

Summary Report
TANEBAUM



The Sri Lanka Intervention

THE SRI LANKA INTERVENTION

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Cover Images; clockwise from top right: 1. Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action* Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa | Nigeria (Photo: FLTfilms) 2. Buddhist Bhikkunis Converse with Catholic Sisters in Sri Lanka. Credit: Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (CPBR) - an organization co-founded and directed by *Tanenbaum Peacemaker in Action* Dishani Jayaweera 3. Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* Dishani Jayaweera | Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION:

Tanenbaum regularly facilitates *Peacemakers in Action Network* conversations within its community of religiously motivated grassroots peacebuilders in 26 conflict and post-conflict zones throughout the world. During a recent Network call, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker* Ricardo Esquivia of Colombia questioned the conversion of individual interest into common interest. He asked, “*How do we take the experiences from different countries and different processes and learn something that can be applied within the context of our own countries?*” His question evoked equally thoughtful responses from his fellow *Peacemakers*. The question of transforming individual experiences among peacebuilding practitioners into a commonality is one Tanenbaum seeks to answer. Beyond valuable personal exchanges, Ricardo spoke of the gift of being physically present with others also working in conflict and post-conflict regions. The gift Ricardo spoke of solidifies the bond among the experts, his fellow *Peacemakers*.

Tanenbaum’s Sri Lankan Network Intervention, detailed below, exhibits the unique connection among members of the *Peacemakers in Action Network*, and how the Network can serve as a model to inspire and facilitate regional peacebuilding communities.

The following report briefly examines Sri Lankan history, particularly the shifting ethno-religious demographics experienced during British Rule, and the ramifications of those shifts on contemporary Sri Lankan society. A discussion of current efforts and obstacles to resolve ethno-religious conflict in the region follows. Finally, Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner’s Community of Practice (CoP) framework is introduced and applied to Tanenbaum’s *Peacemakers in Action Network’s* (hereafter referred to as the Network) Intervention in Sri Lanka and *Peacemaker* Dishani Jayaweera’s project to build peace and foster national reconciliation.

The Sri Lanka Intervention

Tamil and Sinhalese Coexistence and Sri Lanka's Colonial Legacy

“Nations have to go on being constantly re-created in the experiences of those who compose them, particularly in the context of decolonization... There is, fundamentally, the work of imagining the nation, of establishing it in the hearts and minds of its members with a rhetoric of identity and belonging, and of endowing it with symbols which display the meaning and nature of the national community and have deep emotional resonance.”¹

Above, Judith M. Brown, biographer of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru describes the complex task of nation-building, particularly within the context of decolonization. Like Indians, Sri Lankans had to (re)imagine and ascribe the content of their national imaginary following independence from British colonial rule. Under Nehru, India attempted to foster an inclusive sense of “Indianess” following the bloodshed and violence of partition's exclusivity project. In contrast, Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority opted for an exclusive definition of nation post-independence, whereby perceived grievances suffered by the Sinhalese under the British could be rectified. Clearly demarcated boundaries separated the Sinhalese (predominately Buddhist) majority from the Tamil (predominately Hindu)



minority (as well as other smaller minority communities). This lost opportunity to instill and foster “Sri-Lankanness,” and Sri Lankan culture paved the way for the country's bloody civil war.

The Sinhalese people currently account for roughly 75% of the country's total population, and share a long history with the Tamil people (roughly 11% of the population)². Historically, the Sinhalese and Tamils coexisted for many centuries. However, waves of European colonizers disturbed the balance that existed on the island. The British came to control Sri Lanka in 1796 and their employment of divisive policies left an imprint that continues to hinder interethnic and interreligious relationships to this day.

Sri Lankans were subjected to the notorious colonial British practice of “*divide and conquer*” or “*divide and rule*” that strengthened communal identities, bringing them to the forefront of the public sphere. In this case, the crown bolstered the Tamil community. The influx of Indian Tamil migrant workers (and non-worker immigrants) who were brought to Sri Lanka by the British in the early 20th Century led to the “marginalization of Buddhism...[and] Tamil overrepresentation in the civil service, armed forces, universities and professional bodies.”³

The Rise of Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism

Weary of their second class status under the British, the Sinhalese consequently grew resentful of the Tamil minority's preferred standing with the imperialists, even regarding the two as allies.⁴ Moreover, Sinhalese Buddhists have been referred to as a “majority with a minority complex” or a “double minority.” That is to say, the Sinhalese majority feels threatened by neighboring India's large Tamil population.

