contribution to DPI. To the extent that it is politically feasible, reduction in the government's involvement in the media, particularly through the development of private broadcasting stations, should also be encouraged.

### 5) Labor Organizations

USAID/Sri Lanka is currently engaged in projects which strengthen a wide variety of interest groups, such as business and professional groups, small-scale entrepreneurs, peasants, women, and tenants. These activities play a very important role in enhancing the "voice" component of the framework elaborated in section 4.0 of this report. Inadequate attention has been given to enhancing the "voice" of labor in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the mission should initiate an analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of developing a project to strengthen labor organizations. The main goal of such a project should be to depoliticize Sri Lankan

labor organizations, which are now closely tied to certain political parties or politicians. The analysis should be coordinated with the U.S. Embassy's Labor Reporting Officer.

#### 6) Human Rights Activities

A number of government-related and independent groups exist in Sri Lanka that are concerned with human rights research, education, public advocacy, and legal representation. USAID/Sri Lanka is currently supporting some of these activities. We recommend that this support be continued and that it be expanded if the mission feels that insufficient funding is preventing these groups from reaching an adequate audience.

#### 7) Policy-Oriented Research

An important priority in Sri Lanka is to improve the quality of the dialogue among the relevant societal actors on the many urgent social, economic, and political issues facing the country. To facilitate this, USAID/Sri Lanka should increase its support for appropriate non-governmental policy-oriented research organizations, such as the Marga Institute, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Institute for Ethnic Studies, and the Center for Policy Research. This could be done either by supporting these organizations to undertake research on specific issues or by providing them with more general financial support.

In the short term, this could most easily be carried out through USAID/Sri Lanka's Private Sector Policy Support project, which is already engaged in activities of this sort. In the long term it may be appropriate to develop an independent project to pursue this recommendation more directly. Mission personnel could also facilitate research of this sort informally by recommending that certain issues be addressed and by contributing their research expertise where appropriate.

#### 8) Communication

In addition to improving the quality of the dialogue in Sri Lanka on pressing social, economic, and political issues, it is essential that the breadth of the dialogue be expanded by increasing the degree of communication among the relevant societal actors on these issues. This could be done in a variety of ways, including seminars, colloquia, guest lecture series, print and broadcast media activities, and less formal arrangements. The focus of such activities would be to promote discussion on these issues among societal actors who do not generally interact, including business groups, academics, other intellectuals, government and party officials, and the leaders of labor and peasant groups.

USAID/Sri Lanka could provide support for communications activities of this sort through its Private Sector Policy Support project or perhaps through its PVO Co-Financing II project. Alternatively, a communications component could be built into an independent project focusing on policy-oriented research. USAID/Sri Lanka personnel could also serve as informal catalysts for increased communication among the relevant actors. For example, mission personnel could recommend to certain organizations that colloquia or lecture series be established; or they could arrange informal lunches or dinners that bring together prominent figures from different elements of society.

#### 9) Public Opinion Survey Capability

Both USAID/Sri Lanka and local groups concerned with the development of a modern democratic society in which the rights of all groups are respected need the capability to understand more fully the attitudes and values of the populace so they can target civic educational programs more effectively and monitor changes that result from these programs or other factors. More generally, it can be argued that "voice, choice, and governance" would each benefit from the publication of credible public opinion surveys. Today, the country lacks this capability, although a number of people in academia, the political parties, and business (market research) are acquainted with academic and mass media opinion survey methods. The mission should help local research institutions develop a nonpolitical public opinion survey capability.

#### 10) Improving Language Training

Sri Lanka has made a commitment to the achievement of trilingualism, particularly through a renewed emphasis on English language training. USAID/Sri Lanka, along with other aid organizations, is currently supporting this effort. This support should be expanded and integrated with a program aimed at involving language teachers of Sinhala, Tamil, and English in a common effort to improve language teaching methods and to utilize broadcast facilities for language training or upgrading.

#### 11) Improving Respect for the Rights of Others

At this stage in their development the people of Sri Lanka have shown themselves to be too willing to resort to violence to impose their opinions or cultural demands on others. Therefore, USAID/Sri Lanka should take every opportunity in its programming to support education in tolerance and nonviolent political values. For

example, greater emphasis might be placed on these issues in human rights education; and educational materials might be developed that emphasize these themes in the context of language training.

