

Outreach Unit 2007-2009

Centre for Policy Alternatives

*Awareness
-dialogue-
democracy*

**our
mandate:**
complementing
CPA-initiated
interventions by
spreading
awareness
among citizens to
facilitate an
informed public
dialogue
on relevant
issues towards
an overall goal of
peace,
democracy
and good
governance

WHO WE ARE

CPA's Outreach Unit officially commenced operations in January 2007 with an **Awareness Raising Program on Local Governance**. Prior to the formation of the Outreach Unit, the core team members of this Unit, however, have had the experience of working in CPA's Peace and Conflict Analysis Unit for almost five years.

Outreach Unit strives to increase awareness and understanding of the fundamental convictions held by CPA on peace, democracy and good governance, among the Public and particularly among the Rural Stakeholders with a particular emphasis on youth and women's groups.



STRENGTHS

The Unit has an extensive network of contacts among NGOs, CBOs, Youth Organizations and Local Authorities. The Outreach Unit has the advantage of support and co-operation from the other units of the CPA as well as the widespread recognition of CPA's credibility and performance since its inception. Through CPA a solid donor base of financial and resource support has been established and stable INGO linkages maintained which help in the drawing of expertise and information.

Among its major strengths is a base of trained, experienced & dedicated staff, resource personnel and a contact base of consultants who are established experts in their relevant subject areas.

solid networking

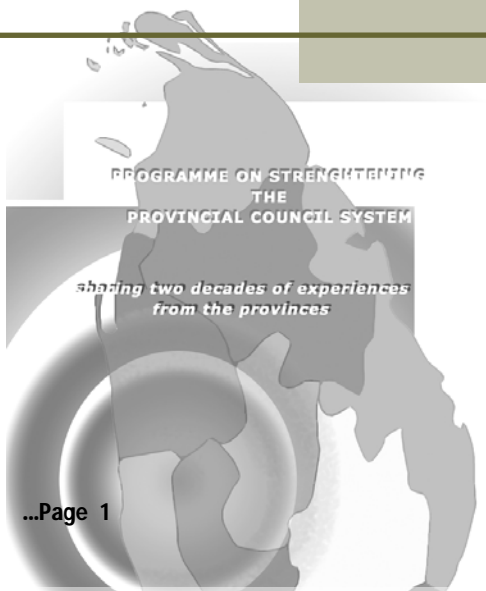
In the course of the last five years, programmes initiated by Outreach Unit (previously a part of the Conflict and Peace Analysis Unit of the CPA) have resulted in the building up of substantial contact networks in the Rural areas as well as in Policy Formulation spheres. For example the recent Inter University and Inter Community Student Exchange Programmes and

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WHAT WE DO



the Programme on Good Governance in Local Authorities led to very useful communication channels built between the Unit and the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Local Governance; University Lecturers & Academics; Education Officials; Community Based Organisations; Provincial Journalists Organisations and Media representatives; Local Authority representatives; and Partner Civil Society Organisations. Periodical publications of the Outreach Unit, such as, Peace Monitor reach up to 25,000 libraries in Schools, Pirivenas, Churches and Media Institutions around the country.

working with
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

understanding all levels of public sector officialdom

Producing
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

reader friendly awareness raising publications

maintaining
STRATEGIC NETWORKS

THE ESSENTIAL LINK

Between rural stakeholders and central policy and decision makers.

in detail

- Awareness Raising Workshops for Youth, Provincial Council Members, Secretaries and Local Authority (LA) Officials, Representatives and Community Leaders.
- Production and Distribution of Periodicals and one-off Publications
- Creation and maintenance of strategic networks e.g. CSO, NGOs, Schools and University contacts, Provincial Council and Local Authority contacts as well as encouraging them to maintain inter community linkages with each other
- Functioning as a communication intermediary between rural stakeholders and central policy and decision makers.