During the 19th Century, Anagarika Dharmapala, an influential nationalist figure, successfully wed Buddhism and Sinhalese nationalism in response to colonial repression. Dharmapala helped initiate a Buddhist revivalism, influencing the *Sangha*, or Buddhist community, to become actively involved in politics. This early mixing of Sinha-

lese religio-ethnic and national political identities, which emerged within the context of the anticolonial struggle, became more virulent post-independence.

Heightened Communalism and Tamil Disenfranchisement

After Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, the Sinhalese majority began nation-building and intensifying Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism. The country's first constitution left minority communities vulnerable, as the Sinhalese Buddhist majority quickly sought to regain power lost during the colonial period, culminating in *Sinhala Only* legislation in 1956. Buddhist monks were actively involved in the political process by this time. Their role, as well as the role of Buddhism, essentially became institutionalized in Sri Lankan political life.⁵

The 1956 social revolution set off sectarian rioting among the Tamils and Sinhalese, commencing the cycle of communal violence. A new constitution in 1972 further exacerbated relations between the two communities. The 1972 constitution symbolically recognized Buddhism's privileged status on the island, provided protections for Sinhalese as the official language (thereby marginalizing Tamils in public life) and renamed the country Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), its Sinhalese name.⁶

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers, violently took the role of the minority's voice. The LTTE fought to secede from Sri Lanka and create independent homelands in northern and eastern provinces, later dropping this demand in favor of regional autonomy.

Agitation between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government began soon after the adoption of the 1972 constitution. The anti-Tamil *Black July Riots* of 1983 left mostly Tamil civilians dead with estimates ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. These riots would trigger the 26-year civil war notorious for its toll on civilians, and would help the LTTE consolidate its power base in the Jaffna Peninsula.

The Radicalization of the Sangha

In response to LTTE violence, the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan government and military targeted both the LTTE and civilian Tamils, who were either sympathetic to the Tamil Tigers' cause or allegedly connected to the LTTE.

LTTE violence solidified Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism and set off competition among nationalistic parties for the pro-Sinhala platform. This resulted in the emergence of military, as opposed to political, solutions to LTTE resistance in the years preceding the defeat of the Tamil Tigers.⁷

Failed International Interventions

Throughout the escalation of violence, the international community condemned both sides of the conflict for committing human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity. India and Norway took bold steps to cease hostilities and broker peace. During the 1980s, India entangled itself in the domestic dispute, stoking resentment among both the Sinhalese and LTTE. Rejected by both sides, India's efforts to quell violence eventually failed. India's intervention would intensify the aforementioned Sinhalese sense of double minority-hood. Moreover, damage to the Sinhalese psyche caused by this intervention would heighten suspicion when it came to future internationally-brokered peace efforts.

Sinhalese nationalists were particularly disturbed by the mediators of the Norwegian Cease Fire Act (CFA) of 2002 who recognized the LTTE as a legitimate actor in the negotiation process. Ultimately, violations of the CFA continued and rampant violence resulted in 3,000 deaths during the ceasefire.

Military Solution to Political Opportunity

In 2009, with increasing public support, the Mahinda Rajapaksa government carried out an unrelenting military offensive against the Tamil separatists and declared an end to the bloody conflict. The absence of a political solution with assurances for minority communities makes the processes of peacebuilding, peacekeeping and national reconciliation challenging.

On January 8, 2015 Maithripala Sirisena was elected President of Sri Lanka, embodying a dramatically different and cooperative spirit from that of his predecessor when it came to national reconciliation. The lack of a political solution amplifies the importance of the Sirisena administration's bridge-building work. The government's efforts are setting the tone for the future of the country, allowing space to recreate the national imaginary and rebuild Sri Lanka post-conflict. Despite the positive shift in the political climate, feelings of hesitancy and insecurity persist *when it comes to reconciliation*.

