

Reconciliation After Violent Conflict

**Eastern Province Workshop
28-29 October 2004**

Habarana

Organized by:
Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (*CHA*)
in collaboration with
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assis-
tance (*International IDEA*)

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Background and Introduction

A workshop on 'Reconciliation after Violent Conflict' was held 28 - 29th October 2004 in the Village Hotel, Habarana, Sri Lanka. The workshop was sponsored by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA).

International IDEA published a handbook on Reconciliation after Violent Conflict which compiles the experiences of various peace processes – some of which failed and led to a resumption of conflict and others which were more successful in transforming violent conflict - and underscores the importance of ensuring that reconciliation underpins peace processes if they are to be durable. Reconciliation is seen as both an end in itself and as a process. Many different initiatives can and must be undertaken and at different levels for a reconciliation process to be effective.

International IDEA took the initiative of supporting dialogues among peace groups in Sri Lanka to determine how civil society, policy makers and the donor community could best integrate reconciliation initiatives in Sri Lanka to underpin the existing cease-fire agreement and on-going peace talks and negotiations.

This was the fourth in a series of workshops on issues of reconciliation convened by IDEA in Sri Lanka. Previous workshops were held in Jaffna (Feb. 2004) targeting peace activists and the civil society groups in the Northern Province where the Tamil community is predominant, and in Colombo (March 2004) targeting peace activists and the civil society groups from the Sinhalese community. A follow-up workshop (March 2004) was held for policy makers from the various governmental secretariats and ministries supporting relief, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and national integration and for the donor community supporting these measures.

This workshop engaged the participation of 38 activists working with peace groups and other civil society networks working in the Eastern Province. Participants were drawn from all the ethnic and religious communities present in the Eastern province – Sinhalese, Tamils, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims.

Presentations were given by four resource persons: Mr. Senaka Abeyratne, Director, Economy Program of the GoSL Peace Secretariat; Mr. Mark Salter, Senior Programme Officer, Democracy Building and Conflict Management Programme, International IDEA; Mr. S. Deshapriya, Media Unit Director, Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Colombo; and Mr. Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council.

The objective of the workshop was to address a complex range of contested issues such as:

- the timing of reconciliation processes
- what would constitute reconciliation measures in Sri Lanka today
- who should initiate such measures, and how
- how such measures can take fully into account the traumas of the violent past
- how could peace activists from the Eastern province network and engage in dialogues among themselves to initiate reconciliation measures.

Key speakers also addressed issues such as the role of the Peace Secretariat and media in the Sri Lankan peace process, an overview of past experiences with peace processes and a review of international experiences with reconciliation processes. Presentations by the resource persons were followed by discussions

during which the participants were able to reflect both on the issues highlighted in the presentations and contextualize them in the light of their own experiences.

Finally, the participants from the three districts in the Eastern province presented overviews of: their regional experiences of peace-building activities; what they perceived to be the major obstacles to peace; and their recommendations for ways forward in addressing the current unstable political situation.

Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)

The Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)¹ presented its mission in the non-profit sector as a national service provider. The activities conducted during year 2003 in the respective program areas in the organization was presented with special focus on the peace related activities that was initiated, such as National Peace Audit, Peace building Toolkit, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment program and Peace & Development program. The detailed presentation is annexed in Appendix 2.

International Institute for Democracy And Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)²

International IDEA was introduced as an intergovernmental organization established in 1995 to assist governments and civil society to promote sustainable democracy and to improve their systems of governance. IDEA provides information and resources on options that are available to countries undertaking reforms to strengthen or deepen democracy, and to manage and transform conflicts so that they can make appropriate choices.

IDEA publishes user-friendly handbooks with information on managing conflict through democratic institutions and processes, improving electoral access and electoral system design, increasing women's political participation and strengthening peace processes by mainstreaming reconciliation. IDEA concentrates on providing information on institutional design as well as participatory processes in a non-partisan way drawing on comparative experiences, high-lighting best-practices as well as lessons learned.

Within the framework of its focus on conflict management – and more specifically, the application of democratic processes, institutions and structures to the non-violent management of conflict – in 2003 IDEA produced a handbook titled *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*. The Handbook highlights a range of practical initiatives and processes whereby a post-conflict peace process can be effectively anchored in the rebuilding and reconstruction of community relationships, as well as the potential consequences of failure to initiate contextually sensitive processes of reconciliation – or what can alternately be viewed as 'social reconstruction initiatives' – in the aftermath of violent conflict

IDEA is exploring how comparative experiences of reconciliation processes, as outlined in the Reconciliation Handbook, could be applicable in the Sri Lankan context. This is the fourth workshop that has been undertaken for this purpose in Sri Lanka. Three workshops have already taken place: in the North and the South of Sri Lanka, addressing constituencies of Tamil and Sinhala peace builders, and a third focusing on policy makers and the donor community to engage them in mainstreaming reconciliation into policy initiatives.

¹ By Lakmali Dasanayake, Program Officer (Human Rights)

² By Sakuntala Kadirgamar- Rajasingham, Head Asia Program, International IDEA

The purpose of this workshop, like the previous events, was to provide a platform from which to understand the perspectives of the people of the Eastern Province - which is home to all the island's ethnic communities - and to discuss issues that affect the Eastern Province uniquely.

IDEA is also conducting such a dialogue at a regional level to understand how South Asia, which has been the theatre of many religious and ethnic conflicts, deals with issues of reconciliation and conflict transformation. Through these dialogues in Sri Lanka and South Asia, IDEA is attempting to promote sustainable peace whereby political negotiations are both driven by and underpinned by community-based reconciliation.

Presentation of report of the workshop held in Jaffna with Tamil civil society (February 2004)

Participants at the Jaffna workshop stated that it was too soon to talk about reconciliation, since reconciliation suggests that there is a state of harmony to which we are reverting. For some people, however, there is no pre-existing benevolent relationship to revert to. They argue that the next step is not *rebuilding* relationships, but building *new* relationships from the beginning based on equality and mutual respect. Workshop stated that the Tamil community had expressed the wish to achieve equality *before* speaking about reconciliation.

Distinguishing between peace talks and negotiations, they stressed that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) did not restore normalcy because cease-fire violations persisted. The High Security Zones continued to exist, making it difficult for Tamils, especially the Internally Displaced People (IDPs), to return to their land. While there has been an increase in trade there has not been a corresponding increase in production. Moreover, farmers and the fishing community have found themselves unable to engage in their occupations. Communities resented being the recipients of relief because they wanted to be able to continue with their lives and livelihood.

They also believed that while the war had devastated the Tamil community, this fact was neither realized nor appreciated by the Sinhalese community in general. Their livelihoods were destroyed, they suffered from psychosocial trauma and high levels of malnutrition, and these were but a few of the effects on the community. Tamil standard of living have plunged, yet the dimension of their deprivation and suffering and their needs were not being addressed by relief programmes conceptualized in the South.

The Sinhalese community needs to take the ethnic conflict seriously and there needs to be a rearrangement of power relations to address the root causes of the conflict. There is not enough attention paid to the root causes of conflict and to addressing the structures of state power that have led both to the marginalization of the Tamil community and to structural inequality.

Cessation of war ultimately has to lead to a peace that must address the social and communal injustices that have taken place, and the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) needs to speak in a common voice about the progress of the peace process.

There was also discussion about how the Tamil community could be called upon to develop a relationship with the Sinhala community because they too have a responsibility to make it easier for the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to maneuver the transition from the current period of 'no war' to a period of 'peace'. The prevailing lack of community-to-community interaction, whilst problematic, demands that Tamils also take initiative and reach out to the other communities. All communities need to concentrate on interim reconciliation methods such as basic trust-building measures. Communities need to start rebuilding relationships. Social relationships need to develop through collaborations such as medical exchanges and through the performing arts, thereby creating solid North-South linkages. Sinhala Buddhist pilgrims, for example, can create a bridge between the Sinhala and Tamil communities by conveying messages to the South, about the conditions in the North and the need to alleviate them, thus engaging in peace building.

Political parameters have to be clarified. As one participant stated, "Good fences make good neighbors". The Sri Lankan conflict has led to an erosion of trust, but reconciliation is a journey that has to be taken together.

The workshop participants recognized that there are obviously positive elements to note, including the ceasefire that continues to hold. There is also a considerable amount of popular commitment within the three majority communities – Sinhala, Tamil and Moslem - to engage in dialogues and to move towards peace.

Presentation of the report of the workshop held in Colombo for Sinhalese community-based organizations

The workshop in Colombo was attended by 14 community-based organizations (CBOs) working with Sinhala grassroots organization mostly in the Southern province, with 2 representatives drawn from each organization in attendance. Participants were interested in the discussions held during the Northern workshop, and some people had already traveled to the North and interacted with Tamils following the ceasefire agreement.

In the South too there was much frustration with the peace process and the mixed messages conveyed by both the GoSL and the media. It was stressed that the media was not contributing to peace but instead fuelling the conflict by dividing communities. The need for trained and socially responsible media was one of the major concerns expressed during the course of the workshop.

There was also clear anxiety amongst Sinhala organizations based in the South concerning the part being played by the Buddhist clergy. While they could be a source of integration, it was noted that they were failing in this aspect by entering politics and being radical nationalists. CBOs were faced with the difficulty of dealing with the ethno-nationalist agenda of significant sections of the Buddhist clergy.

