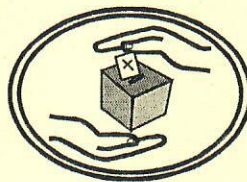


Annual Activity Report 2004



**People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)
93/10, Dutugemunu Street, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka**

**People's Action for Free and Fair Elections
(PAFFREL)**

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2004

1. FORWARD

This report covers the activities conducted by PAFFREL **from 1st January 2004 to 31 December 2004**. This annual activity report has been produced specially for the AGM and for the information of Board of Directors of PAFFREL. The report explains all the project and the major activities that we carried out during the reporting year. Some of the programmes were ended in 2004 while some projects are carried out to the year 2005.

After the synopsis, the report explains all the programmes in summary but with informative way. The latter part of the report explains the current activities.

2. SYNOPSIS

The year 2004 was of special significance to PAFFREL as it had to undertake monitoring activities with regard to three elections, one parliamentary, and two Provincial Councils, during this period. Although the two Provincial Council elections were due as scheduled, the Parliamentary election, which is where the polity changes the country's legislature (and therefore its significance), was most unexpected. Importantly, we conducted the biggest election monitoring mission in PAFFREL history with the participation of over 19,000 local observers and 100 international election observers. In addition to the normal agenda of activities of an organizations committed to the promotion of democratic ideals and institutions, PAFFREL had to be

fully involved in these three elections in order to ensure that the norms and practices evolved with regard to the conduct of elections, during the past few years, are adhered to and developed upon. National and International observers were mobilized for these elections which were held as follows,

2nd April 2004 : Election of members to the Parliament.

24th April 2004 : Election of members to the North-western Provincial Council

10th July 2004 : Election of members to the other 6 Provincial councils other than the North-western and the North East.

The fact that PAFFREL received its accreditation from the Commissioner of Elections as commissioned Election observers during this period was a mile stone in the activities of the organization, a form of acknowledgement for the hard work over the years. However with this recognition the scope of PAFFREL activities also increased and the Parliamentary election held in April could be considered as the most extensive monitoring mission the organization has undertaken in its 15 year history. During the reporting period of this election, PAFFREL was able to mobilize the highest number of locals for any election.

As for the other areas of activity, the dialogue was continued, or initiated where necessary, on topics that are considered contemporary such as the Devolution of power and Electoral law reforms. In addition, PAFFREL also conducted their local fund raising projects and the 'promotion of co-existence' programmes. As a result of interest shown by different interest groups in the country, PAFFREL also held a special work shop on Electoral law reforms. The Second year of the local fund raising project was successfully completed by achieving set targets.

3. DETAILS OF PROGRAMMES

3.1 Promoting democratic Co-existence in a climate of Inter-ethnic tension.

PAFFREL is conducting various programmes under this title with the support of AUS AID. Four major programmes have been conducted under this, namely, Youth Work Camps, Women's Groups, Inter-religious Vigilant Groups and the forming of Citizens' Committees. These are being conducted in almost all the districts in Sri Lanka including Jaffna, Vavuniya and Batticaloa.

The objectives of such programmes can be listed as follows.

- To bring together the diverse communities of the island in an environment that facilitates understanding, in order to foster relationships, trust and confidence, while improving knowledge and skills that would create a processes which empowers peace building and social transformation.
- The creation of awareness among social activists belonging to all communities, of the need to address issues of co-existence as a priority, in an effective manner.
- The formation of groups of activists including women in to units and organizations that would continue to propagate and promote ideals of co-existence.
- To utilize the experience gathered through interaction among the people, identifying obstacles, beliefs, attitudes and fears obstructing co-existence and to develop programmes for overcoming them.
- The capacity building within organizations to collectively intervene in current issues thereby getting involved in the

propagation and promotion of co-existence among ethnic communities at the field level.

- To continue and enhance dialogue between representatives of Sinhala and Tamil civil societies by bringing together key resource persons in order to strengthen the existing relationships and to initiate new relationships between the two communities while enhancing local capacities with the view of achieving practical and sustainable peace building activities.

During the first half of year 2004 PAFFREL conducted, ten Youth work camps, nine sessions of Women's dialogue groups, nine Inter-religious vigilant groups and formed 47 Citizen's Committees.