Although the violence has significantly decreased, extremist undercurrents still exist on both sides, presenting both new challenges and opportunities for inter-faith dialogue-minded religious leaders. The legacy of abuse by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government against civilian populations necessitates the active involvement of civil society in the peace process. Those who had been voiceless during the war must be co-architects of Sri Lanka's future peace.

Tanenbaum's Peacemakers in Action Network as a Community of Practice

As a leader in the growing field of religiously-motivated peacebuilding, Tanenbaum facilitates the *Network*. Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner's Community of Practice (CoP) model provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the value of Tanenbaum's *Network*, and consequently the value of the interventions that Tanenbaum coordinates. The *Network* is both a vital contributor to the evolving field and a practical resource for strengthening the capacity of competent grassroots peacebuilders to promote nonviolence and create cooperative processes, both in conflict and post-conflict zones, like Sri Lanka.

What distinguishes a CoP from informal networks or simpler forms of group organization are its core elements: Domain, Community and Practice. The CoP "has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest," which is further reinforced by "shared competence [that] distin-

guishes members from other people."⁸ Live interactions, rather than just distant or virtual communiques, also differentiate CoPs from other social groupings. Community forms when, in pursuit of shared interest, "members engage in joint activities and discussion, help each other and share information."⁹ The third component of a CoP is its Practice: "members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems - in short, shared practice."¹⁰

Furthermore, as Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner explain, the flexible and informal nature of the CoP allows for its durability, survival, and its advancement as new practitioners join and knowledge resources expand. The value of the *Network* as a functioning CoP is in its ability to foster interaction of diverse members in remote and isolated areas around a common focus on peace in order to create and share practical resources and knowledge.

Self-identification as Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action* and mutual admiration as experienced practitioners in the field bonds the community together in a more vital way than would be accomplished by simply sharing a common cause or purpose. The diversity of the group necessitates the expansion of knowledge as members add contextually relevant information and experiences to the practice. Tanenbaum's *Network* Community of Practice will continue to serve as a dynamic and ever-expanding knowledge resource and exchange for *Peacemakers* well into the future with the continual addition of new award winners to the *Network* CoP.

The *Network* operates as both a vibrant CoP and as a model CoP that can be contextually adapted by the *Peacemakers'* local networks. *Network* interventions and the ability to connect, or transform, distant models with living models of peacebuilding facilitate the processes of sharing and learning that are intrinsic to a CoP. Tanenbaum's interventions not only assist with the formation and consolidation of nascent CoPs, but also reinforce the larger *Peacemakers in Action Network* as an effective CoP. Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers* act as models (distant to living

via interventions) of individual action and as collaborators in interfaith relationship building and action for peace. The Sri Lankan intervention was an opportunity to study the role of the Network CoP in practice, while creating a very real impact on the ground; as a functioning CoP and model CoP for local, field-based practitioners.

Peacemaker Dishani Jayaweera and the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (CPBR)

For the past 14 years, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* Dishani Jayaweera and her husband, Dr. Jayanta Senewirante, have been tirelessly working to foster a broader dialogue for the purpose of furthering peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Dishani and Jayanta founded the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (CPBR) as part of their efforts to promote greater inter/intra-faith and multi-ethnic exchange. CPBR builds an inclusive vision of nation, thereby undermining the exclusive nationalistic and communal identities that have become routinized, indeed institutionalized, in Sri Lankan political and public life.



Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* Dishani Jayaweera | Sri Lanka

Working as facilitators over the years, CPBR has established grassroots groups through consultative processes with women, men, children, youth, elders, and faith leaders across every geographic region of Sri Lanka to facilitate dialogue, empower individuals for self-transformation and improve communities — all with the ultimate purpose of influencing national policies that acknowledge

and respond to the needs of local communities. These efforts culminated in CPBR's historic 2015 People's Forum, where Sri Lankans of every age, gender, faith and ethnicity presented their unique set of recommendations to 1,500 guests, including government bodies, religious leaders, civil society activists, the international community, and community leaders from different regions. These recommendations spanned community, regional, and national levels and focused on six key thematic areas.

