

An Analysis of the Development Impacts of Establishing Kalmunai Administrative District in Sri Lanka

Mohammad Agus Yusoff¹, Athambawa Sarjooon^{1,2} & Mat Ali Hassan³

¹ School of History, Politics and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM Bangi 43600, Selangor, Malaysia

² Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya 20400, Sri Lanka

³ PhD Candidate, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

Correspondence: Mohammad Agus Yusoff, School of History, Politics and Strategic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM Bangi 43600, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: agus_@ukm.my

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Abstract

Decentralizing administrative powers to locally established administrative units has been the key goal of many governments in developing countries intended to boost socio-economic development at regional level. Sri Lanka has also introduced many decentralization initiatives with development motives. New administrative districts were formed in Sri Lanka with development as part of their motive, but, no new district has been formed in the last 30 years while demands have prevailed in many corners of the country. The demand calling for the establishment of the Kalmunai administrative district has been a prolonged and politically influencing demand for the last 15 years in Sri Lanka's political-development discourse. This study attempts to examine the development impacts of establishing the Kalmunai administrative district that has been advocated by the people living in the coastal belt of the Amparai district (referred as 'south eastern region'), a region which has been lacking in terms of development due to the severe impacts of thirty-year civil war as well as the 2004 Asian Tsunami devastation in Sri Lanka. The findings of the study reveal that the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai district will eventually contribute to multi-dimensional development in the region in the long run, however, a conducive institutional environment needs to be built in and around the district administrative machinery in order to ensure equity and justice in service delivery and resource allocation among different ethnic groups in the district which would be the pre-condition for the sustainability of any kind of development impact in the region.

Keywords: administrative decentralization, development impact, Kalmunai district, Sri Lanka

1. Introduction

Development motive has also been an objective of decentralization initiatives and reforms in many developing countries. Most of them attempted to reform their administrative structure since achieving independence as an effort to make the existing colonial administrative structure more effective in the process of planning and implementing the development programs. This development motive of decentralization has contributed to the growth of the study of development administration as a discipline.

Like many countries in developing world, Sri Lanka has also adopted a number of administrative reforms focusing on decentralizing administrative powers as a mechanism to boost economic and regional development of the country. These reforms ranged from establishment of specific ministries and departments in order to formulate, implement, and monitor the relevant economic and regional development policies, up to demarcating and establishing new administrative units such as administrative regions, zones, divisions, units etc. (See: Yusoff et al., 2015; Herath, 2009 & Woiwode, 2009). All these regulative arrangements and institutional and geographical establishments were considered to be the means to implement the decentralized powers toward achieving the goals of economic and regional development. The establishment of administrative districts has also been motivated in terms of development in the post-independent development administration process in Sri

Lanka. Five new districts, namely Moneragala (1959), Amparai (1961), Gampaha (1978), Mullaitivu (1978), and Kilinochchi (1984) were established in the post-independent era, and most of them were justified on development motives. As a developing country, reforming the local administrative machinery was greatly emphasized by the international development and funding agencies and the local public. However, for the last thirty years no major reform has made it to the administrative machinery in Sri Lanka focusing on empowering development administration. There are a number of demands put forwarded by people living in many parts of the country calling for the establishment of new administrative districts and divisional units in order to facilitate and empower development initiatives along with other objectives. The demand calling for the establishment of a Kalmunai administrative district is one such demand that has been prevailing at societal and political spheres for the last fifty years and has gained political importance and has been a contested topic of debate in Sri Lankan politics for the last fifteen years. Even though there are rationales regarding the demand and positive impacts on the establishment of the proposed administrative district in development administration perspective, up until now the demand has been sidetracked by the successive governments. Similarly, no comprehensive academic study has yet been conducted to investigate the pros and cons of establishing the proposed district from the development administration perspective. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the development impacts of the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district from different angles.

This paper is an outcome of a three-year research project which extensively examined the demand calling for the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district, and its impacts. This study adopted both primary and secondary data collected from different sources. Primary data were mainly collected from semi-structured interviews among selected respondents (purposive sampling), focus group discussions, and researcher's participant observations. The secondary data were also collected from different sources through desk analysis. This research is a case study and is descriptive and interpretive in nature.

2. Decentralization and Regional Economic Development: A Brief Conceptual Note

Since administrative districts are exercising a kind of decentralized power—de-concentration—in Sri Lankan context and the establishment of an administrative district, its secretariat and other departments and institutions at district level necessitates the process of decentralization of central power. Therefore, the conceptualization of 'decentralization' and its development motives becomes importance for the better understanding of the development impacts of the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai district. This section briefly conceptualizes decentralization and its regional economic development impacts.

The concept of 'decentralization' has been defined by various scholars of public administration and development studies as transfer of authority and responsibilities from a higher level of government bodies to a lower level; delegation of decision-making authority; placement of authority with responsibility to a person, body, or to an institution; offering local level government institutions a greater number of actions to be taken; removal of functions from the center and placing them in the periphery; and a mode of operations involving wider participation of government officers and the public in the policy-making realm, ranging from policy formulation to implementation (Rondinelli & Cheema, 1983; Conyers, 1999; Kassahun & Tengegne, 2004; Brancati, 2006; & Linder, 2009). The most comprehensive definition of decentralization is given by Rondinelli with others who define it as "the transfer or delegation of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions, and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to subordinate units of governments, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide or regional development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or non-government organizations" (Rondinelli et al., 1989:59). Bolleyer and Tharlanson (2012) use the term decentralization to refer to the removal of core resources from the center to lower levels of a multi-tiered system, whether these resources are fiscal, jurisdictional, or administrative. In general, decentralization can be conceptualized as a process of transforming powers, authorities, and responsibilities of governmental (public) functions from central level institutions to subordinate, sub-governmental or quasi-independent institutions, or bodies legally formed by the central government.