#### 12) FVO/NGO Outreach

USAID/Sri Lanka should consider developing a more aggressive outreach mechanism for PVO/NGO proposals and activities. It would be useful to develop and distribute a simple brochure in Sinhala, Tamil, and English on grant application procedures and the types of projects supported. The mission might want to consider utilizing "umbrella" or general civic organizations (such as CCSS or the Sri Lanka Foundation) to (1) distribute brochures to PVOs/NGOs throughout the country, particularly in rural areas, in the northeast, and among newly formed organizations which may not be aware of the mission's programs; (2) promote applications for certain kinds of projects that the mission considers desirable, through this more informal channel; and (3) aggregate micro-grants into manageable grant programs.

#### 13) DPI Component in PVO Co-Financing II Project

The PVO Co-Financing II project should be expanded to include a DPI component limited to PVOs/NGOs as implementing agencies.

#### 14) Target PVO/NGO Groups

Some groups should be targeted for special attention under DPI. Groups whose leadership or membership cut across the major ascriptive cleavages in Sri Lankan society, link rural and urban Sri Lankans, or link different regions of the country are of great importance in ameliorating the conflicts that have recently engulfed the country. Organizations which include in their leadership youth, women, rural people, or the poor should be given high priority: it is not sufficient merely to provide benefits to the disadvantaged through elitist organizations. The Report of the President's Commission on Youth points out that disaffection follows from absence of "voice" in decision-making.

The checklist given in Appendix I of this report might be useful in deciding which PVOs/NGOs should be given grants. This checklist could be expanded to include economic criteria, such as income generation, productivity, or private enterprise. It is meant to augment rather than to replace existing USAID/Sri Lanka deliberations on PVO/NGO grant applications.

#### 15) Targeting the Northeast

USAID/Sri Lanka should consider establishing a program to encourage national integration and civic participation in the northeast. Given the isolation and pervasive feeling of discrimination that exist in the northeast, the mission should consider earmarking PVO/NGO funds for the region, developing a more aggressive outreach program there, and funding projects which link organizations in the northeast to organizations in other parts of the country that engage in similar activities. In the absence of specific mission policies, the northeast may be shortchanged unintentionally because organizations in other parts of the country have had more experience in dealing with the mission. Groups in the northeast may initially be reluctant to apply for support and may require special nurturing. These recommendations are, of course, conditional on political developments over which the mission has little or no control.

A special problem arises from the possibility that many groups in the northeast fear reprisals from the LTTE if they articulate moderate positions, a fear which is compounded by the isolation of these groups from the rest of the country. It may be useful to develop a strategy of "timed support," where an initial period of communication and cautious socialization is followed by a period in which recipients are selected more carefully on the basis of their commitment to national integration. The mission should be mindful of the political sensitivities that such a program would entail and should work closely with the U.S. Embassy in carrying out such a program.

#### 16) TAF and/or SLFI Grant

USAID/Sri Lanka should consider providing a separate grant to The Asia Foundation (TAF) and/or the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) to promote services in strengthening the judiciary, training journalists, training local government personnel, and developing a parliamentary internship program.

### 6.2 Discussion

Because many of the program recommendations given above amount to modifications of existing USAID/Sri Lanka projects and because most of these recommendations are contingent upon financial considerations over which we have no control, we are reluctant to assign priorities to these recommendations. Nevertheless, we recognize that it would be useful for us to identify which of these recommendations are the most important.

In light of the discussion in sections 2.0 and 4.0 of this report, we believe that our recommendations dealing with the problem of youth unemployment and youth unrest carry the greatest

urgency. Accordingly, we suggest that the mission pursue as a matter of high priority the ideas contained in recommendation (1), especially the idea of convening a conference to discuss immediate employment creation, and those contained in recommendations (14) and (15), which call for increased efforts to target PVO/NGO support and other activities at the northeast and at disaffected groups such as the youth.

Also of high priority are recommendations (2), (9), and (10), which call for the establishment of a human resources analysis and planning facility and a public opinion surveying capability and for increased English language training. Although these latter recommendations do not have the kind of short-term impact that recommendations (1), (14), and (15) do, we believe that they can play very important roles in addressing the problems of youth unemployment and youth unrest. Most of our remaining recommendations are suggestions about how existing USAID/Sri Lanka programs could be modified to play a more effective role in the mission's DPI strategy, and therefore should be fairly easy to implement.

