

## Voices Of The East -Citizen dialogues aftermath of the restoration of civilian administration in the East of Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The Election of a Eastern Provincial Council and the restoration of civilian administration signify the Eastern Province's transition into a new era in 2009. The end of the war has allowed thousands of residents to return to their homes, cultivate their lands, and take an active role in community life. Eastern citizens possess great capacity for social reconciliation and economic achievement. Overall, the province is ripe for transformation from war-torn region into a prosperous province. Under "*Development*," Agriculture is highlighted as the primary source of economic capacity and livelihood in the Eastern Province. In order for agriculture to become a powerful economic force, farmers need better access to agricultural credit, extension services, new technology, and training programs. Animal husbandry can make use of female labour and small land areas, but requires better breeding programs, cheaper feed, and greater veterinary care services. Improved infrastructure, particularly the road network, is needed to facilitate commerce and transportation, and to help bridge the divide in resources and commerce between rural and urban areas. Industry and business also require greater access to market facilities and economic information to make informed entrepreneurial decisions. It is necessary to match improvements in livelihoods, economic opportunities and connectivity with enhanced human capabilities of eastern communities that have suffered setbacks through improving access to better health and education especially in the rural areas, while protecting the vulnerable. For "*Security*," Governance challenges endanger human security through ethnic prejudice among government officials and politicians, and the failure of engaging community organizations. The reluctance of political parties to meaningfully assist with community problem solving and the failure of government officials to sort out conflicting property right claims leaves the poor and the displaced feeling especially marginalized. Additionally, each of these problems tend to create feelings of ethnic inequality, and risk for the renewal of unrest. Improved government responsiveness, accountability, and service delivery is the underlying problem in the Eastern Province. Until these issues are addressed, ethnic prejudice and poor governance will continue to silence the voices of citizens. Proper management of the transition period is critical to securing enduring peace and prosperity and therefore necessitates conscientious attention to the connections between growth, security, accountability, and human development. Reviving the East therefore requires a new culture of governance with focus on grassroots partnerships.

**Keywords:** Eastern Provincial Council, social reconciliation, governance, prejudice