In addition, over 15 panel discussions on the theme of 'co-existence' have been conducted on Radio through the Sri Lanka Broad Casting Cooperation. These discussions held with many eminent personalities including religious leaders, the participation of were broadcast on every Wednesday from 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.

3.2 Local Fund Raising Activities

From the year 2003 PAFFREL commenced conducting several events that constituted its local fund raising strategies. These activities were continued in to the first half of year 2004. In addition, a major event of local fund raising project was conducted in December, i.e. the musical extravaganza.

KIRANA, the monthly newspaper of PAFFREL that is published in Sinhala continued throughout the year. Through this newspaper PAFFREL aims to achieve two objectives, primarily to raise funds through its sale and then to disseminate information regarding democratic issues.

The feedback we have been receiving has been positive as the paper covers current events regarding the Peace Process as well as Human Rights and other contemporary issues. Around three thousand copies are printed each month and monthly sales have recorded a steady increase. In addition to bringing in funds, it is a useful tool of disseminating information to the average reader, in a language familiar to him, with insight in to principles of justice and peace.

PAFFREL's effort to raise funds from the Business community during the pre election period was based on the reasoning that this was an opportune time to send appeals for funds to the Business community. The underlying rationale was that the business community, with its emphasis on making profit would naturally, irrespective of political party affiliation, welcome a non-violent election, to create stability and to attract investment. PAFFREL sent 200 Direct mails to leading business houses, during the month of February 2004, appealing for funds to subsidies local monitors. We also sent letters to the Heads of the main Religions. The response received by PAFFREL has been positive.

PAFFREL conducted another special fund raising event at Mihintalaya, Anuradhapura District on the June full-moon day. Full-moon of June, known as 'Poson Poya' is the second most venerated event in the traditional Buddhist calendar in Sri Lanka and attract thousands of people to Mihintalaya. PAFFREL established a stall in the temple area of Mihintalaya and distributed its leaflets and newspapers among the citizen. Number of PAFFREL activists were engaged in the event and special till boxes were available for devotees to contribute to PAFFREL.

PAFFREL organized a musical show, as a part of its local fund raising programme. The vocalist we selected was Asanga Priyamantha Peries, a well-known singer in the country. The event took place on 24th December 2004 at the BMICH, Colombo 7. Due to the hard work of

PAFFREL staff and co-operation of different stakeholders including National Peace Council, the event recorded the highest income from a single event, under the local fund raising project.

3.3 Establishment of Peace Committees

PAFFREL launched another programme with focus on the Parliamentary General Election 2004. Two training sessions were held to establish Peace committees with the view of building better understanding among different political parties contesting the election. The AED supported us on this and the objectives of this programme can be summarized as follows:

- To formulate and establish structures at local levels to sensitize the people in the respective political interests groups, with regard to behaviour that would lead to maintenance of peace in the community,
- To identify potential situations of violence and to intervene in such instances to diffuse tensions in order to ensure continuance of peace,
- To disseminate members of structures referred to above, the causes of violence, methods of identification of potential situations of violence and methods of resolution of conflicts.
- To disseminate the concepts of human rights and good governance among members of the public.

Altogether, 73 trainers were trained and structures were established to diffuse violence, maintain peace and disseminate the concepts of human rights and good governance at these two training sessions.

The agenda for these training sessions was tediously designed to achieve the objectives of the project. The participants being persons who had some leadership role in the organizations they represented were considered as having valuable personal experience that would contribute to enrich the training program. Therefore, the sessions were designed to accommodate more time for discussions.

The discussion enabled the participants to evaluate the issues raised, relatively and realistically as against their own experiences, so that they could structure their future responsibilities as trainers or mobilizers in such a way as to educate the public to look at social problems in a positive manner with first hand experience, thus contributing to enrich the process of learning.

International Experts brought by AED also made presentations on conflict resolutions at these sessions. The international presentations helped participants to share their personal experiences with each other, look at incidents of election violence and the situations that lead to conflicts in an analytical manner that facilitated the finding of solutions, and to learn what methods other countries and societies adopt to tackle election violence and social conflicts that arise due to competition in politics.