While there is greater opportunity for inter ethnic interaction between communities created during the peace process, these organizations felt uncomfortable about going to the North because of the uncertain political context. Responses from the younger and older generations differed in regard to the peace process. The older generation was more willing to be more patient and give the flagging peace process a chance, whereas students, while willing to give peace a chance, stated that they would return to war if they felt that they were left with no choice. It was clear that youth under the age of 30 in the North have lived continuously in an atmosphere of war, and therefore were increasingly isolated from the people of the South. They feel that they have less to lose from a return to conflict. Participants voiced the need to create fora for activities where they, in the South, could interact with the people of the North and East.

As in the Northern workshop, concern was expressed by CBOs over the lack of communication between North and South, despite the actions that they themselves were taking. They also mentioned a sense the media was not supportive in this regard. If the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is amended, it is important for communities to get involved in influencing the political atmosphere.

Truth Commissions have had a central role to play in the path to peace in other countries. Currently, however, this is only a concept presented for discussion in Sri Lanka. Moreover, Southern based organizations were skeptical in this respect as they noted that in their view, Truth Commissions are usually established in order to pursue political interests, and are moreover conducted between political parties and not between communities. It was, however, acknowledged that there is a need to discuss the issues that both led to and were played out during the conflict in a neutral way, and that civil society should not be shut out of the process of peace negotiations. The GoSL must invite civil society to get involved, in a positive atmosphere in which the opposition is supportive of the peace process, thereby creating an opportunity for progress in the peace negotiations.

Does Sri Lanka need a Truth Commission? A recent survey by UNDP revealed that 55 per cent of Sinhalese and 45 per cent of Tamils support a move towards reconciliation and an amnesty as a point from which the country can move on.

However, amnesties usually offer a temporary respite, and issues re-surface many years after a conflict, thereby demonstrating that the past needs to be acknowledged before communities can move on. In this context it was therefore suggested that is appropriate, for example through documentation, to establish a Truth Commission so that the history is not lost.

While the time may not be right for national reconciliation per se, dialogues between various civil society organizations need to take place and the three communities should be participating in such dialogues. IDEA hopes that the organizations present at this workshop will take an initiative to move a process of reconciliation forward by taking practical measures to rebuild community relationships on the basis of trust and the foundations of peaceful co-existence.

Presentations by Resource Persons

International Experiences in Peace Building and Reconciliation Processes. Mark Salter, Senior Programme Officer, International IDEA.

There is no handy roadmap for reconciliation . . . no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa), Foreword, IDEA Handbook *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*.³

It is important to begin by recognizing that reconciliation is a difficult - and fundamentally contested – concept. The approach adopted in the IDEA Handbook is rooted in a pragmatic, mutual-interest based view of reconciliation. Moreover, it is important here to note the specific challenges of promoting reconciliation in a Sri Lankan context. For example, when translating the Policy Summary of the Reconciliation Handbook into Tamil and Sinhalese, it was noted that the term itself does not really exist in either language. The challenge for us is thus – in part – to find analogous terms and concepts that find resonance in the Sri Lankan context.

Reconciliation can be viewed both as a *goal* - something to achieve - and a *process* - a means to achieve that goal. Much of the prevailing controversy regarding reconciliation arises when these two approaches are confused.

The IDEA Handbook focuses on reconciliation as a *process*: a practical, pragmatic approach to managing the social consequences of violent conflict. Based on this approach, I would suggest that a process-oriented approach may be the most helpful lens through which to view reconciliation in Sri Lanka today. From this perspective the focus is on what needs to be done – and can be done – concretely in order to improve relationships between the different communities, with an understanding that relationships are what provide the ‘social cement’ needed in order to make progress towards a common future possible.

From the broad perspective of what is defined as a *governance approach* to conflict management in general and reconciliation in particular, and drawing on a range of experience around the world to date, the Handbook offers a set of practical reconciliation strategies, tools and options for the design and implementation of reconciliation processes. The underlying message – suggested by Archbishop Tutu in the quotation cited above – is that there is *no single road map for reconciliation*. Each country has to work out its own specific path, and what may be found to work in for example, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan or Peru will be different in many important respects from what may be found to ‘work’ in the Sri Lankan context.

While timing and sequencing vary in important respects from context to context, experience to date indicates that the following stages are essential to a sustainable process of reconciliation.

³ Full text of the IDEA Handbook *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict* available at www.idea.int. In addition, Sinhalese and Tamil translations of a *Policy Summary* of the Reconciliation Handbook are available at the same website.

- Stage 1: *Replacing Fear with Non-Violent Coexistence*. When the fighting stops, the first step away from hostility is in the direction of *non-violent coexistence*: an approach characterized by a 'live and let live' attitude towards former enemies is accompanied by the reactivation of basic communication across prevailing social ethnic etc. divides.
- Stage 2: *Building Confidence and Trust*. Reaching this stage requires that all parties gain renewed confidence in themselves and in each other, and - most importantly – an ability to acknowledge the humanity of others. At this stage, the victims of conflict begin to distinguish:
 - Between *degrees* of guilt among the perpetrators at whose hands they have previously suffered.
 - Between *individuals* and *whole communities*: discourse moves towards an acceptance that specific individuals - rather than e.g. 'the Tamils', 'the Sinhalese' etc. - did particular wrongs to 'me/my family/my community' etc.

Prerequisites of this stage of the process include the (re)establishment of basic physical security, an absence of violence and the beginnings of consensual political development.

An important question: where do you think that things are in Sri Lanka today in this respect, particularly within your own communities? Are you at a stage where there is enough mutual acceptance to work on building trust between the different communities? Or is there more that needs to be done before people feel they have reached this stage?

- Stage 3: *Towards Empathy*. Important attributes to emerge at this stage of a reconciliation process include the following:
 - Victims begin to show a willingness to listen to the reasons and explanations of those who caused their suffering.
 - Offenders begin to acknowledge the hurt of those who suffered at their hands.
 - In many contexts, the establishment of a Truth Commission constitutes an important official acknowledgement of injustices inflicted in the course of the conflict. As the IDEA Handbook notes:

Truth-telling is a precondition of reconciliation because it creates objective opportunities for people to see the past in terms of shared suffering and collective responsibility, and recognition that victims and offenders share a common identity, as survivors and as human beings. IDEA Handbook

Experience to date strongly suggests that stages 1-3 of a reconciliation process will not develop sustainability if *structural injustices* remain within a society. In this sense a reconciliation process must be supported by:

- A gradual sharing of power
- An honoring of political commitments
- A climate conducive to human rights protection and the pursuit of economic justice
- Overall willingness to accept responsibility for the past *and* the future

Ownership of the reconciliation process. Two contrasting approaches dominate current reconciliation thinking and strategies:

1. *The grassroots / 'bottom-up' approach.* From the perspective of this approach – which is particularly (but not exclusively) favoured by the NGO community – the primary focus is on improving interpersonal relations among community members, with local, home-grown reconciliation and grassroots initiatives viewed as the key to the ultimate 'success' of a reconciliation process.
2. *The 'top-down' approach.* Essentially, this is the view that it is national level action that leads to the creation of the local-level conditions (and incentives) required for reconciliation to take place – what might be termed the 'trickle down' approach to reconciliation.

Which approach is 'correct'?

A broad examination of comparative international experience to date suggests that 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' initiatives are *both* essential components of a sustainable, long-term reconciliation process. In this sense it is critical that they are approached as *complementing* rather than *compromising* one another.

When is the right time for reconciliation?

The IDEA Handbook makes the following recommendations in this regard:

- Do not delay reconciliation simply because of other perceived political priorities.
- In post-conflict contexts, 'hard' political and economic issues are often prioritized at the expense of 'soft' reconciliation needs. While understandable, failure to at least begin to address the 'legacy of the past' creates conditions in which the likelihood of the past returning to upset the new order – often with devastating material consequences – is considerably increased.
- Even when improvement in socio-economic conditions is seen as a key step to reconciliation, it is vital not to damage the long-term prospects for reconciliation by:
 - establishing inappropriate political and economic structures.
 - letting the reconciliation agenda slide into the background.

Finally, if the specifics of a context appear to prevent an early start with reconciliation efforts, the possibilities for designing and implementing *interim reconciliation measures* should be actively examined.

The Timing of Reconciliation

Unaddressed hurts and injustices will not just evaporate: they will fester and grow, and ultimately undermine even the best political or economic reforms. IDEA Reconciliation Handbook.

In the current Sri Lankan context it is easy to argue that the continuing lack of progress with the macro-political level peace process fundamentally constrains the possibilities for reconciliation initiatives. Some key insights in this respect from the comparative international experience discussed in the IDEA Handbook, along with insights gained from previous reconciliation workshops held in Sri Lanka include the following:

1. Micro-level community-based reconciliation initiatives both can and should continue independently of progress with the 'official' peace process.
2. Civil society pressure can serve as a key impetus keeping the official peace process moving forward. Recent examples in this regard include the Northern Ireland and South African processes. There are plenty of things that civil society organizations can do – and in Sri Lanka, already are doing – that make a difference. And in particular, in the absence of political will

to move the peace process forward, civil society instigated proposals, initiatives etc. help to shape the agenda of the wider peace process.