Network CoP in Practice

In the months preceding the People's Forum, a newly elected President Maithripala Sirisena galvanized a renewed sense of optimism for Sri Lanka's future. Political space opened, allowing a previously stifled civil society to seize upon the country's historic elections in early 2015 to build a more harmonious and inclusive Sri Lanka.

As alternatives to those espousing hate and division, religious leaders, including Buddhist monks, who seek to build peace through interfaith dialogue, face challenges. Amidst a palpably tense climate religious leaders need to respond to the concerns of their religious institutions, fellow monks, and communities, and gain their trust in order to move forward with peace-building efforts. There is a perception that monks may "...get isolated from the Buddhist community [or] they might get accused of undermining their own religion by working with other religious groups." Leaders operating in more isolated regions may have to contend with even greater resistance to change than those operating in more populous and diverse locales. In this difficult context, some of these leaders benefit from their association with interreligious networks such as Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers In Action Network*.

Understanding the invaluable contributions that faith-based leaders can make to conflict transformation, reconciliation, and peace-building processes, Dishani and CPBR gathered 51 local faith-based leaders for a four-day workshop. Leveraging Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers in Action Network*, Dishani invited fellow *Peacemakers* Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa of Nigeria

to Sri Lanka. The Nigerian duo served as expert trainers and inspirational models of faith-based peacebuilding. The island's Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and secularists were all represented at the workshop.

At a more concrete level, the four-day workshop's purpose was twofold, encompassing both short to medium-term and long-term objectives:

- **Development of a Road Map — a map created by the people of Sri Lanka for imminent reconciliation and for future peace — aimed towards an advocacy campaign to address prioritized issues using strategy and action plans identified and owned by participants (short-term to medium-term);**
- **Training of religious leaders to use their position effectively to influence their hierarchies in favor of open and inclusive peace (long-term).**

During the intervention, Pastor James and Imam Ashafa helped Dishani and her team equip the workshop participants with the strategies and tools necessary to build bridges in Sri Lanka. This collaboration, a tangible outcome of Tanenbaum's Network, was realized due to Dishani's position as a Tanenbaum *Peacemaker*. She strategically seized the opportunity to utilize Living Models — Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's physical presence and live facilitation. As former foes, the duo's partnership ultimately serves as a model of cooperation for faith-based leaders to leverage at the grassroots, local, and national levels in Sri Lanka.

Living Models influence a local Sri Lankan CoP

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa have influenced Sri Lankan peace activists throughout the years as static images in their documentary, *The Imam and the Pastor*, and the subsequent dialogue that it prompted among viewers. Dishani suggests, "even though they [Sri Lankan peace activists] watched the movie, even though they talked about it, *The Imam and the Pastor*, they wanted to hear about it personally." As the Executive Director of CPBR for over a decade, Dishani is a firm believer of modeling,

of giving lectures, and conducting workshops." Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's presence in Sri Lanka provided local activists the opportunity to witness a living example of how religious peacebuilders can overcome differences. Sri Lankan peace activists and organizations had long sought to bring these two practitioners to the island. As Dishani commented following the intervention, "Out of thousands, one group gets this opportunity." She elaborated, "Many people tried to get Imam and Pastor on board in Sri Lanka, but they couldn't...many very big organizations, and when we were able to get them on board everyone was asking us how we made it happen."



Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action* Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa | Nigeria (Photo: FLTfilms)

Dishani's relationship with Pastor James and Imam Ashafa made possible their collaboration — Tanenbaum's Sri Lanka Network intervention — which laid the ground work for the development of a local Sri Lankan CoP: self-identified and competent grassroots peace activists (domain) were brought together at the four-day workshop, allowing remote peace activists to interact in-person (community), share knowledge, experience, strategies, and tools (practice) with guidance from Tanenbaum's *Network* members Pastor James and Imam Ashafa.

Workshop attendees included local faith leaders, civil society leaders, and CPBR staff. The participants already operated with the flexibility and informal leadership that characterizes COPs, and thus collaborated with Pastor James and Imam Ashafa to create a working

plan for the workshop.