The process of decentralization of power may take place in different types and forms. There are three fundamental types of decentralization which have different objectives, degrees, and means of decentralized power, namely: political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization. Political decentralization refers the alteration of government structure through the devolution of power and authority to the lower level government institutions. It reflects whether sub-national governments are directly elected, and thus share in the political functions of governance (Faust & Harbers, 2011). Political decentralization also increases the participation of citizens and civil society in their selection of governmental representatives and in political decision-making. Fiscal decentralization entails the transfer of powers to local level government institutions to raise and retain financial resources to fulfill assigned responsibilities (Cabral, 2011). This kind of decentralization forces the

localities to rely less on financial transfers from the central or regional governments and more on extra budgetary and own generated funds to fill the gaps in local budgets. Administrative decentralization, on the other hand, involves the full or partial transfer of any array of functional responsibilities to the local level public institutions. According to Ayenew (1998), administrative decentralization involves the sharing of responsibility and authority between headquarters and field offices. Under this kind of decentralization, the functions and authority are delegated as a matter of administrative expediency and can be revoked by the center when circumstances warrant. Existing literature has categorized administrative decentralization generally using three terms, most commonly labeled as 'de-concentration,' 'delegation,' and 'devolution.' De-concentration involves a bureaucratic, hierarchical relationship; delegation involves a contractual relationship, while devolution involves an arm's-length relationship (Schneider, 2003).

Decentralization has long been an integral part of development strategies in many developing countries. In order to design, plan, make policy decisions, and administer those plans focusing on economic and regional development, governments often decentralize powers and responsibilities to the different government institutions and representative bodies established at regional, district, and divisional levels. Accordingly, decentralizing administrative powers increases public participation in planning and development; generates additional resources and achieve equitable distribution of resources; facilitates coordinated and integrated planning, and helps with the preparation of relevant local plans (Conyers, 1990). As Conyers (1981) further indicates, decentralization of decision-making and planning for development purpose makes decisions relevant to local needs and conditions; encourages local initiatives, and places greater responsibility on local administrators and leaders; helps identify local resources, and increases the efficiency of resource utilization. Similarly, as Scott (2009) indicates, decentralization will increase public sector efficiency, therefore improving service delivery and regulation functions which are necessary conditions for economic and regional development. In this context, advocates of the development motives of decentralization recommend the establishment of regional or local level decentralized government institutions, departments and agencies, and geographical units such as regions, districts, and divisions in order to facilitate development programs that are expected to be achieved through decentralization initiatives. Since, decentralization, especially the administrative decentralization is often seen as part of civil service reforms as Smoke (2003) indicates, it requires the creation or formation of new administrative bodies, systems and machineries at local level or intergovernmental level in order to manage and support decentralization process.

3. Establishment of Kalmunai Administrative District as an Institutional Mechanism to Boost Regional and Economic Development

3.1 Development as a Root Causes for the Kalmunai Administrative District Demand: A Background Note

People of the coastal belt or stretch of the Amparai district (popularly referred as 'south-eastern region') have been advocating the establishment of a Kalmunai administrative district (politically sometimes referred as 'coastal administrative district') from the establishment of Amparai district in 1961 by carving out the southern part of the Batticaloa district. With many other factors, this study has found that the marginalization of people living in the coastal belt of the district (predominated by the Tamil-speaking Muslims and Tamils), and the related issues in terms of economic and development initiatives by the district administrative machinery controlled by the Sinhalese administrative elites who always favored their ethnic group belonging and district political elites, has also convinced the Tamil-speakers to demand and advocate for a separate administrative district for their living area to boost economic and region development of their area along with other benefits [Note 1].

According to the advocates of the Kalmunai administrative districts, the district administration with the support of central administration and political elites had been instrumental in marginalizing the Tamil-speakers predominately-living coastal areas in the Amparai district in development initiatives. The review of past development projects also justifies their arguments to a certain extent. Accordingly, most of the major projects implemented intended to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people in the Amparai district had been designed and implemented favoring the Sinhalese in the district. The first such a major project was the irrigation-based development and land settlement project in the name *Gal Oya* which centered on the construction of the Senanayake reservoir along the *Gal Oya* river and the subsequent clearing of land and irrigation supply of sparsely populated areas on the western edge of the present day Amparai district (ICG, 2008).

When the *Gal Oya* project was inaugurated in 1949, D.S. Senanayake, the then Prime Minister assured to the local politicians, especially of Muslims who supported the project that the newly developed lands that would be cultivatable under this project would be shared on a 50:50 bases between the local citizens and the colonists

selected from outside (Ibrahim, 2001 & Mohideen, 2013). This assurance was welcomed by local Muslim politicians since the region had a Muslim population of about two-thirds majority at that time, therefore, they supported and worked towards the success of *Gal Oya* project. But, contrary to the promise made, only in 6 villages out of 44 new settlement villages formed under this project, Muslims and Tamils were settled. It is noted that as many studies revealed, the 6 Tamil-speakers' settlement villages suffered much due to the severe shortage of water supply for cultivation and daily use especially during the dry season and this prompted many settlers to leave the settlement in the early period of the project (See: Hasbullah et al., 2005 & Mohideen, 2013). Under the *Gal Oya* project, state-owned plantation industries, particularly the sugar cane industry was also motivated. The primary beneficiaries of sugar cane cultivation were Sinhalese settlers and their product was sold at a government-guaranteed price. On the other hand, sugar cane cultivation reduced water supplies for less lucrative paddy cultivation owned by the Tamil and Muslim farmers (Thangarajah, 2003). Therefore, Tamils and Muslims viewed the opening of the *Gal Oya* settlement scheme as a device to economically deprive them to live and own lands in the district (Mohideen, 2008).