Reconciliation and Democracy: An Overview

- *Reconciliation is a long-term process.* There is no quick fix to reconciliation. It takes time, and the pace cannot be dictated.
- *Reconciliation is a deep process.* It involves profound changes in attitudes and emotions, and cannot be rushed or imposed.
- *Reconciliation is a very broad process.* The attitudes and beliefs that underpin violent conflict spread widely through communities, and must be addressed at the broad level.
- *There is no single recipe for success.* As every conflict and ensuing democratic settlement is different, so the related reconciliation process will differ in important respects.

The Context of Reconciliation

- *Common cross-sectoral interests* on all sides of the prevailing divides can be harnessed for reconciliation, and developed into a basis for cross-community co-operation. Some examples in this regard:
- *Women* from all sides can join together to pursue demands for an equal share of social power with men.
- *Labour groupings* can combine to form a significant pressure group within society.
- *Business and industrial interests* that understand that they would be better served by a larger, combined market, complementing each other's human, financial and natural resources, can combine to pressurize for opening up of previously 'off-limits' avenues of economic co-operation and trading.
- *The poor* can increase their resources by joining together to fight for a more equitable sharing of resources across society as whole, as opposed to e.g. simply within their own ethnic constituency.
- *Common religious or linguistic links* can serve to bring people together across prevailing divides to work for peace.

Past Experiences in Peace Building in Sri Lanka: strengths, weaknesses and ways forward. *Jehan Perera, National Peace Council (NPC)*

Opportunities such as this are valuable because they bring together people and provide the opportunity to listen to the views of people who live faraway, to hear what they have to say and the way in which they analyze and look at the existing situation.

One thing that must be remembered is that Sri Lanka has not yet found a solution to the conflict. Because of this there are going to be many different ways in which to view the solution and of analyzing the present situation. This is why the discussion is important. In the Eastern province alone there will be such a diversity of opinion from the three districts.

To try and get an outside perspective that is knowledgeable one looks to the Norwegian facilitators, because they have been most directly involved, and they have access to the leaders of the two sides in a way that the rest of the population does not. They have made two very important statements. The first is that the present situation is not one of peace: the ceasefire is not peace; it has only frozen the war. Why is it only frozen? Because the institutions of war still remain in place – the armies of the two sides, the lines of control and the divided thinking that leads to conflict are still intact.

The Norwegians have warned that the ceasefire is melting at the edges. This statement was made when Karuna had broken away from the LTTE and violence was threatening to escalate and spill over into the rest of the country. Now the military threat posed by Karuna has dissipated considerably, even though the political threat his faction could pose remains.

In the last visit by the Norwegian facilitators they said that they found a sense of great frustration amongst the people, the government, and the LTTE, as well as themselves. There are many reasons for this frustration – from the Norwegian point of view the peace talks have been suspended for 19 months. There has therefore been no progress in the peace process between the two parties and the people in the north and the east are frustrated. Displaced people are unable to return to their homes, there is a lack of reconstruction and vast poverty. No steps have been taken to unify the country behind the peace process and the violence, such as the political killings in the east, has continued.

These are reasons for frustration. What is the cause of frustration? Frustration arises when people have many expectations that are not met. But when people feel frustrated they have to re-think their expectations – were they too high? If Sri Lankans take their minds back to three years ago, and remember the situation, it was terrible and deteriorating. Very few believed that there would be an end to the war because there was an escalation of conflict when even in a day 1000 people could die.

Increasingly, there were vested interests in the war - the army was growing, Ministry of Defense officials were making lucrative commissions, and some people were making a lot of money out of the conflict. The LTTE was getting stronger and refugees and asylum seekers abroad were frightened that they would be sent back home when the war ended. Therefore, three years ago, a situation of 'no war' seemed impossible. Then suddenly things changed very rapidly. Within a very short time, the GoSL and LTTE negotiators were beginning to treat each other as partners and even began calling each other friends.

On one occasion, for example, Professor Pieris (GoSL) and Mr. Balasingham (LTTE) faced a press conference as a team and they helped each other to communicate the message. This was a major transformation carried out within a very short time. Maybe from that beginning the way things improved Sri Lankans thought that the whole peace process would proceed in a similar manner. They thought that the country had found a common vision, and could march forwards fast towards prosperity and peace.

But clearly this country is not one in which all people think the same way. Sri Lanka is a pluralist country, with many ethnic, religious and social groups. A conflict that became a civil war in Sri Lanka has at least a 50-year history. Can this be completely dissolve in two years? This is an unreasonable expectation and that is one reason why people are now disappointed. An effort is being made to try and find common means to progress and solve the many remaining problems.

What Sri Lanka needs and what made the change in 2002 February was leadership – a supreme act of leadership on the part of the leaders of the GoSL and the LTTE – in the signing of the ceasefire agreement. This move was not made with the consent of the people: neither the GoSL nor the LTTE consulted the people in this regard. A decision was simply taken from the top. The people, both Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim all wanted the war to end: but they also all have different ideas concerning how peace could and should be obtained.

The ceasefire was about finding a way to stop the war. Because of that act of leadership Sri Lanka went from a situation of war to no war. As society is so polarized it is difficult to take a decision that makes a dramatic change. Sri Lanka was stuck in a war for 20 years as a consequence, and couldn't achieve a consensus on how to end the war. Now we have been stuck for three years in a situation of no war – no peace. We should appreciate this situation because no war – no peace is better than war. But we don't want to go from no war to war: we want to go from war to no war, to peace, development and prosperity.

We are frustrated that we are not progressing to the next step. There is no consensus in society on the political compromises that have to be made, changing the way that the country should be governed or how the economy should be managed. The situation of no-war is much better than that of war, and while Sri Lankans are dissatisfied with the place they are in, they have to be appreciative of the place they are in at the moment and on that basis, move towards the future.

At the present there are two major challenges. One is that as part of its own political process the LTTE has come up with a set of proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) for the North and East of the country. To date the GoSL has not agreed to talks about this proposal. What could have been happening in the 2 ½ years since the ceasefire is that the LTTE increasingly sees the GoSL and the South as benefiting more from this state of affairs than the North and East. Why was the ceasefire signed? Because both parties were equal in military terms – there was symmetry. Also there was a stalemate which was hurting both sides. It was at this point that the ceasefire was signed, but today people have a tendency not to look at the military dimension anymore (because there is no war), and instead to focus on the *political* situation.

What is clear is that the government is both benefiting more than the LTTE and getting stronger than the LTTE. The major blow to the LTTE was when the eastern leadership broke away in spring 2004, a development that weakened them both militarily and politically. On the GoSL side, however, we can see that the government has been strengthening itself. The present government, which for some

didn't have a majority in Parliament, recently obtained a majority through forming a coalition with the JVP. The economy in the South isn't that bad, the stock market is doing very well, and tourism remains highly profitable. While the cost of living is rising and not much employment is being generated, the South is still benefiting. But while there is some development taking place in the North and East, overall the ceasefire has not yet bought that many material benefits to the region.

In September 2004 I went to Killinochchi and met with the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), the development arm of the LTTE, and they were very proud to show us their budget figures. They had 2000 million rupees for development purposes, but even though at first this might seem a lot, in fact it is not. 10 years ago when I was working for the Sarvodaya movement, their budget was 200 million rupees: so the TRO only has 10 times the resources that were at Sarvodaya's disposal. To undertake meaningful reconstruction and development in the North and East much more than this is needed. The LTTE must be realizing that the parity that existed when they signed the ceasefire agreement in 2002 has been gradually transformed into a political asymmetry, with the GoSL definitely benefiting and the LTTE hardly benefiting at all as a result.

This is a dangerous situation because the LTTE will obviously want to try and regain parity. How can they do this? If they can't regain political equality they may use violence in a bid to return to the pre-ceasefire position of political and military parity. In addition, the GoSL is refusing to talk to the LTTE and the LTTE might resort to violence if this situation continues. There are also sections of the GoSL that *want* a prolonged stalemate, because they recognize that the LTTE will be in potentially serious trouble if they refuse to restart talks and instead take up arms again. The LTTE is effectively caught in a 'peace trap'. They know that they can't risk a return to full scale war because the on-going 'war on terrorism' means that the international climate is definitely against them doing so.

The GoSL wants this situation to continue because in the meantime the South is benefiting and developing while the North and East remain largely stuck. If the North remain stuck for a long time there might even be more breakaways from within the LTTE. In this context it is clear why sections of the GoSL might therefore not want peace talks to resume or make progress. But even if they don't restart a full-scale war the LTTE can none the less use limited violence with a view to promoting chaos in the South. Those of us active in peace and community-based organizations have long been advocating that peace talks should recommence precisely because of this – and of course other, related issues.

The main issue that prevents the two sides from talking to each other is the ISGA proposal. The LTTE position is that talks must resume exclusively on the basis of the ISGA proposal while the GoSL states that it wants to talk about so-called 'core' issues, and on the basis of the Oslo Declaration.

The LTTE only wants to talk about the ISGA. Why are they saying this? The main reason is that the LTTE is concerned that if the GoSL starts to talk about other things such as core issues and the final solution to the conflict, the negotiations will get stuck and the LTTE will consequently be unable to set up an interim administration in the North and East. Why does the LTTE need an interim government? Unless the government agrees to establish a legitimate, recognized authority, economic resources simply will not begin flowing into the North.

