

Institutional capabilities

We recognise that Sri Lanka consists of varying types of communities, religions, cultural and traditional systems; and survivors of conflict, disaster, and the longer disparities generated from persistent poverty, regional disparities and resultant vulnerability. CHA has since its inception in 1997 experience in identifying stakeholders of different sectors, and building and maintaining partnerships. CHA's-prioritises human security for underserved regions and people by directly assisting, representing, advocating, educating and empowering national and local stakeholders and members of communities of concern on issues related to peace, development, and human rights. Our commitment to conflict mitigation, peace and reconciliation is seen from the narrative below.

Allied to this CHA has extensive contacts and engagements have been made with beneficiary groups, government stakeholders, CBOs, I/NGOs, Bilateral and Multilateral Organizations, Academic Institutions and Private Sector organizations. Therefore CHA is institutionally well placed to anchor this action. The Principle staff involved have core competencies in Advisory services on Policies around governance, human security, Advocacy on human rights related themes, the promotion and protection of the rights of minorities and marginalised groups. They have contributed to the Development of educational tools, transfer of knowledge for the promotion and protection of minority communities using national and international mechanism and procedures and worked with the United Nations included submission of information to Special Rapporteurs, Working Group on minorities and Treaty bodies.

Past interventions

Our commitment and efforts to make a positive contribution to the nation's peace agenda can be traced to the year 1999. Our past initiatives have equipped us with the required resources to facilitate activities in consultation with other institutions and individuals in our network. Our peace related efforts included partnership from 2001 -2011 on Peace & Development Programme focused on capacitating groups and individuals at community level, to work for peace through development initiatives; Promotion of Peace building and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka facilitated mainstreaming and promoting local capacities in Peace building through Networking, Advisory Services and Capacity Building with 600 grassroots level organizations in Sri Lanka from 2004- 2009 ; CHA anchored the submissions for the National Framework on Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation, suggesting recommendations and formulating a plan, that could be implemented to build inter – community co-existence through social integration; Peace Audits 2003 and 2006 conducted in 12 districts in Sri Lanka was to raise awareness on creating the environment for peace and conflict resolution at district level. In addition it enabled institutions and activists to develop a practical insight in to the methods of conflict resolution/ mitigation at the grass roots level; Distance Learning Certificate Course on Peace building disseminated peace education in the districts and to enhance and enlarge the Peace building

community who otherwise would not have access or the ability to pursue such training outside their districts provided training to approx. 100 students over 4 years; Engaging in and following up on the LLRC process and advisory services to Government and Heads of Missions based in Sri Lanka.

Specific examples (1999-2014)

- Involved Design of the RRR Framework Process - July 1999, the Government initiated the Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (RRR) Framework process to address these challenges. Its objective is to help strengthen Sri Lanka's capacity by 1) ensuring that the basic needs of people affected by conflict are met; 2) rebuilding productive livelihoods; and 3) facilitating reconciliation across ethnic lines. The process is expected to generate outputs in the form of revised policies, guidelines, strategies and mechanisms providing a common basis and direction for effective support to uprooted populations and communities in affected areas. In its quest for peace-building and reconciliation, the RRR Framework process is part and parcel of the Government's poverty reduction strategy as articulated in the Framework for Poverty Reduction issued in November 2000, and provides material inputs for the ongoing formulation of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The RRR Framework was complementary to the Action Plan developed by the presidential task force for a National Programme on Human Disaster Management, which presents a comprehensive view of the economic and human dimensions of the continuing civil strife and charts a course for reconstituting the physical, social and psychological foundations of society, providing a blueprint for recovery;
- A University of York, UK, PRDU team undertook a review of the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), an NGO coordinating body. The aim of the exercise was to advise on the role that CHA and its membership could play in a post-war Sri Lanka. The team further contributed to a CHA organized workshop on 'The Concepts, Tools and Issues for Recovery and Reconstruction' in Colombo;
- The Peace building Toolkit- A guidebook on Transitional issues for Reconciliation-The goal of the Peace building Toolkit project is to build the capacity and effectiveness of peace building practitioners in Sri Lanka. This initiative gathered and compiled grassroots level experiences of peace building in the form of a toolkit of resource material and case studies;
- SUPPORTING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR PEACE IN SRI LANKA: CREATING CONFLICT-SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Peace and Conflict Assessments