In addition to the *Gal Oya* development project, the successive central governments continued to marginalize the coastal belt of the Amparai district in many of the regular community-based and regional development projects implemented during the first phase of civil war in the country, referring the insecurity situation prevailed in the area. One of the good examples on this regard is the *Gam Udawa* (village reawakening) program which was implemented by R.Premadasa, the then prime minister during the regime of President J.R.Jeyawardena (1977-1988). The *Gam Udawa* conceptually referred as the total reawakening process of villages concentrating on improving both economic and cultural aspects of life. This program was designed to provide housing for poor, and to enhance basic infrastructure facilities such as roads, electricity, and other services to less developed areas in the country (Hennanayake, 2006:141). The program held annually and a remote area was chosen for the implementation of the program. A special reference to the *Gam Udawa* program in this research context is that the first such a program was conducted in Sinhalese-majority Amparai area in 1980. While there were many populated but vulnerable villages in terms of community and infra-structure facilities and development in the coastal belt of the district, the government with the support of district administrative elites selected the newly settled Sinhalese area to conduct the program. With the funds allocated under this program, the majority of the Amparai town area became developed while most of the populated areas of the district were abandoned in terms of development.

The infra-structure and community-based development in the coastal areas of the Amparai district were focused only after the People's Alliance (PA) formed government in 1994 making coalition with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), the first ever successful Muslim political party in Sri Lanka found based in the research area. But, after the demise of the M.H.M.Ashraff, the founder leader of the SLMC in 2000, the domination of Sinhalese politicians in the district administration became prominent once again. A number of decisions made by the central government, the District Coordinating Committee, and the District Secretary of the Amparai district were found to be discriminatory and marginalizing toward the Tamil-speakers in development activities. All these incidents induced the advocates of the new district to forward it as one of the hot demands on the political platform. From the 2000 general election onwards, the demand became a national level political debating issue.

The Kalmunai administrative district demand appeals for the formation of a separate administrative district covering the Tamil-speakers' majority Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions from the present Amparai district. Even though the demand has long been at the societal and political level from the formation of the Amparai district, the marginalization of their areas in terms of development initiatives and impacts of the successive development programs on the rights of Tamil-speakers has pushed them to strongly advocate the demand. According to this demand, the proposed district covers an area of 1820.8 square kilometers of the coastal belt, which is about 40 percent of the total area of the present Amparai district. The proposed district has a population of 409,260 in 14 DS divisions, which is about 63% of the population of the present Amparai district, according to the 2012 census (Department of Census and Statistics 2014). Accordingly, this district would be a Tamil-speakers' majority (96.5%) administrative district in the eastern province. The Figure-1 outlines the territory of the proposed district and the major figures.