SOME PROGRAMMES

Awareness Raising on Federalism 2005-2006
Documentary on the Ethnic Conflict 2006
Inter Community Student Exchange Series 2006
Inter University Debate Series 2006-2007
Transparent Accountable Local Governance Programme 2007
Provincial Needs Analysis 2008

Provincial Needs Assessment 2008

–working with the 13th Amendment

Outreach Unit worked on two parallel programmes on the theme of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, Provincial Councils and Devolution of Power, during the period March –May 2008. This programme was supported by Development Alternatives Inc through USAID,

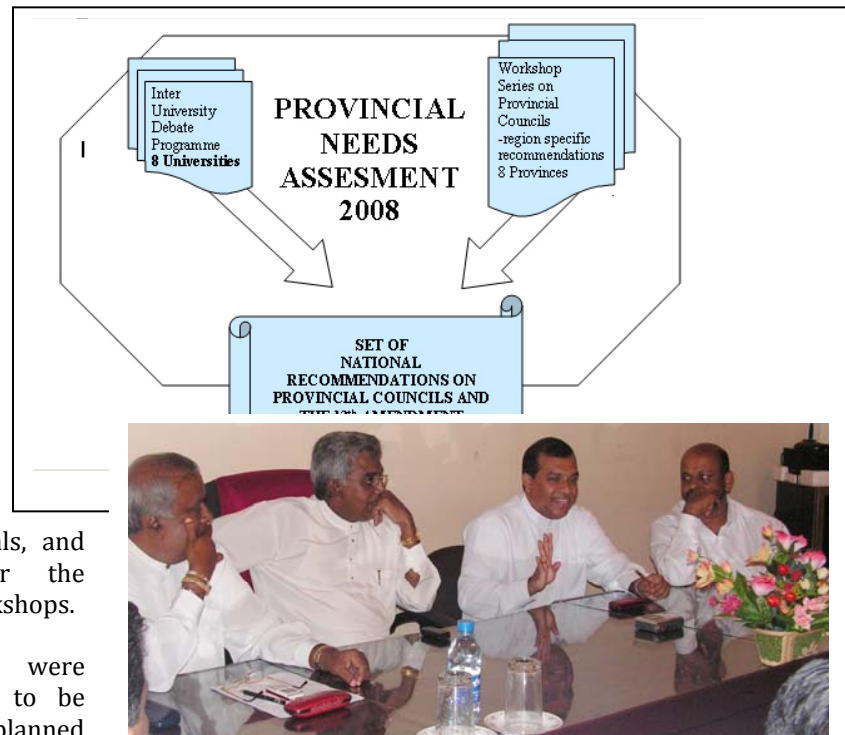
A preliminary round of One Day Regional Meetings was held at each of the Provincial Council auditoriums with the attendance of the Chairman, Chief Ministers, Provincial Ministers, Chief Secretaries and when possible of the Governor, with the purpose of outlining the concept of this programme, garnering support and participation of Provincial Council officials, and clarifying logistics for the proposed residential workshops.

Participant suggestions were gathered on the areas to be addressed at the planned workshops. This was followed by a series of in depth Three Day Regional Workshops on Strengthening the Provincial Council Process.

Resource persons included Rohan Edrisinha, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Colombo

University and Head of the Legal and Constitutional Unit; S.G Punchihewa, Attorney-at-Law, National Trainer and Author; Ashoka Gunewardena, Chairman, Finance Commission, among others.

The residential workshops aimed to collect and document suggestions and experiences,



success stories and challenges faced by participant Provincial Council personnel which would contribute to a final set of recommendations towards Provincial Council Reform.

The final report based on a set of recommendations reached at these workshops were published and presented to all concerned at the National Conference on Provincial Councils held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference hall (BMICH) on the 28th May 2008.

Documentary on the Ethnic Problem –Citizen Voices from the War Zone

Aside from the main aim of giving voice to the people most affected by the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka, this Documentary is intended to be used as resource material in future workshops on conflict resolution studies and as a reference for international partners in the field of Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies.

In a ground breaking collaboration between some of the country's leading Creative professionals and expert academics in Conflict Studies, ably complimented by consultative advice from leading media and civil society personalities, this is compelling use of the documentary media, focusing on the ethnic problem to bring the cause in question to the attention of the viewer.