Each training session formed two committees each for Colombo District and Gampaha District. Four participants volunteered to function as conveners of these 4 committees and decisions were taken as regards the venues, regularity of meetings, the persons to be invited etc. The role of PAFFREL and the role of members of the peace committees, in this whole exercise of conflict resolution was clearly defined and agreed.

3.4 Upgrading Information and Communication Network of PAFFREL

Academy for Educational Development extended their support to PAFFREL to strengthen its Information & Communication network of the center with district and regional levels. PAFFREL had been using an outdated information gathering method up to now with our observers sending their reports either by fax or by post. This method was not up to the required level of efficiency often resulting in delays and illegibility in reports. Therefore we engaged Info-share, an IT service providing group, to revamp our monitoring system through the Groove software in which Info-Share planned to establish a network between the PAFFREL Head Office and Districts / Divisional offices.

Under this programme PAFFREL provided 42 computers with Groove software to its District and divisional level organizations. (The distribution was done after a thorough assessment of the needs by the PAFFREL Head Office and District Coordinators.). This network can be used not only during the election period, but also for any other projects of PAFFREL. Groove software provided a comprehensive set of tools to the users, which is helpful to operate the network. PAFFREL's information management systems were streamlined and modernized by a peer-to-peer, encrypted collaborative software platform provided by Info-Share. IT experts of Info-Share carried out training/orientation programmes in two phases over two days at the PAFFREL Activity Centre and at Dehiwala.

The Installation of the PC Network commenced during the 3rd week of March and was completed before 2nd April 2004 enabling PAFFREL to avail themselves to this 'on line' facility in time for the election, The network thus established remains a potent facility at the disposal of PAFFREL for all its future activities and projects.

3.5 Parliamentary General Election 2004

Parliamentary General Elections held on 2nd April 2004 was the 18th Election that People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) monitored.

The postal voting in this election was held from 14th March to 26th March. PAFFREL mobilized its local observers as well as long-term international observers to observe the postal voting in different part of the country. PAFFREL had by that time 18 international observers as pre-election observers, representing 11 countries. They were, observing the postal voting in different districts in the country and, continuously observing the election campaigns in respective districts assigned to them. PAFFREL had identified probable problematic districts in order to deploy the pre-election international observers in the event of a necessity.

The Commissioner of Elections granted PAFFREL the accreditation as authorized election observers enabling PAFFREL to enter polling stations on the election day. This was the first time in Sri Lankan history that the Commissioner of Elections granted such authority to any election monitoring group in the country and PAFFREL was the first. There were eight other election monitoring groups involved in this election, but their activities could not be considered as 'comprehensive' in that context to cover the entire gamut of the election activity.

During the pre-election period PAFFREL issued three situation reports at three press conferences held on 3rd , 23rd and 31st March respectively. In addition we issued two press releases also concerning two different issues that arose from time to time.

3.5.1 Monitoring the Elections by Local Observers

By 28th March 2004, PAFFREL conducted 403 training programmes in 160 different polling divisions. These were for the training of both stationary and mobile observers. Altogether 19,865 local observers were

trained for this election, which was the biggest observer mobilization by PAFFREL. As a training tool, this time we used a video for 45 minutes at the training programmes, which showed the role of the PAFFREL observers and how to engage in a proper observation. Thirty-five resource persons were trained to conduct these programmes.

For identification purposes, PAFFREL observers were to wear identification signs - arm-band, a P-cap and an identity card issued by the PAFFREL Colombo Secretariat. All the International Observers too were similarly equipped. All vehicles used for monitoring purposes carried PAFFREL identification.

All the materials needed by local observers such as monitoring forms, letters of authority from the Commissioner of Elections, Inspector General of Police and PAFFREL, Caps, arm-bands, identity cards, file covers etc. were distributed to the districts by 28th March.

PAFFREL District offices and 173 Divisional offices were open throughout the period to record complaints from people and to coordinate with observers. These offices were marked with a PAFFREL banner prominently to identify a PAFFREL District / Regional Office.