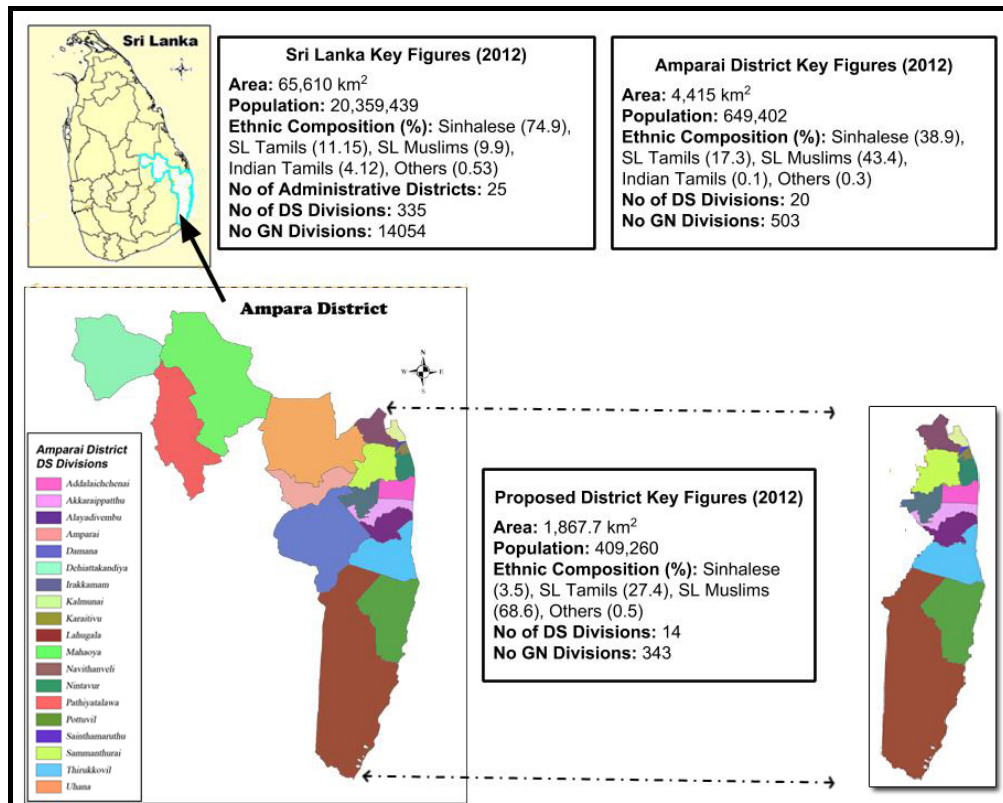


Figure 1. Map and the key figures of the proposed Kalmunai district

3.2 Development Impacts of the Formation of Kalmunai Administrative District

One of the major motives calling for the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district was the negative impact of the development programs initiated by the successive central governments in the Ampara district. In most of these development initiatives, the coastal belt of the district has been marginalized, which caused to the underdevelopment in the region. Also, due to civil war, the region became marginalized in the government’s development initiatives reporting the unstable civic condition in the region. Therefore, the Tamil-speakers in the coastal belt of Ampara district have been demanding the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai district in order to ensure the progressive development in the region in different ways. This study has identified a number of positive development impacts when the region become administered under a separate district administration. Accordingly, the establishment of the proposed administrative district can open new ways for increasing financial and human resources for the improvement of public sectors, infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions of the public in this region. There would be a new window for budgetary allocation and allocation of parliamentarians for this new district which can be better utilized entirely within the district limit in order to enhance the infrastructure development of the district and also for especially designed development projects intended to provide more job opportunities and increase income and revenue in the district. The establishment of the proposed district, its secretariats, and other government departments with the recruitment of the necessary officials would also lead to improvement of the institutional and administrative capacity in order to facilitate the development initiatives in the region. If these staff are recruited mainly from this region, the possibility of developing and implementing regional development plans become easy since they may better prioritize those projects.

The proposed district is rich in terms of sea line and agricultural lands. It has about 115 Km sea line and about 100,000 acres of paddy land with other kinds of land and marine-based resources which can potentially be used for marine cum agro-based developments and innovations in the region. However, no major development project has been initiated in the region focusing specifically on the above two areas by the successive governments. The main argument of the advocates of the proposed district is that due to the establishment of the district secretariat in the Ampara town that is dominated by the Sinhalese, the district secretariat marginalized the Tamil-speakers’ area of the district in development initiatives. According to them, the Sinhalese politicians and bureaucrats have

initiated all major development projects in Sinhalese-predominated areas in order to strengthen their patronage politics. Most of the major development projects implemented in the Amparai district were intended to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the Sinhalese while neglecting the needs and interests of Tamil-speakers living in the coastal belt of the district. Therefore, with the establishment of the proposed district, political representatives can propose regional-oriented development projects and implement them through their budgetary allocations and with the financial assistance.