As noted earlier, the TRO is only getting a small portion of the available resources. What the LTTE needs is to have a legitimate authority sanctioned by the government in the North and East – otherwise, donors will not channel resources

to the region and thus to the LTTE itself. If you look at the ISGA document, it effectively envisages no role at all for the GoSL in the territory covered by proposal. It only talks about powers that will be controlled by the LTTE, and about self-rule. In a united country there has to be both self-rule and shared rule. The GoSL's chief concern in this regard is that if they agree only to talk about the ISGA, they will be talking about setting a new regional authority with effectively no links at all to existing government structures.

The institutions envisioned in the ISGA proposal – the judiciary, tax authority, Human Rights Commission etc. - are all new, with no connection to the centre. It is like setting up an entirely separate authority. This is why the GoSL does not want to talk about the ISGA, whereas the LTTE wants the ISGA set up.

How do you resolve this difference in opinion? This must be discussed openly and honestly, otherwise the stalemate will never be resolved. People like those participating in this workshop must put pressure on both the GoSL and the LTTE to start talking. If they really want to talk then I am convinced that they can find a way through the current impasse.

Media and Reconciliation; the Role of the Media during a Peace Process.

Sunanda Deshapriya, Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)

The media has five basic Functions to perform. These include:

1. Informing Citizens on what is happening around
2. Educating readers, listeners and viewers on facts and ideas presented by various groups
3. Providing a platform for public political discourse in facilitation of formation of public opinion – agenda setting
4. Playing a 'watch dog' role on the functioning of state institutions (especially during elections, monitoring and reporting on violence and malpractices)
5. Serve as a channel for advocacy diverse viewpoints.

In times of conflict, the media can play a special role. It has the potential to play a role in conflict transformation by:

- Channeling communication between parties
- Undertaking confidence building measures
- Educating the public on contested issues
- Identifying the interests underlying the contested issues
- Encouraging a balance of power
- Framing and defining the conflict
- Generating a consensus towards problem solving and solution building

Looking more specifically at the role and functioning of the Media in Sri Lanka, several issues were noted. In Sri Lanka:

- Most of the newsrooms in Sri Lanka are mono lingual. They target a mono-lingual readership and lack diversity
- There is a polarization of newspapers on ethnic lines
- State media is more aware of the need for conflict sensitive reporting but lacks political credibility
- Journalists in Sri Lanka do not understand each other across the linguistic divide
- There are no mechanisms that will facilitate interaction among journalists of different ethnic communities
- Civil society is not proactive in dealing with the problems relating to the ethnically bias media

It is important to (re)introduce a code of conduct for journalist and professional standards of reporting. Recognizing that the Journalist's first duty is to truth:

- The media must take all reasonable care to report news and pictures accurately and without distortion
- Every reasonable attempt should be made by editors and individual journalists to verify the accuracy of reports prior to publication
- Where such verification is not practicable, that fact shall be stated in the report
- Editors and their staff, including external contributors, shall not publish material in such a way as to endorse any matter which they know or have reason to believe to be false or inaccurate

On reporting Race and Religion

- The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a persons race, color, religion, sex or to any physical or mental illness or disability
- It must avoid publishing details of a person's race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability unless these are directly relevant to the story

Dialogue is the Future : Some Ideas

Studio Ijambo in Burundi

Sharing experiences from other conflict situations where the media played a positive role, the example of Studio Ijambo in Burundi was cited. Studio Ijambo was set up with the specific objectives of:

- Targeting the issues and themes where there is a need for objective, balanced and credible information (such as the peace process, negotiations, cease –fire, transitional issues, justice, governance, role of armed groups etc.)
- Highlighting positive examples of tolerance, collaboration, conflict resolution and reconciliation by seeking out real life stories of people and local groups
- Promoting – a wide diversity of viewpoints and perspectives, from politicians to rebel leaders to women's groups, children and ordinary citizens with the aim of seeking common ground on all possible levels
- Tackling these objectives with a multi – ethnic team of media professionals, whose unity and teamwork symbolizes the sense of tolerance and understanding that is desired at the national level and whose diversity enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the radio programs

The South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Challenges to Journalism

The media in South Africa played a key role stating that it was difficult to stand on the sidelines at that critical time. It was difficult to determine What is 'truth' when multiple stories about the same event did not cohere into a whole. They recognized that simple dualisms like 'victim / perpetrator' do not adequately describe situations of conflict and they too had to come to terms with how structurally pervasive 'the system' was. TRC Commissioner Hugh Lewin, said: "the TRC won't deliver reconciliation, but it has put it on the national agenda. The challenge is to journalists to be the first to pick up the baton and take the work forward. The TRC owes a huge debt to the media of South Africa. Without coverage in newspapers and magazines, accounts of the proceedings on TV screens and without the voice of the TRC being beamed through radio across the land, its work would be disadvantaged and immeasurably poorer".

Some practical ideas to consider:

- Steps need to be taken to build a critical mass of shared spaces
- A media watch-dog or a mechanism for Media criticism – for example A Journal could be published
- Promote good practice examples through public recognition and / or awards to be initiated
- Pro active civil society media strategies and initiatives to improve the quality of reporting and strengthening the media to be initiated
- Encourage diversity in the media through exchange programmes and exposure tours

Final thoughts

- We should look forward to creating a media culture of freedom that will not abandon a sense of social responsibility
- Removing the roadblocks to media freedom and socially responsible reporting is a long and hard battle, which envisages a paradigm shift in Sri Lankan culture. However, even undertaking a short term strategy one needs to adopt a long – terms perspective.
- It must also be a holistic approach
- Piecemeal interventions do not work. A road map of media transformation is necessary.

Discussions between Participants and Resource Persons

Discussion following the presentation by Mr Senaka Abeyratne on the Peace Secretariat.

Q: Since Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) is involved in monitoring of the ceasefire agreement what is the role of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM)?

A: SLMM is the main monitoring agency, SCOPP is liaising with them, and so it's a collaborative process.

Q: Currently, there is an invitation for the private sector to get involved in improving infrastructure in the East. How can the private sector get involved in privatization when most of the property is owned by the government such as schools, hospitals and roads?

A: The private sector can be involved in joint ventures with the government or by providing independent supply of water etc., The important aspect is employment generation and income generation, or public/ private collaboration for economic infrastructure development.

Q: Will the communication unit in the Peace Secretariat be able to monitor the media and influence them to report on the peace process more positively?

A: While the Peace Secretariat has regular contact with the press it is unable to influence the press because the press is considered to be an independent body.

Q: There is no mention in the Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (RRR – also known as Triple R) report on how to address land issues. Also, the Triple R secretariat in Batticaloa had no information on their mandate and is therefore confused about its role. It is important for the peace secretariat to advise the ministry to have a better outreach in the provinces

A: A new mechanism has been created by the government called Donor Coordination and North East Funding Programme Cluster (NEDCO), and with the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (known as the Triple R Ministry) these bodies attempt to address some of these issues. Therefore the Peace Secretariat does not handle such issues.

Q: What has been proposed to deal with the refugees returning from India?

A: The action plan is addressing the issue. The Ministry of Triple R is bringing back refugees from Tamil Nadu and trying to find donor funds for resettlement as it is an expensive project. It is however an important aspect of the Action Plan. The Peace Secretariat has only been around for a few months but these issues are on the agenda.

Q: The Triple R ministry should be pressurized on how to address land issues. Is the peace secretariat able to do this?

A: The Peace Secretariat requires a formal letter highlighting concerns because it cannot act on a verbal communication, especially in relation to such issues.

Q: School students are involved in peace activities but recently the President has said that she doesn't want them to be used for these activities. She is not allowing them permission to act in regard to peace. What is the opinion of the Peace Secretariat on this issue?

A: It is for the President to decide on these issues as the Peace Secretariat can't override her decisions.

Q: There have been several accords and agreements in the past to address the conflict but the minorities still don't have rights. Political parties such as the JVP, Sinhala Urumaya and Jathika Hela Urumaya have had a negative impact on the peace process what can the Peace Secretariat do to influence the mindset of such politician and political parties?

A: The GoSL is a coalition government and so speaks in different voices. Nothing can be done about the political issues and all the dissenting views. Such political problems are beyond the reach of SCOPP. They can only consult between civil society, business communities etc. and are unable to resolve these issues.

Q: District peace committees created by the Triple R ministries are not functioning effectively. Can this be rectified by the Triple R?

A: Again this must be done formally with a communication of the problem. However, is this non-functioning arising out of a lack of funds?

Q: Students wanted to march for peace but there was a denial of approval from the President. Can the Peace Secretariat influence the president to allow students to be involved in peace activities?

A: If the president doesn't want the students to be involved in certain activities the Peace Secretariat cannot do anything about it.

General Session with Questions, Answers and commentary:

Comment: *While the President may not want students to be politicized, people also believe that students are resource because they are the next generation. They have to be involved in peace building so that there is opportunity for change the next generation. There is also considerable disparity between north and south with regard to student involvement. There has to be consistency in what is permitted activity and what is expected by students. Allowing them a public space before they find an alternative is important.*

There is a need to consult with ministry of education and other authorities to find out what the appropriate action of students is? We don't want students mobilized in conflict but to be mobilized creatively in peace activities. It is also important that students in the South and the North and East be mobilized in a similar way so that there is some clarity in the role of students in this fragmented society

Q: *The Peace Secretariat may not have funds, but if you want to reach a certain objective you have to find the means. The war was funded even though there weren't funds. Funds were found. What therefore, are people putting towards peace? The Peace Secretariat must demand the funds from donors and government because they have such a huge mandate and they need to address this issue. How can they be expected to do this without the funds?*

A: The Peace Secretariat isn't involved in reconstruction and peace activities. The Peace Secretariat is operating in a realm of consultations and negotiations with the LTTE. They can request funds but on a case by case basis knowing what they are spending it on.

