

THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AS A HUMAN RIGHT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA

Thilini R Galappaththige

Lecturer, Department of Public and International Law, Faculty of Law, University of
Colombo

The Right to Development, rooted in international human rights law both as an individual and collective right, is considered a powerful tool for social change, empowering individuals and communities with entitlements to protect and promote economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental development. In the face of the collapsing economy, Sri Lankans generally have a stronger demand for the right to development. Specifically, in the post-conflict context of Northern Sri Lanka, this right offers a unique opportunity for addressing the long-standing socio-economic disparities exacerbated by its conflict history, which led to destruction of infrastructure, massive displacement, and a breakdown of social and economic systems, severely hindering the right to development. In this context, the main objective of the paper is to explore the role of the right to development as a tool for social change, with a specific focus on Northern Sri Lanka. It further examines how this right can enable post-conflict reconstruction, foster reconciliation, and promote sustainable development. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in the doctrinal approach, this research explores key international human rights instruments, Constitutional provisions and case law to analyse how the right to development as a human right can overcome the barriers to development in post-war Northern Sri Lanka. It also highlights the challenges and opportunities in integrating this right into the local context. This paper contributes to the idea that implementation of the right to development offers a pathway for a peaceful, prosperous, participatory, and inclusive future for all communities.

Keywords: Right to Development, Northern Sri Lanka, sustainable development, post-conflict context