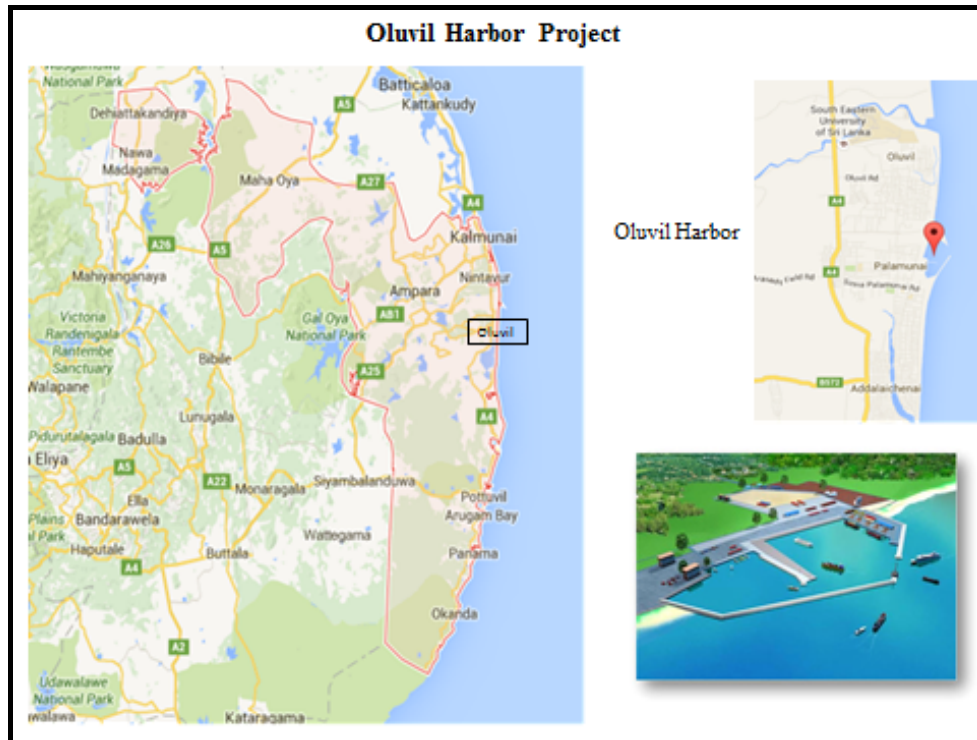


Figure 2. Oluvil Harbor Project

On the other hand, the region has a newly established harbor in Oluvil which was initiated in 1998 as a commercial harbor by the founder leader of the SLMC, M.H.M.Ashraff, while he was in power, with the expectation of improving the socioeconomic conditions and commercial activities of the region [Note 2]. It was expected that the Oluvil port would form the southeastern link in the developing chain of coastal harbors in the country and will provide more convenient and cost effective access to and from the southeastern region for goods and cargo originating on the west coast. Also, it was forecasted 1,000 direct and indirect jobs following the completion of the first stages of the project and another 10,000 employment opportunities by 2015 (Sirimane, 2013). But, when the inauguration of the harbor was initiated in 2008, the objective of the harbor was changed to become a fishery and all of the actives of the harbor became dominated by the Sinhalese when it completed phase one in 2013. This has limited the benefits of the harbor to the people of this region. But, if this harbor is promoted being commercial, there is more potential for economic development in the region. This will also lead the region to improve in terms of road networks and transportation. If the activities of the port are expanded and improved, the Oluvil port will be the only fishery port in the country and it will create a hub for all international travelers as a base to unload their fresh fish, which will be processed for export to Japanese, China, and other Asian markets. Further, since the region has potential for agro-based economic activities, the port would be the channel to export the agro-based products of the region to the global market. Since the Oluvil port has been one of the long-term demands of the SLMC, the main political party that has long been advocating the establishment of Kalmunai administrative district, if the proposed district is established, Muslim politicians will take more concerned on the improvement and the performance of the port activities which would definitely provide job opportunities and enhance regional economic development in addition to the infrastructure improvements in the region.

The coastal belt of Amparai district is rich and popular in terms of contribution to the country's agro-economic production. Presently, the Amparai district contributes 20 percent of the country's paddy production (District Secretariat, 2013). Among them, nearly 70 percent are harvested from the coastal belt, i.e. from the area of the proposed Kalmunai district. The coastal region has about 1800 square kilometers of territory, mostly land area.

According to the statistics of the Amparai district Secretariat (2013), the extent of paddy land sown in the 2011 *Yala* season in the coastal belt was 95,389.1 acres out of 140,883.4 acres in the entire Amparai district which accounted for 68 percent of the total extent of sown. This indicates that even though the coastal region shares only about 40 percent of total district land resources, the region shares about 70 percent of paddy cultivatable lands in the district. However, it is found that thousands of hectare land are still abandoned in this region partly due to the lack of proper irrigation facilities and partly due to the civil war context prevailed in the region. As Ahamed Lebbe (2015), Hasan Ali (2014), Ibrahim (2014) and Jabbar (2014) argued, those lands can be transformed into cultivatable lands by carefully using the reserved water in the Senanayake tank located in the western part of the Amparai district and by renovating the abandoned small tanks in the region. However, except few initiatives, especially during the period when the politicians of this region undertook the relevant ministries, no government or district administration has attempted to rebuild them with the motive of improving the agro-economic sector in the region. Therefore, when those abandoned tanks become reconstructed, they can boost the agricultural-based prosperity in the region. On the other hand, the region produces surplus paddy which makes farmers of the region difficulties to market them on profitable manner (Ahamed Lebbe, 2015). This has been one of the long-terms issues that the farmers of the region have been facing. The region needs the adaptation of new technology and methodology in cultivation and post-harvesting production process capable to compete with global market. Therefore, with the establishment of the proposed district and other relevant government departments, more focus can be given by the district administration and district politicians on the above regards towards solving problems and enhancing the agro-based industries in the region.

Also, the region has number of eco-friendly and heritage-based tourist destinations which can be promoted as centers of excellent in attracting more local and foreign tourists and tourism-based investments and job opportunities to the region. On the other hand, the region has very popular seashores for boating, diving, and swimming which can all be promoted further in order to attract more tourists and visitors. Even though there are a number of tourist destinations along the coastal stretch, only few of them, such as Arugambe and Ulle, were being promoted by the central government. Since the present Amparai district has a vast territory which limits the allocation for these kinds of development initiatives, the administration of the region under separate district administrative machinery can give more attention to this kind of economic development which would certainly lead to positive development impacts in the region.

The establishment of the proposed district can also help to improve the educational development of the region in number of ways. With the establishment of the district, there would be new district-based allocation for educational development in the region which can improve the infrastructure and physical development of education sector (Fousar, 2014; Ibrahim, 2014 & Jabbar, 2014). Similarly, there would be a new district-based university admission for all streams, and district-based admissions for colleges which will improve higher educational opportunities for the youngsters of this region and thus will lead to improve not only the equality and standard of education, but also bring more job opportunities in the region.

Many of the advocates and the civil activists agreed that the establishment of the proposed district will stop or limit the government seizing of lands owned by Tamils and Muslims in the district for development purposes. Under *Gal Oya* and other development projects, thousands of acres of lands owned by the Tamil-speakers were seized by the successive governments for development purposes, but ultimately they were used to settle more Sinhalese in the district who became the main beneficiaries of those development projects. Similarly, with the support of central government authorities, the district administration had been instrumental in demarcating the limits of the local government and administrative units, and allocating more land favoring Sinhalese within the district. At present, the coastal area shares about 63 percent of the whole Amparai district's population but only shares about 40 percent of the district's land resource (District Secretariat, 2013). In order to gain more political advantages from the present electoral system, many parts of the others districts were also merged with the Sinhalese area of the Amparai district in many times. This in turn has supported to increase the percentage of Sinhalese and decrease the percentage of Tamil-speakers in the district's population, but it has also led to the loss of minority representation in many parliamentary elections (See: Sarjoon et al, 2015). In the post-civil war context, government authorities attempted to seize the lands of the Tamils and Muslims in many parts of the coastal area (particularly in Pottuvil DS division) in the name of development motives [Note 3]. It is further found that in many parts of the Amparai district, land issues remain unresolved partly due to the non-supportive attitudes of district administrators. Therefore, the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai district and defining its boundaries would help to settle many land related issues prevailing between the ethnic groups in this region, which would also help to improve the social and ethnic cohesion that is needed to sustain any kind of development in this region. The establishment of the proposed district will not only limit the boundaries of both

districts, but it will also stop the unnecessary seizure of lands in Tamil-speakers' majority areas in the coastal belt by the government authorities.