The Intervention

Day 1: Exploration and Exchange

The first day of the intervention highlighted the strategic value of having a diversified community with shared purpose and competency (domain). More precisely, a demographically and geographically diverse community of 51 secular and religious leaders, representing the country's Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, came together with united purpose (community). They were together to learn, share, and develop advocacy strategies while training under the guidance of experts in their field. National leaders interacted with local leaders from six of CPBR's interfaith dialogue centers across six different parts of the country. Participants included 43 males and 8 females, ranging in ages from 25 to 60. They represented nine regions: Jaffna, Beliatta, Galle, Anuradhapura, Colombo, Hatton, Kalmunai, Batticola, and Kandy.¹¹

The first day of the workshop tapped into the unique historical and contextual experiences of each individual participant as a peacebuilding practitioner. Participants revealed the rich knowledge that can be gained from such diversity of experience and geography. Pastor James and Imam Ashafa led an interactive discussion of the meaning and purpose of advocacy. The session seamlessly transitioned into smaller group discussions of the advocacy work and strategies that participants utilize in their own geographic regions and unique milieus.

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa highlighted the value of diversity while leveraging the power of the practitioners' shared purpose and competency (domain). Echoing the words of Ricardo Esquivia, Imam Ashafa observed, "The entry point is always looking at what they have in common. ... We use the common — the common bond, the common root, common interest -- they are the tools for engaging such communities." While diversity enriches knowledge, commonality defines the identity of the community, and allows for solidarity despite the informal and fluid structure of the CoP. Dishani revealed:

"... [F]or the participants the most important thing for them was witnessing living models who are very different — different personalities, different approaches, different way of talking...different enemies. Witnessing that they can work together, be together, and work for one purpose together — witnessing that living model that has...that experience is the most life-changing experience."

Day 2: Nigeria's Peace Architecture

The second day emphasized the power of transforming distant models into living models and, in turn, the significance of Community and Practice for a nascent CoP. Day two began with a screening of Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's documentary film, *The Iman and the Pastor*, which had first introduced the two Nigerians, as distant models, to the Sri Lankan faith leaders. Imam Ashafa was incredibly moved to find out that Dishani had the film subtitled in order to unite linguistically divided peace activists. As CPBR staff explain "[S]oon after the film, a lot of people went up to both of them and hugged them, and there were a lot of tears...it was [a] very emotional situation at that time, and they appreciated that. And based on that, they related the story about the peacebuilding work in Nigeria nationally; the strategy used; the lessons learned; and the challenges." Imam Ashafa shared about his interaction with one of the participants:

"There is a man who told me that in the last eight years he has been using [the film] to teach in communities, [including] Hindu women's communities. He's a Muslim Imam. He was so happy to meet in person. He said, 'You are my hero — you — I'm seeing you today.'"

This exchange spoke to the mutually beneficial nature of the event (for models and participants), and reasserted the power of connecting, or transforming, distant to living models.

Distant models became living models for a burgeoning CoP in Sri Lanka. Experienced practitioners provided both inspiration and constructive strategies in person. CPBR staff recounted the significant dual function that the living models served for the community, including:

Inspiration and Emotional Support: “I think that the example of them [Pastor James and Imam Ashafa] working together was quite a strong message to the community; they were two leaders who were fighting with each other and now, you know, the fact that they are working together was a model to the people. I don’t know if this can be said as a strategy but that was very powerful thing that they presented to the community that they wanted to promote the course of peacebuilding in Nigeria.”

Political Engagement Strategy: “One thing that they highlighted was the engagement with authorities in developing trust and building relationship with the government, with people who are in charge. And they told that it was very difficult for them to do it together, from various sectors, and then, they went to ministries and civil society members to build that relationship, and that was the main area.”

Lifting up positive role models: Many Sri Lankan faith leaders hesitate or even fear participating in interfaith-dialogue given the potential for ostracization by their religious institutions and communities. In response, the Q&A session with Tanenbaum’s Nigerian *Peacemakers* created an atmosphere and environment where reconciliation could be accepted as a concrete reality. As one of the living models, Imam Ashafa, suggested, “Identifying role models among people of faith, iconic people within each community...people without blemish and use them in the media chat and people see their role model discussing with the role model of the other. This has been very useful for us. So identifying role models and using them to speak to the community on social issues.” In this case, our models, albeit not directly from the community, profoundly affected workshop participants, especially once embittered rivals, as noted by Dishani:

“I can remember one Hindu and one Muslim were saying like a joke, ‘if one day if me and you could work like them together.’”