3.5.2 Monitoring of Elections by International Observers

Short-term international election observers arrived in the country on 27th and 28th March 2004. They were placed in Trans Asia Hotel, Colombo where we conducted the briefing session for them. Including the pre-election observers, altogether there were 102 international observers in this mission making it the largest-ever PAFFREL international observer mission and the largest international observation group in this election. The briefing sessions for the international observers were held on 28th evening and continued until the end of 29th March. Representatives from the Commissioner of Elections, Major political parties and the Police department briefed the observers. In

addition, Experts on, election laws, media, observation and reporting procedures, also addressed the observers.

Due to the demand by the political parties and local NGOs in the area, PAFFREL deployed as many International Observers as are available in the North and East, which included the LTTE controlled areas. PAFFREL sent 8 international observers to Jaffna, most of them with wide experience in election monitoring.

3.5.3 Media Advocacy Campaign

In order to educate the political parties, candidates and the voters on their responsibilities, PAFFREL successfully conducted a media campaign throughout the month of March. This included TV ads, Radio spots, paper ads, poster campaigns, street drama, and SMS alert.

Street drama and SMS alert were conducted for the first time as media advocacy tools. A drama ensemble traveled throughout the country, performing at public places. The drama highlighted the importance of voters' awareness of political violence and the importance of voting. The performances started on 20th March and continued until 30th March. There were 40 shows (one show 1 hour) in 10 Districts. The street drama performed mainly in public places such as market places, bus stands, junctions etc.

SMS alert was another new tool that PAFFREL used as a media advocacy tool. It was the first time in Sri Lanka that such a method was used for a similar purpose. PAFFREL sent messages to nearly 15,000 mobile phone users informing them of the election violence reporting system. At the same time it was published in the newspapers. The voters could report any incidents of violence / information or their ideas through SMS where PAFFREL could cross check if necessary. We noted that this was extensively used by voters.

PAFFREL made use of TV advertisements on several channels periodically in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil, English), similarly in the radio spots. Advertisements were published in newspapers in three languages addressing different target groups like voters, observers, candidates and the general public.

3.5.4 Reporting

The local monitors, both stationary and mobile, furnished their reports on structured forms made available to them. Forms in respect of the 9,000-odd Polling Stations and the 605 mobile teams referred to above have been received and PAFFREL has commenced their tabulation for the analysis of information for the preparation of the final report. The reports rendered by the international observers too being synthesized and incorporated in the final report. PAFFREL's final report of the Parliamentary General Election 2004 was released in September 2004 (English version) and followed by Sinhala and Tamil versions.

3.6 DIALOGUE ON ELECTORAL LAW REFORMS

In Sri Lanka, in the last few years there has been an extensive discourse and debate on the need for electoral reforms. The previous government of the UNF appointed a Select committee of Parliament to which civil society groups, individuals, Trade unions, NGOs and political parties could make recommendations for the revision of the constitution and to the laws pertaining to this. Before the committee could complete its task, general election was called. The main political parties included in their manifesto the need for electoral change.

In May this year, People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) and the Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and the Women and Media Collective together with prominent members in the civil society embarked on a project to obtain views of the need for electoral changes in order to formulate recommendations that could be

effected to the electoral system of Sri Lanka. The National Democratic Institute of International Affairs sponsored this project.

PAFFREL held 5 consultations during the month of May 2004 at the Districts of Galle, Puttalam, Colombo and Kandy with the participation of Professionals, Religious leaders, Representatives of women's groups, Civil society activists and Local-level politicians.

Women and Media collective held a consultation with their network of women's groups in Colombo on the 18th. May 2004. So did the National Peace Council.

The participation and response at these consultations were very good and was an indication that civil society actors were very much concerned to bring about change in the electoral system on democratic lines and thereby ensure a just society in our country. These consultations were reported in the media thereby creating awareness in the wider public.

The consultations culminated with a massive one-day consultation at the BMICH, Colombo where over 200 persons attended, drawn from various districts. This was organized by the Center for Policy Alternatives. Leading experts among them, the Election Commissioner Mr. Dayananda Dissanayake and the DIG Elections, Mr. Gamini Navaratne were invited to address the meeting.