The establishment of the proposed district can also help to boost the process of post-war and post-disaster recovery and development process in the region. As mentioned earlier, the region had been lacking in terms of development initiatives due to civil war and tense situations prevailed in the country as well as in the region. Therefore, the region received little attention from investors for regional development. The 2004 Asian Tsunami has also devastated the economy, everyday lives, and livelihoods in the region [Note 4]. However, the recovery process was severely challenged partly due to the inefficiency and partial attitudes of the administrators in the district secretariat in Amparai. To cite an example, it took three days for the district secretary to visit the places affected by the tsunami devastation in the coastal belt of the district even though that district was the worst affected district within the entire country. Permanent housing, sanitation, and drainage were challenged due to the unnecessary delay imposed by the district secretariat. This was the main justification of Muslim politicians who requested the government to establish a special district secretariat in the coastal area in order to accelerate the Tsunami recovery process. Since the government accepted this justification at that time, a separate district secretariat was opened on an ad-hoc basis in Kalmunai in 2005. However, the secretariat was under rigid control of Amparai district secretariat in terms of financial management and decision-making. Even at present, compared with the region's population, the region receives less district-based allocation for infrastructure and basic development purposes while Sinhalese-majority areas receive more allocation due to vast lands allocated to Sinhalese-majority local administrative units (District Secretariat, 2013). No government in the post-war context attempted to propose or plan any mega project intended to boost post-war regional and economic development in the war-turned eastern province except the initiatives for facilitating basic amenities and small-scale livelihood activities and infrastructure improvement [Note 5]. Therefore, if the region is declared as a new administrative district, the district secretariat with the help of administrators and Tamil-speaking politicians can fully focus on region-oriented development initiatives.

3.3 Rationales and Potentials for Establishing the Kalmunai Administrative District

There are many rationales and potential for establishing the proposed Kalmunai administrative district on development drive, as explained below:

To boost the agro-economic sector: The region has long been popular for its contribution to national agro-economic sector. The region was declared a special administrative region for the purpose of accelerating food production to contribute to the country's food scarcity during the Second World War period and was administered under an Assistant Government Agent (now District Secretary) for about six years (1942-46), which was a successful attempt (See: Anes 2007 & Jameel 2009). Even though the region has been contributing a considerable share to the national agricultural production sector through producing paddy and other supplementary crops, the region has long been facing number of difficulties in agricultural sectors in terms of improving the quality of the post-harvest production adopting modern technology compatible to the global market, and marketing them on comfort price (Ahamed Lebbe, 2015). Advocates of the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai district claim that the marginalization and negligence by the district administration towards improving the quality and the productivity in the agricultural sector of the coastal area was the major reason for this situation. Therefore, if the region is declared as a new administrative district, that would lead to boost agricultural economy in the region and the nation as well.

To support rebuild the Tsunami devastated areas. The coastal area of the Amparai district was the worst affected area by the 2004 Asian tsunami. However, no attention was given to develop those villages which were predominantly occupied by Muslims and Tamils, and leaving alone with the aids of foreign dignitaries (Farook, 2013). With the strong justification of Muslim politicians, the government declared the region a special administrative area with the establishment of an Additional District Secretariat in Kalmunai town in 2005 in order to facilitate the acceleration of post-tsunami relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction works. Even though this office was supported by the heads of other government institutions of the district, it was highly vulnerable in terms of financial autonomy and it functioned entirely on the advice of the District Secretary located in Amparai town. However, the secretariat was closed and all officers were annexed with the Amparai district secretariat in 2009, while recovery work remained uncompleted. Still, in many parts of the district, the post-tsunami recovery process is in the stage of uncompleted. Hundreds of families who lost their houses due to disaster have not been provided permanent houses due to lack of available public land and other administrative issues in the coastal area. The houses (about 720) built for the Tsunami victims (mostly Muslims) of the Akkaraippathu DS division with the financial assistance of the Saudi government are also still unsettled due to the failure of district administration in justifying the project on rationale ground [Note 6]. Therefore, the establishment of the

proposed Kalmunai district will strengthen the institutional capacity to plan, implement, and monitor the tsunami recovery process that is lacking in this region.

As part of the administrative reform to strengthen development administration process of the country: The formation of the proposed Kalmunai district would strengthen the process of the development administration in Sri Lanka. Both the development administration and the decentralization stress the institutional strengthening of administrative machinery in order to facilitate the administration of development initiatives. Even though Sri Lanka's civil administration (at local level) was severely challenged due to civil war and now the country has been driving towards post-civil war development, but in the past three decades, or in the post-war context, no institutional reform has made to the district's administrative machinery. Also, no new administrative districts have been formed in Sri Lanka to boost regional and economic development in the last three-decade period. The Moragoda Commission (1978) formed by the United National Party (UNP) government has also recommended the formation of new administrative districts including Kalmunai, in order to facilitate the development initiative of the UNP government. Therefore, the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district can also be justified as to strengthen the country's development administration process.