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa’s presence was crucial for creating an environment where once divided faith-based leaders could feel comfortable taking the first step towards reconciliation. The context of the workshop

allowed these leaders to be in the physical presence of former rival community leaders. This brought humanity to the “other,” and ultimately an understanding that reconciliation is indeed an achievable goal.

Day 3: Development of Roadmap for Reconciliation

The Sri Lankan CoP operated as a more cohesive unit by day three. The newly formed CoP devoted itself to developing a Roadmap to National Reconciliation to present at the above-mentioned historic 2015 People’s Forum.

From a strategic standpoint, the Roadmap to National Reconciliation was one of the most challenging endeavors that workshop participants tackled. While the development of the Roadmap was a short- to medium-term objective, the goal of said Roadmap is to have long-term impact in creating sustainable peace in the country.

Over an eight-month period, CPBR’s local groups of women, children, elders, legislators, and youth throughout the country generated 2,688 recommendations on how to further peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The workshop participants’ goal was to finalize the recommendations to be presented at the Forum just three weeks later.

The 2,688 recommendations were successfully synthesized into 67 major recommendations in six thematic areas.

The six thematic areas draw attention to the immediate areas that society believes need to be addressed by national leaders if reconciliation is to succeed:

- **Opportunities for healing for women, youth and children affected by war;**
- **Implementing the trilingual policy (fluency in Sinhala, Tamil and English);**
- **Integrating social reconciliation into the formal education system;**
- **Establishing a national interfaith council to promote interfaith culture;**
- **Introducing media policy that respects diversity; and**

- **Introducing constitutional amendments that ensure equality and equity.**

Unrestricted dialogue among participants and guests during the Roadmap development portion of the workshop led to the exchange of many ideas, thus expanding the knowledge and strategy resources (practice) of both the Sri Lankan CoP and the overarching *Peacemakers in Action Network* CoP. Pastor James and Imam Ashafa advised the group on long-term strategy, suggesting that they appoint an Advisory Council¹³ to oversee CPBR's proposed national coalition. This group would ideally consist of diverse stakeholders — grassroots, civil society and government — to further reinforce implementation of the Roadmap.

Impact and Outcomes

Setting the Groundwork for National Reconciliation

The war may have ended, but in the absence of an inclusive political solution, the grievances of many on all sides go unrecognized in Sri Lanka. This holds particularly true for civilians that were systematically targeted by members of their own community and the opposition. Not only must the antagonisms that spurred the onset of the conflict be addressed, but also the crimes committed during the 26 years of hostilities and, in some cases, beyond.

The people's grievances motivated the Sri Lankan *Peacemaker* to initiate processes of healing well in advance of the government's military solution. Sri Lankan faith-based leaders who may have engaged in the divisive politics of the past would benefit from a safe, comforting space to participate in interfaith dialogues that seek to nurture reconciliation and peacebuilding. Dishani and CPBR recognized this need and created local, intra- and inter-faith centers. The Tanenbaum intervention bolstered and expanded the groundwork set in place by Dishani; and the participants took inspiration and encouragement from Pastor James and Imam Ashafa's bond.

As a relatively new Tanenbaum *Peacemaker* (awarded in

2012), Dishani successfully leveraged the *Peacemakers in Action Network* as a CoP. With the *Network's* help, Dishani provided grassroots Sri Lankan practitioners with models of organization and action. The intervention also provided hope to Sri Lankans.

The Roadmap to National Reconciliation

In terms of short to medium-term objectives, the intervention facilitated the Roadmap's development for the then forthcoming 2015 People's Forum, which, as Dishani describes, was "an historic and unprecedented moment for Sri Lanka."

The intervention used civil society space to successfully bridge the gap between national civil society leadership and grassroots leadership.

Together, they developed the thematic areas to present to the People's Forum.