Q: *Parties who should take part in the peace process haven't taken part in the Peace Secretariat. For instance the LTTE, the UNP or representatives of the Tamil have not taken part in the Peace Secretariat) and have been excluded therefore how can the Peace Secretariat function? Someone has to convey the message to the peace councils such as we are more scared now than we were before of a return to war. A committee should be appointed.*

A: Not all stakeholders can be included in the three committees. President has a difficult time trying to reorganize it. It doesn't mean that those who are directly involved don't have a say, They can do so through their representatives. They can voice their opinions through representatives in the civil society groups, They are not excluded and can influence the peace process.

Q: *Moving towards the core of issues in the discussion and taking a comparative look at peace processes, it is recognized that inclusivity is an important aspect of peace processes. It is encouraging to hear that many groups are involved and other views besides those of the main negotiators are voiced and taken into consideration. It is fundamental to ensure the inclusivity of all views in your deliberations. The question would be: what mechanisms you have established for the functioning of your committees? Are there any opportunities for regional cooperation and to ensure that the voices and opinions of the regions are listened to? Unless you ensure such consultations you won't be able to reflect all the opinions. Therefore, what mechanisms ensure the implementation of the action plan so that you are held accountable for your actions?*

A: The National Advisory Council for Peace and Reconciliation (NAC) is not Colombo based therefore it will have country-wide consultations and monitoring the implementation of the peace process is part of our mandate. The way the Peace Secretariat monitors is by identifying the agencies responsible for addressing certain issues. They will be held accountable for implementation. This exercise has been orchestrated by the Treasury and it has been made clear that monitoring is important. There has to be periodic consultation between the districts and the Peace Secretariat.

Q: *What has the government done so far for the peace process? What is communication between the two [Govt. & LTTE] Peace Secretariats like?*

A: This Government has only been in existence for 6 months and needs longer time to solve some of these issues. The current government is a coalition and there are divergent views within it. The LTTE has come around since April. Over time there will be a convergence of views, I am confident of this. The NAC is the first step in a consultative initiative started by the govt. it is only the first step and is positive. Over time there will be an effort to regionalize the effort so that all voices will be heard. With regard to communication between the two Peace Secretariats, when the Norwegian's come to Sri Lanka, there is communication. There are no on-going communications as such but there will be once the negotiations resume. There is communication on logistical issues but no physical communications exist at the moment.

Q: *Is it possible for the Peace Secretariats to carry forward the opinions of the civil society to the President?*

A: Certainly but it is a process. It is proposed that there should be frequent meetings between the Peace Secretariats and civil society.

Q: *During the peace process people want to return to their lands but the navy says the land belongs to them. How can the Peace Secretariats mediate such disputes?*

A: Under the Action Plan (AP) the Peace Secretariat is trying to develop a mechanism regarding land disputes. Many agencies should be involved and a common mode of operation must be decided on. It is in the AP but it will be addressed in the future and can't be done over night.

Q: *Does the Peace Secretariats function independently?*

A: As I explained earlier it functions semi-independently. It is part of the government but it reports to the President and not to a line ministry.

Q: *Are you able to change the mindset of the parliamentarians who represent the people?*

A: The Peace Secretariat is not political organization and is only a government institution. We can't change the mindsets of the parliamentarians. But the NAC will have a more involved role in this aspect.

Q: If you can't change the minds of the politicians how can you change those of the population in general?

A: Are you implying that all the parliamentarians oppose peace?

Q: Despite the current state of the ceasefire all these organizations are struggling to establish peace. Could you tell me a single action that has been taken by the parliamentarians towards peace? It should be realistic and agreeable. And what have you done to stop the media from propagating against peace?

A: The press is independent and therefore not even the President can influence the press or the mass media. However, the Peace Secretariat can report accurate information to the press, but whether they will report those same facts to the people in the way that is presented by the Peace Secretariat is beyond our control because the press is independent. There is a role for civil society to reform media through education. Civil society groups could consider having educational programs for mass media so that they become aware of the importance of accurately reporting to the public.

Comment: We Tamils have given up the fight for a separate state. We only want to enjoy the rights that are enjoyed by those who live in the south. We would like the Peace Secretariat to stress that the people are asking for equal rights. But what, in the South, are they willing to give up for peace? Please convey this to the people in the South.

Q: There is nothing called semi-independence. How can you make the Peace Secretariat into a fully independent body in the future?

A: The Peace Secretariat can't become full independent but we enjoy a degree of independence due to the fact that we are directly under the President.

Q: In order to create peace you must make people at the grass roots level aware about peace.

A: There are certain expectations of the Peace Secretariat in relation to Civil Society. One of the things that the Peace Secretariat would like to do is to work with Civil Society in conveying some of these messages of peace to people living in rural areas and villages because it is impossible for the Peace Secretariat to do everything on their own. Therefore there needs to be consultation between Peace Secretariat and Civil Society in order to develop mechanisms to enlighten people who live in remote areas about the perceptions of the government and those in the north about peace.

Q: Before we talk peace we must live in normalcy because it is the expectation of the people. What is the contribution that the Peace Secretariat can provide in giving people back a sense of normalcy? What are the activities that Peace Secretariat has undertaken in providing the basic needs of the grassroots people? The government, the police, the army and other armed groups, how can you control them and what is the contribution you can make for helping people?

A: Bringing normalcy is very difficult task and depends on the collaboration of various agencies in a joint effort. We are not an implementing ministry and are unable to improve people's livelihoods. Such programs are implemented by the Triple R ministry. Our role is to conduct negotiations and consultations to improve peace process.

Q: *There is the need for inclusivity but more often there is bipartisanship. This is why the concept of a truth commission is viewed suspiciously, because commissions are usually partisan bodies. It is critical that the efforts of the Peace Secretariat are seen as bringing in constituents in regard to the peace agenda. It is also important to note that without bipartisan approaches the peace process is in danger of getting locked in a partisan position and not having the support of all the people of Sri Lanka.*

A: The government is sincere in its effort to create a bipartisan position. However, the LTTE also have an obligation in their part and should make an effort as well. Clearly there are high expectations of the secretariat and some of these expectations even if they can not be met by the Peace Secretariat can be met by other institutions and actors. People must be made aware of which institutions and mechanism that they could turn to. It is frustrating for people if there are layers of committees and bodies and they are not aware of which body has which responsibility.

A bipartisan approach should not only be adopted between the government and LTTE – perhaps it is important to constantly refer to the main opposition party and all parties within the government in order to bring them aboard as this has been highlighted as a failure of the previous efforts.

There is a belief in the success of the negotiations that led to the peace process. It is necessary however to anchor the MOU through the parliament and it is important to engage the participation of all political actors.

The Peace Secretariat should be sufficiently independent to tell the President what the people need and think. There has to be peace building and the opposition and government have to both be part of the process. The leadership of the Peace Secretariat is currently with an independent individual. He is an approachable person and should perhaps act as a representative of the civil society in order to express their opinions to the President. Engaging the LTTE Peace Secretariat is also important.

The media is a key player in the peace process and the Civil Society can also play an important role by pressurizing the media to be more accountable. The Civil Society can demand this of the media because they have a responsibility to report failure. Mr. Sunanda from Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA) has discussed the role of the media in the peace process and commented on their way of reporting which is often biased. The Civil Society should convene sessions with the Peace Secretariat to determine how they should report on the peace process and on ethnic relations.

Q: *What is the mechanism that you suggest with regard to reconciliation?*

A: Drawing from the South African experience, from an early stage, civil society established initiatives such as national forums which are designed to bring together all civil society actors and articulated their demands. This was partly because the ANC was dominant politically and carried political weight. They were able to open up channels of communication to track 1 actors. The challenge in Sri Lanka is to identify what fora are available for us and to ensure that all voices and demands are being heard. Are the existing fora satisfactory? Or do new fora need to be created? Civil society would need to be involved in a national basis. As long as it's regional or local it won't have the impact on the boarder level political process, until regional civil society actors feel that they are being heard at a national level. Maybe the need is for nationally organized initiatives.

Q: *Do you think that the Peace Secretariats can play a crucial role?*

A: I think that that's a hard one to answer. Clearly as the appointed bodies they are important and government and official bodies are accountable to the public and they should be pressurized if there is a feeling that they are not doing sufficient work. Civil society should pressurize them in this case. At the end of the day they are accountable to the people.

Q: *As an interim measure should we focus on people to people reconciliation.*

A: Reconciliation Its not a single constituency issue, it's a national issue for the rehabilitation of all the people. People should avoid keeping initiatives within the communities and should concentrate on making it into a national effort. If the people have little experience of people from different areas, channels of communication have to be created which is important for the reconciliation.