The existing institutional and administrative capacity: The establishment of the Kalmunai district can also be justified on the existing institutional arrangements as a potential institutional capacity to undertake development and other governmental activities in the region. The proposed district is bigger than many existing administrative districts in terms of size of territory and population. The territory of the proposed district has 14 divisional level administrative units and 14 local government bodies, among those, two are with municipal council status, the top level local government body in Sri Lanka. Similarly, at present, there are a number of separate public institutions and departments which are facilitating the decentralized administrative machinery of central government within the proposed district area. For example, a separate Regional Health Service Director's Region (Kalmunai region), Separate Educational Administrative District (Kalmunai), Judicial Administrative Division (Kalmunai), Road Development Department (Akkaraippathu), Telecommunication region (Kalmunai-067) and Fisheries Department zone (Kalmunai district) are functioning in the coastal belt while separate divisions function for the rest of the Amparai district. Also, there are enough potential administrators who are working at the district secretariat and in other government departments in Amparai who can fulfill the human capacity needed in order to administer any kind of development activities in the proposed district secretariat. In addition to the existing arrangements, in two different periods (1942-1946 & 2005-2008), the territory of the proposed district has been declared as a separate administrative area (like the administrative district) in order to monitor and facilitate development activities in the region. All these arrangements clearly justify that the coastal areas in the present Amparai district have the potential human and physical capacity to be declared as a new district. Also, these arrangements justify the capacity of human and physical resources to undertake any kind of development initiatives in the region.

3.3 Possible Challenges

As discussed earlier, even though this study identified the possible development impacts with the establishment of the proposed Kalmunai administrative district as it would eventually support a surge in socio-economic development in the region; however, this study further identified the possible challenges that would undermine any kind of development activities and its sustainability in the proposed district. Since Muslims have strongly been advocating the establishment of the Kalmunai district, potential for Muslims' domination in the administration in the new district would be high, and that would automatically induce the district administrators take development decisions and allocate resources favoring one ethnic group, i.e. Muslims, as happened in favor of Sinhalese in the Amparai district in the past. On the other hand, when the new districts' secretariat and other government departments are established in an area that is not easily accessible by public living in other parts of the district, that would also lead those people and their areas to be marginalized in development initiatives. All these partial activities will not only challenge the progressive regional development in an equal manner but will also lead to the emergence of divisions and regionalism within the district. From the emergence of ethnic politics, politicians mostly favor serving the ethnic group they belong to; therefore, there has been a variation in terms of socio-economics, infrastructure, and other kind of developments in villages in the region. Due to lack of political representation that gives political power in the central government, many villages in the region have been lacking in terms of development. Therefore, if the proposed district is established, its administration with the support of political representatives should reconcile the disparities in terms of development in the region along with the introduction of new regional-based development initiatives. This again highly depends on the ethnic politics of the region as well as on the systematic administration of the proposed district. Even though the civil war has come to an end and people experience a kind of fearless social context, however, there are number of

unresolved issues between the ethnic groups in terms of land, water resources, border limits, and local political power-sharing which all will definitely influence and challenge not only the administration of the proposed district, but also many of the development initiatives within the district.

In addition, the region highly depends on irrigation water, and electricity supply mainly coming from the western part of the Amparai district which is highly essential for any kind of development in the region. The continuous supply of electricity not only for domestic consumption, but also for developmental activity therefore, highly depends on the goodwill of the officers, administrators, and politicians of the Amparai area. Therefore, the success of the development motives by the establishment of the Kalmunai district would be highly influenced by the above mentioned possible issues. An early mechanism to administer those issues would be a pre-condition not only for the establishing and successfully administering the proposed district, but also for the success of the expected development drives in the region.

4. Conclusion

Inherited from British colonialism, Sri Lanka's public administrative system has portrayed a number of attributes which give the basis for public sector administration. Public sector reforms in Sri Lanka have basically revolved around the attempts towards decentralization including the regional and economic development in motives; however, most of them were supply-side intervention, i.e. the government perceived, designed and implemented the most decentralization reforms from its own perspective. Those reforms failed to consider the accommodation of the demand side, i.e. public service recipient's interests and demands in designing and implementing the decentralization initiatives focusing on development administration. The calling for the establishment of the Kalmunai administrative district was one of such demands that the successive governments have failed to consider from the perspective of 'development administration.' The demand has partly emerged as a response to successive governments' development policies and projects implemented in Amparai district and their negative impacts on the rights and interests of the people living in the coastal belt of the same district. The demand advocates the establishment of institutional capacity and procedural reorganization in order to facilitate the region's development initiatives along with other objectives such as public service delivery and minority language accommodation. However, no government considered the demand and attempted to establish the proposed district in its thirty-year long sidetracked survival. As viewed earlier, there are number of positive and negative development impacts by the establishment of Kalmunai administrative district. With the formation of the proposed district the region will institutionally be empowered through the establishment of district secretariat and other decentralized government departments, and by the recruitment of necessary human and physical resources which are the pre-condition for the promotion and boosting of the economic and regional development that has been lacking due to the continued thirty-year civil war and natural disasters in the region. The region has potentials for economic development which can systematically be administered for the utilization of economic and regional development in the proposed district that would contribute to the nation as well. The establishment of the proposed district will open ways for the separate allocation of development funds and to attract more financial investments and aids to the district which can be fully utilized for development purposes of the region. However, the success and sustainability of any development impact that is expected to be achieved through the establishment of the Kalmunai administrative district highly depends on the number of other interconnected factors such as ensuring equity in delivering public services, distributing resources, and developing the area regardless of ethnicity, language, religion, and the location the service receivers belong to; and in maintaining sustainable societal peace.