In addition to the specific program recommendations made above, we suggest that USAID/Sri Lanka offer to assist the Sri Lankan government on a selective and limited basis in implementing reforms related to "voice, choice, and governance" that have been proposed recently by the government itself or in the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth. Responsible Sri Lankan leaders have identified most of the problems the country faces, but in many cases they lack the resources, technical expertise, or constituent support to resolve these problems. The mission can be quite helpful in assisting the government's efforts to resolve these problems, but in doing so it should bear in mind the importance of "Sri Lankan solutions to Sri Lankan problems" as a guiding principle.

## 7.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures useful for DPI are necessarily less precise than those used in measuring economic progress. Developing such measures is particularly difficult when annual performance measures are required. Nevertheless, one member of the team (Gastil) has had extensive experience in measuring the comparative rise and fall of democratic performance in all countries over the last seventeen years. Adapting the checklist employed in these analyses to the purposes of this project, to the Sri Lankan situation, and to the categories of "voice, choice, governance," and civic values discussed above, yields the following criteria:

### A. Voice

#### Direct Measures:

1. extent of freedom of political discussion among individuals.
2. degree of freedom from media censorship.
3. extent of freedom in the public media.
4. extent of free political organization.
5. extent of free nonpolitical organization.
6. degree to which assembly and demonstrations are free.
7. degree to which the population is free from socioeconomic or psychological dependency which inhibits individual sociopolitical expression.

#### Indirect Measures:

8. number of cases of unadjudicated political imprisonment.
9. number of documented or estimated cases of execution, assassination, torture, or disappearance.

### B. Choice

1. degree to which the system is based on free and fair elections, without fear or compulsion from any quarter.
2. degree to which control over the political process is in the hands of those elected or is controlled through referenda.
3. degree to which the system responds to voter desires expressed through ballots.
4. degree to which minority desires play a role in political decision-making.
5. degree to which the system reflects an appropriate decentralization of electoral or other democratic mechanisms.

### C. Governance

#### Direct Measures:

1. the extent of the government's control over the country.
2. the degree to which the civil service functions in accordance with government policy and reflects the operation of a merit system.
3. the extent to which the security services act in a disciplined manner in accordance with government directives.
4. the degree to which violent criminal or revolutionary activity is controlled by the government, thereby ensuring social stability.

Indirect Measures:

5. number of cases of ethnic violence reported during the past year.
6. number of cases of terrorist attacks reported during the past year.

D. Civic Values (to be included after a survey capability is developed):

1. national survey score on tolerance measures.
2. national survey score on measures of ethnic or socioeconomic distance.
3. national survey score on civic/democratic values.

The definition of these measures and a discussion of their relevance can be found in the accompanying Appendix II, as well as in the foregoing discussion. By assigning numbers to these criteria, one could assess annually the comparative international position of Sri Lanka in terms of democratic development. Using similar criteria, in past years democratic freedom in Sri Lanka has been seen to be similar to the level achieved by India, although the violence and interruptions in democratic practices in recent years often have caused its rating to fall somewhat below that level.

However, for the purpose of measuring advance or decline in the democratic performance of Sri Lanka, assigning comparative numerical values to those foregoing criteria that are not reported in numerical form would be both unnecessary and too difficult. Instead, USAID/Sri Lanka should develop annually for each criterion short narrative descriptions of its state. One or two sentences should be sufficient for most narratives. Successive years should then be judged in terms of the relation of the narrative descriptions for the several criteria for the previous year to those of the current year. If equal weight is given to each criterion, which is appropriate for initial work, the ratio of measures that have improved over the year to those that have declined could be used as a measure of the direction of change in the country's democratic performance. If, for example, the current

peaceful interlude in intercommunal relations and revolutionary activity continues for another year, one should expect that a review of the criteria would show more advances than retreats at the end of this year, and thus an overall gain for democracy. Specifically, over a period of years efforts to improve the state of democratic values and attitudes should be reflected in positive changes in opinion survey results, if these efforts are having the desired effects.