Q: *Both in the North and South there have been different responses to the notion of reconciliation. The word itself doesn't exist in the national languages – do you feel that it is an issue that is relevant and should be pursued. How do you understand it?*

Comment: *We don't see similarities between lessons learnt from the previous history of peace-building. When President Chandrika's government came to power another policy was adopted. In Sri Lanka there is a trend to change everything when a government comes to power. There are such changes made in education policy - we don't have a fixed policy as far as education is concerned and the same goes for the peace process. The government often doesn't think beyond the party political line and therefore their policies have no relevance to the previous peace- building experience. Therefore, the Peace Secretariat should be a fixture despite the fact that the governments' changed. However, this isn't the case, because the Peace Secretariats too are changed by the government in power. We need to have a fixed policy in this country. Otherwise the (mis)use of democracy as simply a means of coming to power will prevail. Politicians should be taught political ethics.*

Both parties have been engaged in the war. The announcement was made that the door for peace is open but the period of war would be extended. They were simply heralding peace but never allowing peace to take root. They must let go of the internal frictions. They often use the interim period to solve their own dis-

putes. During the peace they fight with their brothers while during war they fight with their enemies. When will the time for peace come? The extension of the peace process is a lengthening of the period to settle inter-party and other political disputes. Sri Lanka has not lost its feudal character. Feudalism still prevails even as it boasts that it is democratic country. We must start a new era of peace and open new avenues by learning from the experience of other countries. So long as Sri Lanka adopts these current political practices peace will remain a distant dream.

A: Democratic structures themselves don't allow peace because they can be used for pursuing power.

Q: *Reconciliation is a long process. You can't conceive it when there is such a gap between people and they are no longer aware of what normalcy is. It is going to be a long term process – a short term process can be started – the result however, has to be sustainable peace. All Sri Lanka citizens should contribute to this process. It is not possible for only a few of people or politicians to sit and discuss the future- it has to be an island wide issue and somebody has to take it up from the North to the South. Reconciliation should be about initiating the healing of wounds in the minds of people.*

Comment: *I have lived out of the country for twenty years but I would like to make some observations. I consider myself to be from the last of the generations to have experienced the close interactions between Tamil and Sinhalese, and have moved about from the North to the South. I have seen the distance that has grown between people. People feel that others don't understand their fears and anxieties When Memory Dies by Mr. Sivananda is a book that talks about the lost relationships and how difficult it will be to replace it. Some people feel more committed to peace because they remember peaceful times. However, in this current atmosphere, even agents of civil society such as Mr. Ariyaratne of Sarvodaya are seen as hegemonic because he represents a certain section of society. His actions are viewed with suspicion even though he is a respected civil society leader.*

While it is a slow process, it is important to attempt to build bridges, to gap the relationships between people. Take small steps – don't start from the whole country but from the village. For example, there should be efforts to bring the Peace Secretariats together – Civil Society should push for this until the Peace Secretariats are forced to come together for it is those face to face interactions that help to create a space for reconciliation.

Even the donor communities should design and support initiatives that are tri-religious and multi-ethnic so that everybody has a stake in the peace process. You have to make that effort because people are often willing to spend more on war than on peace. People should take a gamble on peace – especially community organizations. You have to say, though we have had a ceasefire for two years, it has meant nothing to our lives and some additional measures have to be taken before the peace process can be effective. Civil society groups should take action.

A: *In terms of Civil Society engagement it is useful to think about the peace process in North Ireland. Peace has many stops and starts. What was really critical was when things were at a standstill during negotiations, it was pressure from women's organizations and civil society saying that they didn't want the process to stop and that they would like it to go forward, and it was through the building of a national coalition to pressurize the British government that the negotiations progressed. Civil society organizations can't do it on their own but need popular*

support and participation which will demand actions regardless of the government's stance – pressurization needs to be something that Civil society does in order to propel action.

Shared Experiences and Concluding Discussion

- In all presentations there was the discussion that religious leaders need to be more involved in the peace process. These Civil Society groups have made an effort in their districts to bridge gaps but have not been proactive in meeting the Buddhist priests. There is a new Mahanayaka who has made positive statements about the Peace Process and this may be something to build on.
- An incident that occurred in Ampara in 1998 was related. In a border village, Sinhalese and Tamils lived peacefully for a long time, but due to the war they were divided and many lives were lost from both sides. Today many Tamils are living in the refugee camps. The Sinhalese were living in the temples at night for refuge, but they did some cultivation in the lands owned by the Tamils with help from the armed forces but the Tamil's were unable to do this. One man suggested that both people should cultivate without intervention from the army. Tamils and Sinhalese met together and selected a common place away from this area where people were able to meet and blame each other for their troubles. Soon, it became evident that some misunderstandings had occurred creating conflicts within the society. There was a request made for the armed forces to leave so that the people could mediate between themselves and live harmoniously. What I am trying to say is that we made arrangements in an area where nobody could think of peace but the community is now living in peace through understanding.
- In Trincomalee Muslims and Hindu religious leaders are often positively involved in peace initiatives. We are trying to make religious leaders active however there are differing viewpoints about the Peace Process which obstruct their involvement.
- In Batticaloa, while previously the *pirith* was not chanted on *poya* days, now it can be heard. So clearly the priests and the Sinhalese community are engaged in chanting again and this reflects the fact that peace prevails there. It may be a chance to build bridges between communities.
- To relate a story however of how religious leaders and the media can disrupt peace: one Buddhist priest apparently attacked a Tamil *gramasevaka* but it was misconstrued as the government servant having attacked the priest. The news portrayed the incident incorrectly. The incident was apparently in connection with a land dispute where a person who refused to give his land to the priest had reported this harassment to the government servant. The priest attacked the government servant to prevent him from intervening on behalf of the landowner. This has caused distrust in the minds of the Tamil people about the Buddhist clergy. This also highlights what the role of the media should be. When the media publish such sensitive issues they should be careful not to distort the story to hurt others.
- In Kantale NGOs are trying to bring peace to the people and have to try and make the religious leaders of all three religious groups active and get their support. The NGOs have to be clever enough to get them involved and keep them involved in the process.
- In the border villages the Tamil and Muslims support these initiatives but must make contacts with the priests, visit them regularly and pull them towards peace initiatives.

- Some Buddhist monks took part in various fora which were convened for facilitating the Peace Process, but the question was raised as to how far they are taking the message to the community. There is no way of knowing their effectiveness and they should monitor the impact of their communications with their people. There will be a positive move towards the peace process if they can do this.
- In times of conflict, NGOs contact the media to make sure that they publish facts correctly, to minimize misunderstanding between the communities and make sure that provocative incidents are put in proper perspective and neutralized. But the media is slow to counteract false reporting. More work must be done with the media to make them aware of their special responsibility.
- As a result of the war, the people of the North and East have deep wounds in their hearts and minds. They have lost their relatives, their property and livelihood. So if the Peace Process is to be a step towards reconciliation then the rehabilitation of affected people has to be undertaken simultaneously, or they might not be ready to accept peace or to work towards reconciliation.
- The people from the Ampara district have had a particularly bitter experience of the conflict and recognize that it is important to include religious leaders in peace activities. We have had many discussions with our religious leaders in this regard. The contribution of one Christian priest was very significant. There was a *hartal* based on a rumor and the priest came and stopped his motorbike between the two sides – the Tamil and Muslim, to stop them from hurting each other, and promised to undertake measures to stop any provocations. In this case he undertook to stop the Tamil youth from coming from one area to another and intimidating Muslims and he actually did help prevent a big disaster by acting as a mediator.

As most Muslims gather at the mosque, the Christian priests come and share ideas with the Muslims and the Muslims were also very cooperative when sharing ideas and discussions. The Buddhist priests' participation was much less. But it will be necessary to have the participation of all the religious leaders and the hope is that this will happen in the future.

- Spirituality is an important facet of peace. While much is said about the contribution of religious leaders it is also necessary to examine what people understand by "religion". The religious leaders must not work only towards the wellbeing of part of society – their own religious followers, but should work towards helping all the people, regardless of what religion they follow. We must know the basic principles of the other religions and be respectful of them. This creates a basis to discuss with people of other religions their concerns. This can prevent divisions amongst religions. Those whose thinking is based on religion must think about the basic features of the religions. Religion can't be understood through the structures but through the moral values and humanism which are fundamental to all religions. These beliefs and values are not practiced all the time. Religion should not be seen as something to be practiced from time to time but throughout our lives.
- There is a notion that Sinhalese and Muslims oppose the Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposals. As a Muslim, I would like to say that there is no clear definition of the ISGA no clear picture and people haven't been properly informed, this is an obstacle. The Muslims in the east are portrayed as apparently opposing the ISGA but often we actually do not know the real facts of the ISGA. Organizations must provide information to the people about it so that we know what is included and what is excluded in the ISGA. There is a lot

of confusion due to a lack of clarity. Therefore the notion that we are opposing, it is wrong, we just don't know the truth.