The development and improvement of administrative capacity is not only meant to improve service delivery functions, but also to support the capacity of the state for solving long-term and cross-sector problems by enhancing design and implementation of policies intended for that, as well as supporting structural changes, which improve the services of the public sector and intended outcomes of development plans. Further, conceptually, both decentralization and development administration encourage the establishment of new administrative systems or structures, such as department, divisions, districts and local government bodies in order to facilitate development initiatives in a particular area or region. As a developing country, and severely affected by the thirty-year civil war, Sri Lanka need more administrative reforms and institutional restructuring in order to support the post-civil war development initiatives and to boost regional economic development. The more administrative capacity would lead to more drives to sustainable development.

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Notes

Note 1. An extensive analysis is made on the factors that caused to the emergence of demand calling for the establishment of the Kalmunai administrative district as part of this research project, see interalia: Sarjoon et.al 2015.

Note 2. The Oluvil port project was initially forwarded to the then the People's Alliance (PA) government in 1994 by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader and the Minister of Port Development and Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, late M.H.M.Ashraff. It was one of the major demands of the when they made alliance with the PA. There were some initiatives to build a port at Oluvil, a small undeveloped Muslim village in the middle of north-south distance of the proposed Kalmunai district including the construction of a light house,

marine training center and some guest houses in 1998, but the construction of port had been limited to discussion for a long period. Successive governments had agreed with the SLMC and with other Muslim parties to build the port, but none of the agreements were put into practice until 2008. However, the United People Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government initiated the Oluvil port development project on 6th May 2008 with the investment worth of Euro Million 46.1 received as financial assistance from Denmark government. The proposed Oluvil port plan included the construction of a commercial port and a basin for fishing crafts and covering a land area of 60 hectares in the first stage and 105 hectares in the second stage. The port was officially declared open on September 1st 2013 (For more details on the Oluvil port project, See: Srimane, 2013; The Colombo Page, 2008 & Sri Lanka Port Authority, 2008).

Note 3. For more details on the land-related issues facing by the people of the coastal area of Amparai district, see: Yusoff et al., 2015a; Sarjoon et al., 2015; Fonseka & Raheem, 2010; Mohideen, 2008 & Hasbullah et al, 2005.

Note 4. In addition to the impact of civil war, the people of the coastal region of the Amparai district were also severely affected by the 2004 Asian Tsunami devastation. This was the most affect regions in entire Sri Lanka. About one kilo meter from seashore in 11 divisional secretariat divisions (along the coastal belt) of the district were badly affected. 11,507 people died in Amparai district alone. Majority of them were Muslims. All basic facilities including lives and properties such as houses, small industries, fishing, education, health, electricity, roads, water supply etc. were completely damaged. About 200,000 people displaced. On the basis of the latest data available, about 27,572 houses were damaged. Of these houses about 17,117 were fully damaged and 10,445 were partly damaged. Government ministries, Non- Government Organization and International Organizations were fully involved in the recovery process (See: Amarasiri De Silva, 2009; Jeyasuria et al., 2005 & PDMIC, 2005).

Note 5. Many development projects were implanted and some are undergoing in the northern and the eastern provinces in order to boost the socio-economic conditions of the people affected by the civil war under many themes. But most of them are supporting the people on a smaller scale even though huge amount of money allocated for them from the national budgets and from financial assistances. Except, the proposed Sampur Coal-fired power plant project, no mega level projects are proposed in the northern and the eastern regions. But, governments have proposed many mega development projects in the other parts of the country which were never affected by the civil war. The one and only mega level development initiative, the Oluvil port project was also narrowed down than the initial project and failed to produce positive economic and development impact to the region.

Note 6. The Nuraichcholai Tsunami housing project was initiated by the then minister of Housing and Public Amenities, Mrs. Ferial Ashraff with the financial assistance from Saudi government as to resettle the Muslims who were victimized by the tsunami and permanently lost their houses from Amparai district. While the construction works under completion and the beneficiaries were short-listed, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), a political party found on Buddhist fundamentals failed a petition at Supreme Court (SC) challenging the handing over the completed houses for the tsunami victims (mostly Muslims). The main argument of the JHU was that the beneficiaries were not really affected by the tsunami and the housing project is in Digavaapi sacred area. The SC ultimately ruled out that giving houses to Muslims only is improper. It was common knowledge that the Muslim masses in the Amparai district suffered the worst from the tsunami disaster, and their settlement process was also severely challenged due to number of factors, particularly the shortage of available public land. It is also true that the land for the Nuraichcholai housing scheme was granted by the government and it was government property near to the Digavaapi temple (not belong to temple) and the location is almost 14 km away from the Digavaapi sacred area. It is noteworthy fact that project was approved by the government to give shelter to victims of Tsunami of Amparai district (mostly Muslims). Unfortunately, not only SC failed to consider the ground realities behind the project and both the central bureaucracy and the district-level bureaucracy failed to justify the housing scheme on the above ground. The ultimate result was that the continued abandoned of 720 houses and the hundreds of Muslim families who lost their houses are still in temporary shelters.

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