

# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## **Sri Lanka Peace-building Program**

### **PROGRAM ON PEACE-BUILDING AND RIGHTS**

#### Executive Summary

Columbia University's Peace-building and Rights Program seeks to advance post-conflict peace-building in Sri Lanka through (i) dialogue, (ii) education, and (iii) capacity building. Its overall goal is to help Sri Lanka realize its potential by helping address recent and root causes of conflict. Following is a comprehensive review of activities since the inception of Columbia's activities in Sri Lanka.

#### Needs Assessment

David L. Phillips, Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR), visited Sri Lanka, including Jaffna, to assess conditions and conduct field research on attitudes and issues of importance to Sri Lankans, including Tamils. Phillips met with Sri Lankan, U.S., Norwegian and Indian government officials as well as leading Sri Lankan NGOs and academics from the University of Jaffna (March 14 – 19, 2011).

#### Curriculum Development

Danielle Goldberg, Program Coordinator of the Program on Peace-Building and Rights at ISHR and Phillips drafted a *Curriculum Fostering Social Harmony among University Students in Sri Lanka*. The curriculum provides a comprehensive course incorporating theoretical and practical lessons on interpersonal interaction and intergroup understanding. Working with Sri Lanka's Minister for Higher Education S.B. Dissanayake and U.S. Embassy/Colombo, the curriculum was vetted during a series of meetings in Sri Lanka with Ministry of Higher Education and University Grant Commission officials, student counselors and professors from throughout Sri Lanka, university students and civil society (April 3 – 6, 2011). Goldberg and Bonnie Miller ran a Training of Trainers program in Colombo for Sri Lanka's Ministry of Higher Education (July 6–8, 2011). 92 Sri Lankans selected by the Ministry participated. The Ministry implemented a two hour training program on the curriculum in Rantembe on February 25, 2013 as part of its pre-orientation programme (POP) for 1,000 incoming college students from throughout the country. Lecturers trained by Columbia University from the University of Jaffna led the program. Minister Dissanayake, Hon. Lalith Weeratunge (Secretary to the President), and Dr. SJ Navaratne (Secretary/MOHE) participated as chief guests.

Minister Dissanayake, with input from other Ministry of Higher Education officials and the University of Jaffna, requested that the curriculum be adapted into a semester-long course (September 2011). The University of Jaffna agreed to pilot the course, and in March 2012,

Columbia University staff met with administrators, faculty and students in Jaffna to assess the applicability of the curriculum to students' needs. Based on feedback, the course was developed as a two-credit course to take place over 15 two-hour class sessions. Columbia University staff led a Training of Trainers program at the University of Jaffna for 27 lecturers from the Faculties of Science, Management Studies, Commerce, Arts, and Agriculture at the University of Jaffna (June 15- 17, 2012). Plans are underway for the University of Jaffna to implement the curriculum as a two-credit mandatory pass/fail course with approximately 1,500 freshmen in the spring 2013 semester.

Goldberg and Miller also presented the Social Harmony and Conflict Resolution course to vice chancellors or their representatives from the other 15 universities in Sri Lanka (June 13, 2012). The Ministry of Higher Education identified the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Eastern University, Uva Wellassa University and South Eastern University as suitable and interested institutions to adopt the semester-long course.

### *Inter-Faith Dialogue and Curriculum on Social Harmony*

In order to have greater impact with "main civil society," Columbia University has taken steps to adapt the Social Harmony curriculum for Sri Lanka's Buddhist clergy. To this end, Buddhist Scholar Bikkhu Bodhi prepared an anthology interpreting the curriculum based on the Pali Cannon. In February 2012, Dissanayake pledged to submit the Pali Cannon anthology for training young monks at Sri Lanka's 3 Buddhist Seminars. He and Phillips also discussed developing a curriculum on social harmony based on other major religious traditions in Sri Lanka, to be made available in universities throughout Sri Lanka. Phillips also met with Professor P.D. Premasiri, Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Studies at University of Peradeniya. They explored development of a project on "Inter-religious Dialogue for Social Harmony," which would involve two parts: 1) "Workshop on Inter-religious Perspectives on Social Harmony" at the University of Peradeniya and 2) Conference of the Sri Lanka Buddhist Association on the topic.