To explore grassroots perspectives on the peace and conflict situation, a field questionnaire was administered in all the selected districts. Nearly 1400 people representing various socio-economic groups responded in this survey. A significant number of key representatives of the economic, security, administrative and social life in the districts (scholars, religious leaders, high ranking officers, university teachers, military/police, etc.) were interviewed in the survey (approx. 20 per district, 240 in total). A majority appreciated the survey and expressed their desire in promoting conflict sensitive work and peace building activities. The discussions were seen as helpful to develop their knowledge and alert them on the subject and issues.

Conflict Sensitivity

In addition to conducting 24 training workshops on conflict sensitivity in 12 districts in Sri Lanka, we also carried out a survey studying the level of integration of conflict sensitive approaches among CHA member organizations implementing post-tsunami reconstruction projects. In the survey information on training and capacity development needs of agencies was also collected. Training and survey helped to develop and maintain a pool of resource persons who could conduct workshops in the future.

Publication and Distribution of the Peace Audit Report

The main objective of Peace Audit 2003 was to improve the quality and impact of conflict transformation/ peace building and peace sustaining strategies and initiatives conducted by the Sri Lankan government, civil administration, international donors, NGOs and other civil society stakeholders.

The 2006 Peace Audit Project titled “Supporting an Enabling Environment for Peace in Sri Lanka: Creating Conflict-Sensitive Development Capacity, provides an understanding of the environment of peace and conflict, focusing on (12) selected districts of Sri Lanka, promoting conflict-sensitivity among humanitarian and development agencies, while enhancing knowledge and functionality of local methods of conflict mitigation/resolution to promote more positive results.

Report in three languages to make it available to a wider audience and to ensure that people in the districts can make use of the report in their language. Six hundred copies in English and 400 copies each in Sinhala and Tamil were printed. The report was also published on the web;

- Forums on:

Reconciliation – the way forward: an assessment of ongoing initiatives, a listing of productive possibilities led to *drafting of Policy on Reconciliation*.

Economic Perspectives on Post-War Reconciliation aimed to foster dialogue in the area of reconciliation and generate interest and commitment towards crucial issues which need to be addressed at a national level to create a platform for collaboration towards achieving the larger aims of accountability, social cohesion and national development.

Perspectives on Post War Reconciliation “Role of the Armed Forces” addressing the loss of personnel in the North and East and those of the South to heal their wounds and create an environment for reconciliation;

- Dialogue on the LLRC Action to discuss the LLRC Action Plan to collate observations and invitees to contribute to its implementation and or ascertain views to be for it to be practically undertaken more effectively;
- Presentation on ‘Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Philosophy, Principles and Processes within Civil Society at XVI Palais Des Nations, Geneva focusing on human rights, accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka;
- Forums on Peace, Reconciliation and Development that brought together eminent practitioners from both the North and South of the country to discuss topics ranging from post war reconciliation to the process of moving forward to becoming a developed nation that embraces the contribution of diverse individuals and groups. Major among these efforts is the opportunity CHA was given to present at the Palais Des Nations in Geneva on the avenues the country as a whole needs to explore to ensure that reconciliation is firmly embedded within development;
- A documentary film “Common Differences” – a film providing a balanced insight to the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. It brought together various stakeholders and enabled a candid discussion on reconciliation with experts in the panel;
- Stakeholder Forum on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)-
CHA continued its dialogue with the Chairman of the LLRC Action Plan Committee and while proposing a contact group of eminent civil society, engage the Action Plan Task Force to exchange notes, to keep confidence levels up and bring a spiritual dimension to the effort. In promoting economic Development in the North by linking Education, Jobs and markets,
- CHA sought the assistance of the Norwegian Ambassador to host a meeting of several commercial and non- profit sector professionals. In parallel to the above, a series of confidential dialogues were hosted with participation of several MPs and the Defence Secretary at the Norwegian Ambassador’s residence;