A key component of this meeting was the reports of the previously held dialogues where a number of the recommendations for strengthening the electoral process and reform of the electoral system were the highlights. These included the appointment of the Election Commission, a greater internal party democracy, a greater public information and awareness of electoral reform issues, a bicameral legislature, quotas to enhance representation of women, the effective

disenfranchisement of migrant workers, the role of the media and the use of National ID cards on Polling day.

Representatives from the Confederation of Public Service Independent Trade Unions (COPSITU), the Association of Election Professionals and the Marga Institute made presentations based on public opinion, which to a great extent helped to reinforce the recommendations that already surfaced through the various dialogues.

A discussion on the Electoral System followed the presentation made by CPA on the objectives of parliamentary representation, the pros and cons of 'First Past the Post (FPP) and Proportional Representation (PR) which were found combined in the German System. Differences of emphasis and perspective no doubt emerged during the discussion, but consensus there was on the need to reform the current electoral system.

PAFFREL, with its commitment to the holding of Free and Fair Elections, believes that a change in the present electoral system is imperative to ensure a fairer representation in Parliament and help prevent election related violence to a great extent. A publication of this programme was released in January 2005.

3.7 Dialogue Series on Devolution of Power

From the support of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) USA, PAFFREL launched a programme to educate the community leaders on the merits and demerits of a federal system of government that is being considered as a solution to the socio-economic and political problems in Sri Lanka-especially the ethnic conflict. This series has started from August 2003 and have held 25 District level dialogues and the final convention by July 2004.

After completion of this one-year project NED funded PAFFREL again for another one-year consultancy on electoral law reforms. This was started in October 2004 and to be completed by September 2005. This project also followed the same methodology that we used for the “devolution of power” programmes. District consultancies will be carried out until August 2005 and concluded by a national level discussion, which will be held in September 2005.

3.8 North-western Provincial Council Election

The North-Western Provincial Council Election followed in the aftermath of the general election and was held on the 24th April 2004, Monitoring was done in the usual 3 phases as the pre-election period (of two weeks), the day of the elections and a post-election period (of two weeks).

The pre-election period and the post-election period was monitored through the temporary offices established for the monitoring activity in the Province. On the day of the elections, PAFFREL deployed 2,350 stationary observers, while the number of mobile monitors was 250. Of the total number of 1,204 polling stations in the Province, 866 or 73% per cent of the stations were covered by stationary monitors. Two media communiqués were issued on these elections and the final report is under preparation.

3.9 Six Provincial Council Election 2004

PAFFREL observed the Provincial Council Election held on 10th July 2004 in respect of the Western, Central, Uva, North Central, Sabaragamuwa and Southern Provincial Councils.

The total number of members to be elected for these Provincial Councils at that election was 316. The total number of candidates who had submitted nominations for these Provincial Councils which include 15

Districts were 4134. Twenty-three political parties and 32 Independent groups had submitted nominations. The total number of electors who were eligible to vote at the election on 10th July 2004 is 9,581,331. They were expected to cast their votes at 7,663 polling stations.

In comparison to the previous Provincial Council elections the pre-election period of this election was peaceful. The underlying reason for this situation was the change that took place in the electoral scenario beginning with the last general election namely the attempts made by electors to have a free and fair election. However a few acts of violence have been reported from certain districts.

One special feature of this election is the low level of participation of electors in electioneering activities. The postal voting in respect of this Provincial Councils Election took place on 23rd and 24th of June without any serious violations of the election law. PAFFREL deployed observers at Police Stations, Bus Depots and Regional Education Offices for monitoring purposes of the postal voting. Observers Reports of the monitors indicated that the postal voting activities were conducted without any serious incidents.

As in the case of previous elections PAFFREL monitoring activities were done on two stages. The first stage was stationary monitoring and the second stage was mobile monitoring. Under the stationary monitoring scheme there was at least 1 or 2 monitors attached to each polling station. In the mobile monitoring scheme there was at least one mobile team to cover one polling division. Each team was 5 monitors who consisted of provided with a vehicle. Accordingly the entire mobile outfit comprised of 8,059 monitors and 148 vehicles for this election.

PAFFREL have issued two situation reports regarding the pre-situation of this election and a press conference was held on 8th July 2004. The election day statement released by 7.00 p.m. on 10th July and the final

report of the Provincial Council Elections 2004 will be released by the end of March 2005.