It may be hard to show the extent of the relationship between USAID/Sri Lanka's DPI program and the outcome. However, insofar as the program has been directed toward making possible the continuation of political and communal peace, in the example suggested above, if the ratio between advances and retreats is greater than 1:1, or even stabilized at 1:1, it would not be unreasonable to assume that USAID/Sri Lanka has made a contribution to this result. This would be particularly true if the gains that are noted are in areas that have been directly targeted by the mission's DPI-related projects.

## Appendix I -- NGO/PVO Checklist for DPI

- 1) Does the group have leadership drawn from different ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups? (1 - 3 points)
- 2) Does the group have its membership drawn from different ethnic, religious, or ethnic groups? (0 - 3 points)
- 3) Does the group have youth (under 30) in leadership roles? (1 point)
  - women? (1 point)
  - poor? (1 point)
  - rural? (1 point)
- 4) Does the project provide training for youth? (1 point)
  - women? (1 point)
  - poor? (1 point)
  - rural? (1 point)

(if training is for non-traditional jobs add 1 point)
- 5) Does the project provide benefits for youth? (1 point)
  - women? (1 point)
  - poor? (1 point)
  - rural? (1 point)
- 6) Does the project promote general civic goals? (1 point)
- 7) Does the PROJECT promote communication or cooperation between different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups? (1 point)

## Appendix II -- Further Explanation of Performance Criteria

The performance criteria discussed in section 7.0 of this report are based on R. D. Gastil, Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1988-89, pages 8-25. They have been modified to fit the Sri Lankan case and the emphases discussed in this report. Some questions that might be asked under the headings of the performance criteria are suggested below. Most of these questions should be easily answered by U.S. Embassy political officers or those responsible for human rights reporting.

### A. Voice:

1. extent of freedom of political discussion among individuals.

How freely do people discuss political issues with others in the community or with outsiders?

2. degree of freedom from media censorship.

How often and to what extent has media censorship been employed in the last year? How significant has this been in curtailing national discussion?

3. extent of freedom in the public media.

Who owns the media? If there is significant government ownership, to what degree is there a commitment to a presentation of all points of view on the BBC model? How significant is self-censorship in the private media?

4. extent of free political organization.

To what extent are political parties or political pressure groups allowed to operate freely?

5. extent of free nonpolitical organization.

Are religious, business, environmental, and other organizations allowed to operate without hindrance? To what extent are nonpolitical groups allowed to participate in the political discussion?

6. degree to which assembly and demonstration are free.

Is permission to assemble publicly or privately necessary or freely given for any purpose?

7. degree to which the population is free from socioeconomic or psychological dependency which inhibits individual sociopolitical expression.

Are women able to express their opinions free of male dominance? Are tenant farmers or farm workers able to express opinions or organize free of domination by landowners or supervisors? Are citizens able to express themselves free of fear that local warlords or terrorists will harm them?

8. number of cases of unadjudicated political imprisonment.

9. number of documented or estimated cases of execution, assassination, torture, or disappearance.

**B. Choice:**

1. degree to which the system is based on free and fair elections, without fear and compulsion from any quarter.

Have the most recent elections been generally free of violent interference or dishonesty in the voting process? Has the selection of candidates offered a fair chance to all parts of the community?

2. degree to which control over the political process is in the hands of those elected or is controlled through referenda.

Have military officers, foreign governments, or other forces intervened in, or cast their shadow upon, government decision-making and policy execution?

3. degree to which the system responds to voter desires expressed through ballots.

Did the most recent elections ask voters to choose among policies? Are those elected generally pursuing the policies that they advocated at election time?

4. degree to which minority desires play a role in political decision-making.

Are minority concerns adequately taken into account by the leading political parties? Is there provision for ensuring that they will be represented in the political process?

5. degree to which the system reflects an appropriate decentralization of electoral or other democratic mechanisms.

Do democratic mechanisms at provincial, district, or local levels allow local interests to be adequately taken into account in administering national programs? To what extent do these political levels possess independent powers of decision, especially taxing and budgetary powers?

**C. Governance:**

1. the extent of the government's control over the country.

Are sections of the country out of the control of the government, such that their governance cannot be in accord with the democratic structure?

2. the degree to which the civil service functions in accordance with government policy and reflects the operation of a merit system.