### Shared History Project

ISHR's Director, Dr. Elazar Barkan, led a Seminar in conjunction with the Pathfinder Foundation (PF) on "Historical Memory as a Tool for Conflict Resolution" in Colombo on July 22, 2011. The seminar was attended by intellectuals, civil society leaders and academics from universities including the University of Jaffna, the University of Sri Jeyawardena and the University of Peradeniya. As a result, PF and ISHR developed a shared history project involving collaborative research, publication, and dissemination of products developed by Sri Lankan working groups on (i) State Building; (ii) Shared Experiences and Suffering during the War; (iii) Peopling of Sri Lanka; and (iv) School Curricula. Each working group (WG) will have 5-10 participants. Shared history products will be developed over 12-18 months followed by proactive efforts to mainstream the findings through television, radio, web platforms, social networking and the visual arts. Phillips met with PF leadership and members of the project's Steering Committee in Colombo September 2011 to discuss a work plan for the Shared History Project.

The first Working Group on State Building was launched in October 2011. Final membership of the Working Group included: Prof. Gamini Keerawella (research coordinator), Dr. Ms. Janaki Jayawardena, Dr. O.G. Dayaratna Banda, Dr. P.V.B. Karunathilake, Prof. S. Sathiyaseelan and Ms. Cader Ferozia (five member research group). To begin, Prof. Keerawella coordinated with the WB members to come to an agreement on the thematic direction of the project. They decided to focus on key factors influencing state-building, including: (i) political representation, (ii) the impact of state policies and actions on different groups, (iii) resource allocation and language policy, and (iv) the past and potential future role of transnational activists, Diaspora and the community. From February 4 – 5, 2011, WB members participated in a two-day brainstorming session to develop detailed outlines for each section and agree on thematic coherence. Phillips met with members of the State-Building Working Group and Pathfinder's Shared History Steering Committee on February 20, 2012 to exchange views on the state and direction of the project. The first drafts of the research papers were ready June 1, 2012 and circulated among team members of the Steering Committee for review. The WB held a brainstorming session June 30 – July 1, 2012 at the Sri Lanka Institution for Development (SLIDA) to discuss/comment on the first draft. WG members then revised the paper accommodating feedback. Given the highly contested issues covered in this research project, group consensus was not expected; however, it aimed to contribute to the ongoing academic/political discourse with strong research backing. After a long research and consultative process, the five final papers with summary versions were completed January 31, 2013. Dissemination of the outcome of the project began February 2013, starting with a one-day stakeholder meeting in Colombo hosted by the History Department of the University of Colombo (February 1, 2013). PF is seeking funding for the publication of the research papers as a book.

The December 1, 2012 Addendum LKA-11/0052 will support a second Working Group on “Shared Experiences and Suffering during the War.” This WB will focus on the suffering and problems that Sri Lankans from different sectors of society have in common, but have failed to share with each other in order to bring subaltern views of the war into the mainstream. It is hoped that this exercise will help create a union of narratives, which would be representative of the masses and the elites. A comparative examination of multiple narratives and perceptions of the violence during the 1987-89 Southern insurrection will also be conducted as part of this exercise, if it can be accommodated within budgetary constraints.

### Humanitarian Dialogue

ISHR, Sewalanka Foundation, and the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies convened a “Dialogue on Addressing Post-Conflict Challenges” in Anuradhapura on September 9-10, 2011. Fifteen persons representing NGOs and INGOs working in Sri Lanka's conflict-affected zones joined the meeting. The discussion focused on progress, problems, and opportunities, identifying the need for a “facilitator” assisting local NGOs and endorsing a clearinghouse of information on early recovery. As a result, the International Rescue Committee and Sewalanka have entered into a partnership agreement, authorized by the Ministry of Defence, to engage in development activities and consider post-conflict reconciliation strategies.