- National Policy Framework for Social Integration (NPFISI) and Development of Affirmative Action for Citizens Affected by Conflict focused on social integration in Sri Lanka and ended with a recommendation to the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration for an affirmative action policy for citizens affected by conflict;
- Engagement on issues Truth, Accountability and Justice with British Foreign Office, US Department of State, Human Rights Council and Special Mandate holders.

Current focus:

- Improving communication between stakeholders to the national reconciliation process through structured dialogues and related initiatives;
- Promoting human rights education by drawing on common elements of spiritual scriptures of religions in Asia and the International Bill of Rights, by providing education based on common elements of Sacred Scripture and the International Bill of Rights
- A north- south dialogue within SL; enabling minorities and underserved communities opportunity to become an investor and shareholder in the economy ; promotion of investments on soft skills for employment and services; promoting nondiscriminatory and conflict sensitive development practices;
- A north- east dialogue enabling minorities and underserved communities’ opportunity to bring their grievances to the notice of the Tamil speaking politicians for employment and services; promoting advocacy for the government support.
- A national Right to Development Forum and network consisting key government stakeholders and private sector companies drawn from the Top 100 in the country including those providing financial services through information update and meeting periodically to continuously assess value added interventions and responsive actions when needed on the Right to Development of citizens.
- Promoting Sacred scriptures and the inalienable right to freedom of religion and belief - The CHA amongst many civic groups held meetings with key stakeholders including with Special Mandate holder offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration in the context of the National Policy Framework for Social Integration, Muslim Council of Sri Lanka and religious dignitaries in the Congress of Religions to discuss issues at hand. CHA with SEDEC will organize through SEDEC 5 regional sittings with inter religious groups promoting knowledge of the Rabat Plan of Action and also elicit views of participants on how can religious tolerance be promoted AND at a concluding session in Colombo with key religious and inter religious groups reaffirm our belief in religious tolerance using the Rabat Plan of Action while using recommendations below.

- Advocating for Implementing the prohibition of incitement to hatred-In terms of general principles, a clear distinction should be made between three types of expression: expression that constitutes a criminal offence; expression that is not criminally punishable but may justify a civil suit or administrative sanctions; expression that does not give rise to criminal, civil or administrative sanctions but still raises a concern in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.
- Jurisprudence-Criminal sanctions related to unlawful forms of expression should be seen as last resort measures to be only applied in strictly justifiable situations. Civil sanctions and remedies should also be considered, including pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages, along with the right of correction and the right of reply. Administrative sanctions and remedies should also be considered, including those identified and put in force by various professional and regulatory bodies.
- Policies-States should consider creating equality bodies, or enhance this function within national human rights institutions (established in accordance with the Paris Principles), with enlarged competencies in the field of fostering social dialogue but also in relation to accepting complaints about incidents of incitement to hatred.
 - Promoting workings of a credible domestic mechanism addressing Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Human Rights working with Commission on Disappearances, Office of the President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Missions in Colombo.
 - Open Sri Lanka -The Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) organised a conference on the theme “Our Sri Lanka 2025: Engaging Persons of Sri Lanka Origin Overseas”, in February 2015 supported by International Alert, The conference was based around: Contributions of persons of Sri Lankan origin overseas; achievements, challenges and recommendation for further exchanges towards an 'Open Sri Lanka and ': Support by persons of Sri Lankan origin overseas, towards peace supportive development. The CHA is engaged in consultation with the Government of Sri Lanka and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce for a policy enabling “Open Sri Lanka’.