Is the civil service responsive to political changes in the country? Is it guided in its recruitment or other policies by the decisions of the elected government? Can development and other policies be carried through effectively?

3. the extent to which the security services act in a disciplined manner in accordance with government directives.

Can the government act without fear in its relations with the security services? Can the officers in these services discipline their subordinates for illegal actions?

4. the degree to which violent criminal or revolutionary activity is controlled by the government, thereby ensuring social stability.

Can the security services guarantee the security of citizens against terrorist attacks? Can it adequately control mobs that attack groups that are out of favor?

5. number of cases of ethnic violence reported during the past year.

6. number of cases of terrorist attacks reported during the past year.

**D. Civic Values** (to be included after a survey capability is developed):

1. national survey score on tolerance measures.

2. national survey score on measures of ethnic or socioeconomic distance.

3. national survey score on civic/democratic values.

(Note: The three types of questions in section D would be based on the work of social psychologists and political scientists over the last generation and more, as well as the well known public opinion survey organizations such as Gallup or Roper. The best known relevant early work in political science is perhaps Gabriel Almond

and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture. Alex Inkeles has done important questionnaire studies of this kind in India and other countries in the area of modernization. To develop this category, USAID/Sri Lanka should work with a local institution to make simplified distillation of such work for annual field application.)

## Endnotes

- 1) World Bank, Sri Lanka, A Break With the Past: The 1987-90 Program of Economic Reforms and Adjustment (Washington, 1988).
- 2) Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth, Summary (Colombo, 1990).
- 3) Ulrich F. W. Ernst, "Some Economic Characteristics of Sri Lanka's Provinces," Program Economics Office, USAID/Sri Lanka, November 1988.
- 4) Although emphasis on English has more obvious returns, incorporating English language programs into a more general trilingual language education project can be defended on a number of bases. First, it supports an announced national goal, one most recently affirmed in the Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth. Trilingualism is also the linguistic solution suggested by K. M. de Silva, the best known authority on ethnic conflict in the country (in Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies, p. 371). Secondly, there are economic and cultural arguments for all three languages. Obviously, Sinhala as the majority language should be readily understood by all Sri Lankans. Tamil is not only the language of a disaffected minority, residing throughout the island, but is also the language of an adjacent population in India many times the size of Sri Lanka's. Given this adjacency, understanding Tamil is inevitably of cultural, political, and economic importance for the future of the country. Third, it is important for Sinhala teachers to see something in language training for them. The Sinhala Teacher's Association was one of the major groups pushing for a single national language in the 1950s (de Silva, p. 173), and they were the group that gained most from the change away from English. Emphasis on English has also been identified with the interests of the Tamils in the past, for example in the headline "Federalists win: English rules; Sinhala finished" in a 1965 Sinhala publication (Jayawardene, p. 111). We do not want emphasis on English to be used again for such nationalist sloganeering. Finally, the symbolic argument is not unimportant. As the noted anthropologist Edmund Leach said, in referring to Burma, "For a man to speak one language rather than another is a ritual act; it is a statement about one's personal status; to speak the same language as one's neighbors expresses solidarity with these neighbours, to speak a different language than one's neighbours expresses social distance or even hostility." Of course, complete trilingualism will never be achieved, but it would help if the country moved further in that direction.
- 5) Basic references on the history of ethnic conflict and violence in Sri Lanka are K. M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka: 1880-1985 (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986); G. Gunatilleke, N. Tiruchelvam,

and R. Coomaraswamy, "Violence and Development in Sri Lanka: Conceptual Issues," in Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam, and Coomaraswamy (eds.), Ethical Dilemmas of Development in Asia (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1983); Kumari Jayawardene, Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka (Centre for Social Analysis, Sri Lanka, 1986); and Charles Abeysekera and Newton Gunasinghe (eds.), Facets of Ethnicity in Sri Lanka (Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 1987). The record of communal violence is a long one, although the minorities that were an object of that violence have varied greatly. In the 1880s, the enemy was the Christians, in 1915 the Muslims, in the 1920s the Indian Tamils, and since the 1950s primarily the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Marxist authors of the last two references, intellectually based on a Western European tradition, continually lament the fact that for Sri Lankans today ethnic considerations override all others, obscuring for all classes their "true interests."