In October 2011, Sewalanka provided a concept paper outlining a strategy to develop a comprehensive, nationwide program on peacebuilding and development to be launched by Sewalanka in partnership with the IRC. Sewalanka executive director Harsha Navaratne met

with leadership of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in New York on November 21, 2011 to review opportunities for collaboration. From January 25 – February 2, 2012, IRC senior staff visited Sri Lanka for meetings with GSL officials and Sewalanka, and to assess field conditions for project activities. IRC submitted a proposal in March 2012 to the Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives' to support IRC programming in Sri Lanka. From February 17 – 20, 2012, Phillips also conducted follow-up discussions with Sewalanka and potential funders in Colombo (U.S.AID, embassies of Norway, Switzerland and Japan).

Bharathi Radhakrishnan, a Columbia University consultant from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, where Phillips is adjunct faculty, traveled to Colombo January 7-11, 2013 to conduct an assessment of the Humanitarian Dialogue, provide recommendations for follow up, and prepare for follow-on activities on women's health for women displaced by conflict. Radhakrishnan consulted with organizations involved in the September 2011 Humanitarian Dialogue on their reconciliation efforts, highlighting three main components of reconciliation that need to be addressed for a cohesive reconciliation to take place in Sri Lanka: (i) the end of the war, (ii) reconciliation within the Tamil community, and (iii) prevention. Respondents emphasized the effectiveness of a bottom-up approach to reconciliation, the need to incorporate reconciliation as a cross-cutting theme in NGO program design and implementation, and the importance of engagement with religious leaders in reconciliation and poverty alleviation as key components to sustainable peace.

### Tamil National Alliance

Phillips first met Tamil National Alliance (TNA) members, M.A. Sumanthiran in Colombo, Suresh Premachandran, S. Daravanapavan and Appathuray Vinayagamooty in Jaffna March 14 – 19, 2011 to discuss the TNA political dialogue with the GSL. They met again September 1 – 3, 2011, at a time when the TNA had agreed to resume political talks with the GSL. As follow-up to these meetings in Colombo and Jaffna, Columbia University offered technical expertise to the TNA and facilitated arrangements for the visit to New York (November 1-3. 2-11) of a TNA delegation comprised of R. Sampanthan, K. (Suresh) Premachandran, and M.A. Sumanthiran for meetings with think-tanks, scholars, and media representatives and senior UN officials. Technical seminars focused on minority language rights, the UN's human rights machinery, and transitional justice issues such as truth and reconciliation commissions, justice and amnesty, and a follow-on mechanism to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). Phillips met with TNA members again in Colombo on February 19, 2012 to further discuss negotiation items (i.e. land issues and local policing) and in December 2012 with diplomats from Bangladesh, Brazil, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, Romania, and South Africa as part of the "Observation of the Progress of National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka."

### Truth and Reconciliation

From February 18 – 21, 2012, Phillips conducted an assessment trip to Sri Lanka. On February 20, 2012, Phillips presented on "Global Truth Telling" to the National Peace Commission. NPC translated the booklet into Tamil and Sinhala and distributed it to public libraries, NGO libraries, parliamentarians, and other interested stakeholders this spring. As a follow-up to this presentation, Columbia engaged Mr. Patrick Burgess, an expert in truth and reconciliation commissions, to participate in discussions and lead a seminar with local civil society leaders, Sri

Lankan university academics and researchers on comparative experiences with truth and reconciliation processes (May 11 – 18, 2012). Burgess visited Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. In-country arrangements were coordinated by NPC. In addition to the seminar, NPC organized consultations with the GSL (e.g., Minister of National Languages and Social Integration Vasaudeva Nanayakkara and policy-makers associated with the Sri Lanka One Text Initiative in Colombo). Meetings were held with politicians (e.g., the Minister of Justice, members of parliament and regional government office holders), opposition figures (e.g., EPDP leader Douglas Devananda), Tamil opposition leaders (e.g. senior TNA leadership), civil society (e.g., NGO activists, journalists, women’s groups and religious figures), and LLRC Commissioners. Burgess prepared a syllabus for more extensive training for civil society and a trip report including a brief analysis of the potential for transitional justice initiatives to be undertaken in Sri Lanka in the current context. At the request of NPC and other stakeholders, Burgess returned in November 2012 to conduct a follow-up two-day training of trainers program on transitional justice issues for NPC.