- o Given that the media has not reported positively on the peace process, a survey or a poll on what people think about where the peace process is going and the prospects for reconciliation will be useful. Reconciliation is about living in peace, but people need to talk about what needs to be given up for peace. Peace is not simply the absence of war. What do the Tamils get in return for giving up a demand for a separate state? Will there be a new state formation where minorities have a certain amount of autonomy? It is necessary for the NGOs working on peace building to talk about these issues you return to your districts to talk more about your ideas and discussions and to use the policy summary to see how other countries have dealt with similar problems such as Rwanda etc. Can we learn something from these processes?
- o The need to have interfaith dialogue was stressed several times. Some priests are willing to participate while others are not. The activist priests want to use their positions to be a positive force for building peace but they have to do this without formal training. Their training is in teaching their gospels. But the conflict has forced them to address the material needs of their people. The priests are operating in a complex time. There was a Bill recently presented called the Anti-Conversion law and this made people wary about how they interact with other religions. Priests need to get together, especially the proactive priests who would be willing to take part in these kinds of fora. But is important to work with people on the ground as well, and not only the religious leaders.
- o The experience of the National Peace Council (NPC) was shared to help these civil society groups determine strategies that could be effective. The NPC conducted small seminars at the community level where the civil society actors receive basic awareness about what the conflict is about and what kind of future structure of governance we should aim towards – they have done it for the last ten years and intend on continuing it into the future because it is effective. What the NPC found particularly effective is people's fora with about a 100 people meeting and attracting the attention of the whole community to let people know what is happening. The NCP organizes these events in public, the larger community and the media gets involved and are aware of the issues. Another benefit of organizing a larger event is that the people of that area feel that they are actively doing something. If it is a seminar they feel they have come just to listen, whereas if it is a Forum, at which what they say is taken by the media and broadcast to the community, people feel empowered. Maybe in these three districts such meetings should be organized about a hundred people, meeting to talk about reconciliation and the Peace Process. The National Peace Council will be happy to support such an initiative.
- o Another effective activity is exposure visits. Unless people see the devastation with their own eyes they don't understand fully. Korea, organized through UNESCO, such visits for people to visit and to see what kind of peace work was undertaken. The exchanges included visits by human rights workers and media groups. The media is vital to the progress of the Peace Process. The journalists who went had negative views towards the peace process and the Human Rights groups were positive towards it. But after the exchange visits the situation was reversed. The media group who went to the north were the groups who told the Koreans how good the peace process and ceasefire agreement was whereas in the Human Rights groups were more critical focusing on the ceasefire violations.

- o Bishop Tutu of South Africa said that it was the religious leaders in South Africa who can make peace because politicians look for divisions and want to exploit divisions whereas religion tells you that all people are one and that we are all brothers and sisters. Religious leaders are better at healing and bringing about peace and reconciliation. Unfortunately, religious leaders in Sri Lanka aren't educated about the other communities. That is why they have not been at the forefront of a peace movement and sometimes have even opposed the peace process. They need exposure to other communities; there is need for work with religious leaders in this aspect. If we do that and help them to understand how other communities think and what their problems are then we can work towards reconciliation. Inability to understand the other side often leads to mistrust.
- o Reconciliation is not only about setting up truth commissions; it is about understanding our context and seeing the problems of the others. Civil society has to be conscious of its limitations, because the people who have power in society are politicians and military leaders. If they have contradictory plans of their own then whatever civil society does, won't have an impact because they have much more power. Civil Society can only prepare the ground for leaders who will be genuine in their efforts to promote peace. That is the important role civil society plays but civil society can't solve the problems on its own. Genuine leaders are needed and if the country has that kind of leadership there will be peace. At this present time Sri Lanka's leaders are only thinking about consolidating their own power and not about the Peace Process. Civil Society has to start taking big risks because the people at the top have other agendas and they will not take the country in the direction of peace. The time will come when there are leaders who put peace first and then civil society and citizens can take the big risks to make things happen. They may even be called upon to risk their lives.

This is a very special moment that such a workshop was held bringing so many different diverse communities of people from the East together to discuss such important issues.

- o With regard to interfaith dialogue it is true that in the South African context the religious leaders were in a better position to promote peace and reconciliation, but we have to be aware that religion has played a double edged role in situations of conflict. It maybe important in the Sri Lankan context to conduct an honest assessment of the role that religious leaders have played as they may have been blocks to the progress of peace. If religion becomes confused with national identity, it can become a major block to peace. Sri Lanka needs to start reconciling with past but it may not necessarily be through a truth commission.
- o This peace process is fragile, but people are supporting it and the government and other political actors must be made aware of this.

Presentations by the Participants: Regional Experiences and Case Studies

Voices from Batticaloa

We want the Sinhalese to come to our areas and see the problems that we face and the reality for themselves. We appreciate the efforts of those who are ready to bring the Sinhalese to our areas. There is no community-bridging done and the donor communities and NGOs should concentrate on this and make it more concrete because the collapse of inter-communal bridges will result in the destruction of all other projects.

We want to show the Sinhalese that the Tamil people are in trouble and we want Tamils to realize that the Sinhalese too are suffering. We want people to spread this message. We have taken a case study to demonstrate the problems of the Tamil people and how bridge building can make people aware of each other's troubles.

A Sinhala girl who met a Tamil girl whose school uniform was blue, commented that she thought that blue was the color of uniforms in their area. But the Tamil girl explained to her that she only had one uniform. One day the uniform got mixed with another piece of clothing in the washing and the dye leaked onto her uniform. She is too poor to buy another uniform and therefore has to wear a stained uniform to school. This surprised the Sinhala girl and generated a greater feeling of sympathy for the Tamil girl.

Peace education program in Batticaloa

We have created a peace education program and we teach peace education in schools. In Advanced-level classes we conducted a program in which we concentrated on bridging the gap between gender and a peace education program for the youth – an awareness program. We have effectively created peace education groups in the schools

We held training of trainers programs for staff of NGOs on school peace group formation. We have created 39 groups targeting 1160 students and this program has sponsorship from the Ministry of Education. There was a South-East bridge building program – a two day program where children were brought by their parents to the North to participate. We celebrated *Thaipongal* with all communities. They met LTTE leaders and had a dialogue with the LTTE. We believe that if we create peace among us, only then can we create peace in the country.

Media and communication: The media is very important in the peace process. With the help of those who know Sinhala we were able to broadcast to the Sinhala nation.

Elders and youth from Chilaw lived with people from the South. Some of the Sinhalese had to live with the Tamil people for the days during which the program was held. They met female cadres and the leadership of the LTTE. We conducted students' exposure programs, East-South bridge building programs called *Asa/Sisila*. The Tamil youths participated in a program conducted by the Sinhalese. There were cultural programs and there were religious activities conducted by people from all three communities who gave blessings for peace.

To commemorate one year of the signing of the MOU a holy mass was held which was attended by army personnel. Deepavali was celebrated by all different religions emphasizing the importance of religion in creating racial harmony. It is necessary to conduct confidence building measures through sports and human rights

programs. We conducted awareness programmes on child rights and emphasized the importance of peace for children. We hope to further expand on these activities and we hope for peace in Sri Lanka.

Ampara

All three communities live in the Ampara district and many different organizations operate there. People should live together in harmony however there are a few troublemakers who create larger problems within the communities. Disputes occur and have led to shops being burnt and people being abducted and false rumors are spread which cause even more disputes which were later solved publicizing the truth. When people are aware of the truth they do not act rashly. It is usually troublemakers who cause problems.

In the town, there are many Sinhalese and there is a Muslim village two kilometers away. A law passed by the *Pradeshiya Sabaha* states that Muslims cannot trade in the town or buy land and despite the Member of Parliaments representing them there is nothing done to rectify these issues. This causes resentment.

Trincomalee

Some of the issues which faced by people in Trincomalee resulting from 1983 riots include malnutrition, displacement, and deprivation of education for children. Also people have lost their lands because they have lost their deeds. People thought there would be peace after the MoU – people know that the war is not the solution. There is concern and anxiety about the resumption of the war. Reconciliation is difficult because people have still got wounds resulting from the war. NGOs should work to bridge the gulf between the two communities to make Trincomalee a place for lasting peace.

After 1983 there were many displaced families in welfare camps. About 49,000 families who attempted to access resettlement schemes were not able to do so because government resettlement assistance has varied from government to government. The latest is the UAS scheme which offers livelihood assistance of Rs 25,000 and the same amount for housing. Those who go for resettlement after 22 February 2002 are able to get the new amounts. But people who applied for resettlement before that got less and there is pain in the mind of the people who had decided to resettle before this period. Their chances of receiving enhanced assistance have been deprived. Their situation has not improved as there were no opportunities for income generation, a problem which is common in other districts as well. Apart from this, there many unresolved land issues. Many people were displaced and some people have gone and settled on the vacant land and there is dispute about who really owns the land. People who originally owned the land have lost their documentation and are now regarded as landless.

While some areas have been cleared of landmines in others areas they have not been cleared. People live in huts and cannot go to their paddy field because the de-mining process is moving at snail's pace. It will take about six years to clear their land of landmines. Often the people have to abandon their livelihoods. During riots almost the entire fishing community was displaced. As a result they have lost their fishing gear and because they have no other skill, they have no alternative livelihood to take up. The government has not provided them with the gear which is necessary for them to carry on their livelihood because of the expense.

The malnutrition in un-cleared areas is three times higher than the rest of the country. Malnutrition amongst the mothers is the worst as the custom is for the

mother to eat only after the children and husband have eaten and only if there is food left.

In the un-cleared areas there are also no basic facilities – transport, drinking water etc. - something has to be done for people. There are many children who are not educated because they were displaced and they even go from camp to camp. In the remote areas poverty is the main reason for children not being educated. The eldest child remains to look after the younger children while the parents leave the house to look for work. The children who drop out are often too poor to even go to catch up programs in the camps.