3.10 All-island Inter-schools Essay and Oratorical Contest

Following the two successful programmes organized in the year 2002 and 2003, reporting year too PAFFREL organized all-Island inter-school essay and oratorical contests with the Universal Human Rights Day 2004. This programme was carried out with the financial support of SIDA. The theme was Human Rights, Good Governance and Democratic Rights and over 2,000 students from over 800 schools contested. Both Essay contest and oratorical contest were conducted on all three languages and winners were selected at district levels and national level. The whole programme was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of School Education and Lankhanda Radio. The media sponsors were Lankhanda Radio, Independent Television Network and Lake House.

The Prize giving of these competitions were held on 11th December 2004 at the BMICH, Colombo. The Chief guest was Mr. Thilak Ranavirajha - The Secretary of the Ministry of Public Security, Law and Order. In addition, Opposition Leader Mr. Karu Jayasuriya, Member of Parliament from Tamil National Alliance Mr. Raviraj, The Commissioner of Elections Mr. Dayananda Dissanayake also attended as guests of honors.

Parallel to this event, PAFFREL celebrates its 15 years of existence. To make the occasion a Souvenir was produced in which consisted greetings from HE the President, The Commissioner of Election, the Prime Minister, the Inspector General of Police etc to PAFFREL. Special plaques were awarded to the founding members of PAFFREL by the Commissioner of Elections Mr. Dayananda Dissanaike.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

As in the most cases, tidal waves in 24th December 2004 changed direction of all aspects. As a civic movement, we too affected by tsunami disaster and had to adjust and react accordingly. Therefore, we have terminate / reduce the working strength of some of our activities and future plans. However, we have been able to react very positively in this context as a true civic movement. The day-after the tsunami we are able to mobilize resource and deliver to the affected areas. With the cooperation of many other organizations including MDDR, NPC, Future Peace, AYC and AHIMSA we carried out immediate relief distribution in different part of the country, which is affected by the Tsunami waves. After identifying the immediate stuff like food, medicine and cloths are been adequately provided by different parties to the victims we started timely needed programmes including work camps and monitoring the services to tsunami victims, which are carried out at the moment.

1. Work camps by volunteers in affected areas

As reconstructions programmes, we have commenced to hold work camps at the affected areas, where volunteers need to pay their physical energy to rebuild the area. PAFFREL mobilized over 2,000 volunteers for these programmes.

PAFFREL commenced operations of cleaning and clearing in Matara, Galle, Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts. The process included cleaning and chlorinating of wells, clearing of debris and rubble, disinfecting and filling of trenches, washing, cleaning and disinfecting of houses, clearing and cleaning the environment and also managed to identify the boundaries in cases where the entire landscape was washed off. We also extended our work camps to other districts also including Mullaitivu. There are number of partner organizations of

PAFFREL involved in these camps. The volunteers are from various ethnic and religious groups. We are confident through this humanitarian act we will forge ahead co-existence among the affected communities.

Over thirty-five partner organizations have contributed towards the success of this programme. By now we have completed over 20 work camps and around ten to be conducted.

However, we have now recognized that the need for temporary accommodation is much higher than the need of work camps in most areas. Therefore, we are now discussing with our donors to use some of the money that we allocated for work camps to use for temporary accommodation for tsunami victims.

2. Monitoring the services to tsunami survivors

In January 2005, we have identified a need of a civic monitoring mechanism for the ongoing relief and reconstruction process. Therefore, we started to train monitors in all affected districts to monitor the services to tsunami survivors. PAFFREL has received accreditation from the Commissioner General of Essential Services and the Department of Police in this regard. Our observers now observing the services especially at the welfare centers and issues relating to this process. While we receive weekly reports from our observers, we have already issued our first interim report in this regard on 9th March at a press conference. The second interim report of this monitoring mission is scheduled to be released at the press conference, which will be held on 5th April 2005. We expect to carry out this monitoring mission at least until July 2005, despite the fact that low rate of funds allocated and raised for this programme.

3. Commemoration of 100 days of Tsunami

PAFFREL with the cooperation of MDDR is preparing to commemorate the 100 days of tsunami disaster. The preliminary arrangements have