

**THE NIWANO PECE FOUNDATION
THE FINAL REPORT OF RESEARCH/ACTIVITY GRANTS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006/2007**

Title of the project : Consultation on Fifty Years of Language Policy in Independent Sri Lanka.

Organization/official title : Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue.

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Signature

ACTIVITY REPORT

Report of the Consultation held in Colombo on the theme : *Fifty Years of Language Policy in Independent Sri Lanka* . Organised by the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue

Two consultations were held from 3 -6th of December 2006 and 2 -3rd June 2007

Purpose of the Consultation : Since political Independence in 1948 Sri Lankan state introduced new policies aiming at indigenizing the socio-political landscape of Sri Lanka. Inefficient implementation and inherent weaknesses of some of the new policies disturbed the social peace and created tensions which led to open conflict and war. One such important policy decision which contributed immensely to the conflict between Sri Lanka state and Tamil community involves the language policies initiated in 1956. Even if the current war comes to an end still one of the major factors that contributed to the conflict will remain as a thorn in the body politics of Sri Lanka, until justice is done in terms of language policy.

The consultation held with the support of knowledgeable scholars and social analysts belonging to different Religions analysed different facets of the language policy and highlighted areas that need urgent attention.

Findings are already published to educate the wider society and to sensitize the authorities to act on the problems created by language policy as soon as possible without waiting for the final solution to the ethnic issue.

Content and Method of the Activity

Contents of the first Consultation

Part I: Sinhala Only : Religious Perspective

- i. Sinhala Only : Focus on Buddhism and Society – *Sanath Nanayakkara* – Former Deputy Editor, Encyclopedia of Buddhism
- ii Sinhala Only: Its Impact on the Muslim Community – *A Javid Yusuf* – Attorney at Law.
- iii 50 Years of Sinhala Only & Over 175 Years of English Only : A Christian Perspective on Linguistic Domination –*Aloysius Pieris, s.j.* – Director, Tulana Centre for Encounter and Dialogue, Kelaniya and Editor of ‘Dialogue’.

Part II : Sinhala Only: The Legal Perspective

- iv The Trajectory of the Equal Protection of the Law: From Sinhala Only to the Supreme Court Judgment on the North-East merger - *Rajan Philips* - Professional Engineer, Currently working in Canada.
- v A Tale of Three Constitutions and the Language of Minorities, - *N. Selvakkumaran* – Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Colombo.

Part III : Sinhala Only and the Other Two Official Languages

- vi Sinhala Only : The Impact on the Tamils – *Silan Kadirgamar* - Former senior lecturer in History at the University of Colombo and Jaffna

vii Sinhala Only : The Status of the English Language – *Ashley Halpe* – Former Professor of English at the University of Peradeniya.

Contents of the second Consultation

Part IV : Sinhala Only and the Medium of Education

- viii English in Science and Technology Education – *Kumar David* – Former senior lecturer at the University of Peradeniya
- ix Sinhala Only : Consequences of Social Sciences and Humanities Education at the University Level – *Sasanka Perera* –Senior Lecturer in Sociology, at the University of Colombo.

Part V : Sinhala Only : and Public Affairs

- x The Absent Fundamental – *Susil Sirivardana* – Former civil servant of the Government of Sri Lanka and Director General of Janasaviya
- xi Sinhala Only in the External Relations Sector – *Izeth Hussain* – Former Senior Diplomat of the Government of Sri Lanka.

Course of actual events

October – November 2006 – Preparation of papers by the contributors

December 2nd – 6th Consultation first 3 parts.

January – February 2007 – Transcription of discussions

March – April – Contributors finalized the papers incorporating the new ideas that emerged in the discussion

June 2 – 3 – Second Consultation covered parts IV and V

June and July – Transcription of the discussion

August – contributors finalized the 4 papers incorporating the new ideas that emerged in the discussion

September – October – Editorial work by the Editorial Committee and chief Editor.

Final draft was available in last week of September 2007.

October 2007 : “Dialogue’ was published incorporating all the material.

Achievements of the Activity

The findings of the consultation highlight the urgency in settling the language issue to facilitate the transaction of the tamil speaking citizens with the Sri Lankan state. Particularly at the present time, there are signs of strong positive opinions emerging in Sri Lanka about the urgency of taking action to settle the language issue through doing justice to the users of the tamil language.

This Dialogue publication on ‘50 Years of Language Policy’” will contribute to this emerging discourse. This publication has already reached the university community, civil society organizations and even some key individuals in the State sector.

Future areas to be pursued: We hope to translate these publications into Sinhala and Tamil in due course for the benefit of the non English speaking persons interested in language issue.

Further studies connected with language issue will be pursued by the Ecumenical Institute in due course.