### *Observation of the Progress of National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka*

Columbia organized an “Observation of the Progress of National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka” with the Government of Japan (GoJ), with assistance from the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL). The goal of this project was to encourage the progress of national reconciliation and reconstruction in Sri Lanka through observation from neutral, objective viewpoints. Phillips and Patrick Burgess joined diplomats from Bangladesh, Brazil, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, Romania, and South Africa in a fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka (December 6-8, 2012). The delegation visited Colombo, Jaffna and Kilinochchi. It interviewed officials from the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL), opposition members of parliament, civil society representatives, religious figures, the Colombo-based business and diplomatic communities, and members of the United Nations (UN) country team. Phillips drafted a Chairman’s report, summarizing the observations and findings of the delegation, which was amended and disseminated by the Government of Japan to UN Members. Diplomats from Government of Japan and the Government of Sri Lanka and Phillips met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to discuss the report. The report highlights progress with reconstruction and the challenge of reconciliation, and suggests next steps, which may assist the stated goals of reconstruction and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. On March 8, 2013, Phillips presented a statement to the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN and UN Member States, drawing from the chairman’s report while expressing his independent views. Given the GSL’s failure to conduct credible domestic investigations of alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law, Phillips called for an independent international investigation of alleged war crimes under the auspices of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) to address allegations.

### Women’s Charter for Peace, Security and Development

ISHR organized the “Sri Lankan Women’s Charter on Peace, Security and Development” in coordination with Leymah Gwobee, 2011 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and Sri Lanka’s Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), an NGO comprised of more than two thousand Sri Lankan women directly affected by the war. Closing the IDP camps signals a new phase in Sri Lanka’s post-war period; however, women in the north and east face evolving resettlement

challenges focused on security and livelihoods. The aim of the project was to enumerate the needs of women in post-war Sri Lanka, give them voice, and facilitate links between women across Sri Lanka.

AWAW Chair Visaka Dharmadasa and her research team conducted surveys on post-war requirements in 10 war-torn districts and held discussions with over 450 women on women's legal gains and their activism for peace and human rights, as well as the critical security, economic and social risks they face. Drawing on their findings, AWAW drafted the "Sri Lankan Women's Charter on Peace, Security and Development" in April 2012, articulating demands of women's movement and providing recommendations to the government and international community. The Agenda was vetted the following month with a leadership cohort of women at a meeting in Colombo. Gwobee, Dharmadasa, philanthropist and film maker Abigail Disney and Sri Lankan parliamentarian Rosy Senanayake participated in a press conference in Colombo August 16, 2012 to launch the Agenda. This was followed by a lunch with Colombo-based women ambassadors. Gbowee, Dharmadasa, Disney, Senanayake and Program Coordinator Danielle Goldberg then traveled to Kandy to meet with women's groups, including a screening of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* with Team 1325, AWAW's network of women activists from all 25 provinces across the country working on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The program culminated in a conference in Kandy on August 17, 2013 with approximately 100 women, at which time Gbowee made a keynote address endorsing the Agenda and AWAW presented it to the Government of Sri Lanka's Minister of Science and Technology. A seminar with the Colombo-based NGO and diplomatic community was also held on August 18, which included remarks by Gbowee. Follow up activities by AWAW have included engagement with police and local authorities in the northern and eastern provinces to build capacities for prevention and protection against sexual and gender based violence. AWAW also presented the Agenda in New York City during the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

### Government Relations

ISHR's work is based on the principles of transparency and consultation. To these ends, it has maintained regular contact with officials from the Government of Sri Lanka both in Colombo and at its Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Phillips has regularly visited Washington to discuss strategies and activities with the U.S. State Department (SCA and DRL) and US Embassy/Colombo.