* * *

Outcomes of the Group Discussions

Peace work can be continued through development work. Peace work in isolation will not have any impact. It is also necessary to prioritize and address the needs of people who are most affected. There are many factors that affect the peace process in Sri Lanka. First, there is an unstable political situation. The constitution of Sri Lanka separates people as majorities and minorities and therefore is a barrier to the peace process moving forward. If there is peace prevailing for a while the politicians disrupt the efforts and capture narrow advantages by promoting racism.

The media plays a key role as far as the peace process is concerned. We know that the media in the South and the media in the Northeast distort facts.

The language policy of Sri Lanka is the basic cause for the ethnic crisis. The people's hearts and minds are not in a position to accept peace because they are divided into ethnic groups who do not even respect each other's culture. Their attitude is the problem.

People make use of the war as an opportunity to increase their income and promote their self interest. The distribution of resources is not equal amongst the people and that also causes resentment. There are many Anti-peace groups who are hostile to changes or want revenge. The majority want rule by the majority. Muslims are not included in ISGA proposals and that is another cause of friction.

The conflict continues because of the influence of neighbor countries who are afraid that their own interests will be effected by the peace process. Therefore they are getting involved in it. It is necessary to educate the majority of the impact of war as there is a lack of awareness. There is a need to engage all the three communities in cultural activities, and bring out their ideas about building and sustaining peace. All the NGOs should take peace initiatives. There is a need for a neutral mass media

Politicians, religious leaders, teachers, students especially university students should review their attitudes and support peace. The supporters of the peace process should also engage: politicians, Religious leaders, security forces, artists, Writers, youth groups, state officials, educational institutions, International human rights organizations, Donors (who provide large amounts of aid) and unbiased foreigners to advance peace.

Those engaged in the peace process should use the available resources and seek more to invest in the peace process. These resources include: Human, Cultural, Economic, Educational, Language and Spiritual Resources

If we want to create peace, awareness programs should be conducted at the grassroots levels – about the economic conditions and culture of all communities so everyone gets a good understanding of other people. We must provide opportunities for others to take part in community based religious activities to learn about other religions.

There was no opportunity for people of the south to understand what has taken place amongst the people in the north such as the devastation. We must meet those people to make them aware of our problems – they are surprised by what they learn. The media does not give them this information and they never get an opportunity to understand what has happened in the north.

We must unite the three communities and promote peace and people should be allowed to come out with their ideas and these ideas should reach all the people. I think this kind of activity could bring about great change. The NGOs are playing a prominent role. There are plenty of NGOs doing peace building activities. But nobody knows what each organization is doing – each organization is not aware of each other's work because there is no network. There are many who work in district levels and there should be a network amongst these groups.

They have a direct link with the people but they should take their work to other areas. They are working for the welfare of the people and all peace work should be brought together and they should work in unison. We have to determine who is going to implement the peace agenda? Will the implementation of the peace process be left to religious leaders, armed forces, NGOs and CBOs artists and writers, youth organizations, government and public servants?

People cannot rely on the government and LTTE to move the peace process forward. While the government and LTTE must come forward and carry on the peace process, the civil society too has a responsibility to advance the process. At the district level we have identified many civil society groups working effectively but there are many problems at district levels. A two-way communication between the high political levels and the grass roots is necessary.

Four major proposals are put forward by way of building peace initiatives and reconciliation: define clear objectives for advancing peace; build understanding, eliminate misunderstanding and expose the reality.

Undertake a range of activities that include:

- Building Civil Society structures (NGOs, CBOs, Religious groups, political wings, students organizations, Intellectuals) across the country and linking them together.
- Convening Regular meetings and Special meetings when necessary to clarify any doubts or misunderstandings;
- Promptly correct the wrong messages expressed by the media;
- Keep all parties (i.e. Government and LTTE) engaged in the Peace Process by: informing both parties about the ideas of civil society through the Peace Secretariat.
- Providing relief and rehabilitation to people who are affected by the twenty year war;
- Take initiatives through government institutions, donor agencies to uplift the life standard of affected people;
- Take initiatives to release matters regarding the building of inter- communal understanding, and matters relating to rehabilitation through the electronic media.

List of Participants

Total	District	Name	Designation	Organisation	Nominee
01	Batticaloa	Mr.E.C.Jayaroban	Proj.Coordinator	ZOA	DO
02		Rev.Fr.Sridharan Sylvester	Director	EHED	DO
03		Mr.S.Jeyram	Project Director	DS	GA
04		Sasiharan	FO	CHA BTC	
05	Trincomalee	Mr.J.Hussaideen	Project Director	DRCC	GA
06		Mr.S.Arumainayagam	DS	T&G	GA
07		Mr.M.Sheriff	DS	Kinniya	GA
08		Kalaichelvan	DO	CHA -TCO	
09	Amparai	Mr.A.B.M.Ashar	dist. Planning branch	kachcheri	GA NGO
10		Mr.Senthurajah	President	SWOAD	Con.
11		Mr.S.C.C.Elankooan	Project manager	ZOA	DO
12		Rajamoney	DO	CHA-AMP	
13	Jaffna	Mr.Srisakthivel	President	NGO Council	DO
14		Mr.Sundarampillai	Proj.director	DS	GA
15		Bakeerathan	DO	CHA-Jaf	
16		Mr.C.Pathmanathan	GA		GA
17	Mannar	Mr.I.Francis Croos		Pesalai	DO
18		Mrs.Jesy Ariyaratnam	President	MWDF	DO
19		Mr.Jesuthasan Rajah		MIMISA	DO
20		P.Sinclair	DO	CHA - MNR	
21	Vavuniya	Mrs. V.Ketheeswaran	Pr.Dir.Rehab	Secretariat	DO
22		Mr.Thangarajah Thayana- than		TRO	GA
23		Mr.A.R.Arasakar		RDF	GA
24		Narmatha	DO	CHA -VAU	
25	Puttalam	Mr.Haseem	Prog. Officer	IHO	NGO Con.
26		Mr.Hijaas	Field Officer	CTF	DO
27		Mr.Abdeen	Proj. Officer	RAAF	DO
28		Rahmathullah	DO	CHA	

DO - District Officer (CHA)

GA - Government Agent

About Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA)

CHA is a network association with a membership which represents the resources and work on conflict related areas and issues. It implements projects on behalf of and with its members on peace and development issues, protection of vulnerable groups of people and aims to enhance local capacities by documenting and disseminating knowledge.

CHA aims to achieve greater levels of efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian sector and hence maximizing use of the resources in the sector. It assists in mediation and negotiation among different parties operating in the humanitarian sector to ensure smooth operation of CHA's members and fulfills the role of a catalyst and leader to identify, on behalf of and with the humanitarian sector, new priorities and opportunities.

It provides services to membership through customized information services, capacity building; dissemination of information and strengthening district linkages. It undertakes electronic archiving and maintains a Directory of NGOs. In addition it provides advisory services by responding to requests for advice on project review and planning, provides and facilitates expertise in consultancies.

It serves as a knowledge center, collating, analyzing, documenting and disseminating good quality information essential and timely to the humanitarian sector. It promotes sharing and responsible use of appropriate information and stimulates the development and enhancement of information networks within the humanitarian sector.

It is engaged in advocacy, lobbying, and stimulating policy debate on humanitarian issues and promotes dialogue and confidence building at grass-root level to strengthen peace and reconciliation process through the CHA network.

CHA is committed to maintaining professional standards in the humanitarian sector. It facilitates the development of professional skills of agencies in the humanitarian sector, including the CHA Secretariat, develops and promotes guidelines, standards and principles relevant to the humanitarian sector and initiate and/or support district level participation through development of District Consortia.

CHA believes in the respect of diversity and the promotion and achievement of fundamental rights and freedom, which provides equal opportunities for development for all Sri Lankans and this vision informs its programs and ways of engagement.

About the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

Created in 1995, International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization with member states across all continents. IDEA operates at the interface between governments, research and the international development community to support sustainable democracy worldwide. IDEA works with both new and old democracies helping to develop the institutions and culture of democracy. It operates at international, regional and national levels working in partnership with a range of institutions.

IDEA helps to help countries build capacity to develop, strengthen democratic institutions, provide a forum for dialogue between academics, policy makers and practitioners around the world, synthesize research and field experiences and develop practical tools to help democratic processes. IDEA works to promote transparency, accountability and efficiency in election management and facilitates in-country democracy assessments, monitoring and promotion by local citizens.

IDEA's current areas of activity include a focus on electoral systems and management, political participation, including women in politics, political parties, management and financing, post-conflict democracy building and dialogue, democracy at the local level and democracy indicators and assessment.

IDEA has published many user-friendly handbooks on electoral system design, conflict transformation through the design of democratic institutions and processes and peace building initiatives, strengthening women's political participation and assessment indicators. IDEA maintains electronic data bases on legislation to enhance women's political participation through quotas and is currently developing data bases on political party legislation and on electoral laws.

Membership to IDEA is open to governments and international organizations and there are currently 23 member states and four associate members. IDEA has an international staff based in Stockholm, Sweden and in the field and is managed by a Secretary General, responsible to a Board which has policy oversight and approves the work program and budget. The Board and its Chair are appointed by a Council on which are represented IDEA member states. IDEA is financed through its member states and through complementary funding.