Buddhist Bhikkunis Converse with Catholic Sisters in Sri Lanka. Credit: Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (CPBR) - an organization co-founded and directed by Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* Dishani Jayaweera

A Sri Lankan Community of Practice

The work of rebuilding post-conflict Sri Lanka, is far from over. However, newfound resources, tools, strategies, and models of action — i.e. practice — are available for a community of once isolated strangers who nonetheless share common purpose (domain). Tanenbaum's Sri Lankan Intervention successfully mobilized a nascent Commu-

nity of Practice, which Tanenbaum *Peacemaker*, Dishani Jayaweera, had cultivated for years.

For the Nigerian *Peacemakers*, they took with them Dishani's highly innovative [recommendation process model](#) which they found more authentic than traditional recommendation processes. They hope the model can be shared with a larger audience.

Conclusion

Tanenbaum's Interventions offer local and remote peacebuilders tangible and intangible support, capacity-building, and consequently, contribute to the overarching field of peacebuilding.

Over a four-day period in Sri Lanka, individual experiences and a shared goal became the basis for commonality and bonding. Nigerian peacebuilders brought their own processes of peacebuilding to the Sri Lankan context; and in turn, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James took with them new insights on how to integrate the local voice, via Dishani's recommendation process, to peacebuilding work in their homeland. Once-hesitant faith-based leaders could find comfort in working with other communities, inspired by the Pastor and Imam's example.

Tanenbaum's Sri Lankan Intervention is an example of the *Peacemakers in Action Network's* value as a Community of Practice. The Intervention reveals the Network's unique ability to nurture and help develop nascent CoPs, helping create a larger web of peacebuilding CoPs globally. Models of organization and models of action for adoption are invaluable to isolated peacebuilding practitioners. These models provide *peacemakers* operating in dangerous, low-resource, and poorly supported conflict zones with concrete resources and emotional support. Dishani said it best:

"Nobody can bring the energy they [Pastor James and Imam Ashafa] brought than those who are sharing life together...sharing what they have done together and what they have gone through."

Postscript¹⁴

The overall intervention in Sri Lanka detailed above is obviously not an end in itself. It was an important juncture in the peace and reconciliation work of CPBR and a significant contribution to on-going peace and reconciliation work in Sri Lanka in general.

The new government that came to power at the beginning of 2015 has been able to set up several institutional mechanisms to move forward with reconciliation work both at national and regional levels.

The two key institutions in this regard include (but are not limited to) a newly established Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) headed by the former President, Ms. Chandrika Bandaranayke Kumaratunga, and a Ministry of National Co-existence, Dialogue and Official Languages. CPBR is currently in a partnership with ONUR, and looks forward to entering into a new partnership with the other new Ministry as well.

The process initiated through the development of the road map is now underway and a National Coalition is being created to work on the six thematic areas mentioned above, comprising stakeholders at the policy, civil society and grassroots levels.

This initiative is expected to address a long-felt need, as it will bring community recommendations on reconciliation to the national level for their implementation. In this way, community voices will be heard in a tangible manner through a program of action at the national level. This reconciliation effort will ensure that aspirations of diverse communities at the grassroots are presented and realized through specific actions taken to address several key reconciliation issues.

The overall goal of the program is to ensure that the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is promoted and enhanced through a specific advocacy program of policy change and policy implementation at the national level. While the goals of this program are to be achieved in several phases, the following specific objectives have been

identified for the first, six-month phase, which is scheduled to begin at the end of 2016.

- **Establish and operate a national Coalition on reconciliation comprising stakeholders from the national and grassroots levels to contribute to national reconciliation in Sri Lanka**
- **Develop in a participatory process and present to policy makers plans for reconciliation interventions in relation to six thematic areas so that they begin to be implemented.**

This initiative's key theory of change is premised on the fact that: IF a concerted and combined advocacy program is designed and implemented by both grassroots and national level stakeholders for promoting reconciliation in Sri Lanka, THEN policy change with regard to specific reconciliation interventions will occur resulting in tangible positive changes at both the national and grassroots levels.

The reconciliation work, especially at the national level, is currently gathering momentum with the road map development process that was initiated in the joint collaboration of CPBR and Tanenbaum.

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