Two premier Sri Lankan artists will use this media– in all three languages – to produce a brief and easily understandable chronology of events leading to, and an analysis of, the current conflict situation. The film is to be scripted so as to awaken sympathetic attention to the situation by a society of people who tolerate diversity and help mediate to bring out a political solution. The concept of Federalism is to be incorporated in to the proposed solution.

The first phase of the Documentary is complete as of October 2007, months of extensive field visits have resulted in a collection of community opinions on the effect of War, and possible negotiated solutions, human stories and comments and Script Writer Tilak Jayaratne has produced a 150 page script which is being translated to English and Tamil. Director Dharmasiri Bandaranaike is currently working on the Story Board.

“Wars create stories of forgetting and remembering, on a personal and a national level. Certainly, the events of war affect all life narratives. Some war memories become cultural myths, uniting the nation; or widening existing gaps and fissures. Some personal and intimate memories remain in the quiet. It is these that we sought to bring out”.- scriptwriter Tilak Jayaratne



Research Objective:
To collect community opinions and views on the root causes of the ethnic conflict, the effects of War, and possible solutions.

Inter Community Student Programmes

-working with future decision makers

Inter University Debate Series

This project involves interaction with Lecturers and university students, intellectuals and the interested public, and encourages the participation of young academics, who are the future decision makers, in open debate in the selected subject areas. The objectives are to provide a forum for discussion on possible alternatives leading to a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.

In 2006 The debate series drew the participation of students of Sociology, Political Science, Economics and Mass Communications. The organizers believe that this is an important step in ensuring that future policy makers of Sri Lanka are sensitized to values of democracy, human rights and tolerance of diversity. In 2007 a debate series was held on Democracy and Good Governance The next series held in 2008 was on the subject of Power Sharing and the 13th Amendment



Media given unlimited freedom – Secy., Media Ministry

by Cyril Wimalasurendre
KANDY — Media in Sri Lanka has been granted unlimited freedom. The government has not imposed any limitations or controls, Media Ministry Secretary B. Ganegala said the inauguration of a media workshop for university students in Kandy on Friday (20).
The workshop titled Media and Mass Communication was organised by the Centre for Policy Alternatives. The venue was Hotel Tourmalene, Kandy.
Undergraduates of at least 10 univer-

print or electronic media. The media was so disciplined and respected ethics, the Ministry Secretary said.
But, he said the same principle and ethics did not apply to the victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka.
Dead bodies and deformed dead bodies of tsunami victims were shown in the electronic media worldwide continuously Ganegala said.
The same media institutions acted in two different manners, he said.
There are at least ten states media



Inter Community Student Exchange Series

This series was set up with the objective of promoting inter-communal tolerance, appreciation of diversity & “peace culture” among teachers and students in schools island-wide. In fulfillment of the broad objective of the programme which is to foster inter-community friendship and understanding among the younger generation, activities such as philosophical debates, joint art and culture programmes and a periodical inter -school newsletter were planned. The results of the Student Exchange Series have been extremely heartening and show a significant change in attitudes. This program which attracted wide media coverage, initially involved the participation of 45 schools in 15 districts. It is planned to increase this number bringing the total involvement to 300 schools.



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Transparent Accountable Local Governance – Better Governance at the Local Level

This project involves interaction with Local Authorities from all parts of the island including 11 from the North and East. The objective was to improve co ordination and cooperation between different tiers of LA personnel and Civil Society; and increasing people's participation in Local Governance by emphasis on Transparency and Accountability. This was reached by carrying out

- Meetings with relevant personnel in Local Authorities, including Representatives/officials
- Meetings with leaders of Civil Society organizations and Community Based Organizations
- Combined meetings with three tiers of leaders
- Sensitization on Good governance and the requirement for Transparency/ Accountability
- Discussion of Past Experiences / Formulation of Joint Action Plans with participation of both Officials and Representatives and setting of Goals and Responsible officials
- Implementation of Action Plans
- Publications on Local Governance / Guidebook /Good Governance Newsletters etc
- Subsidiary matters such as setting down required By-Laws
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Approximately 200 1 day Meetings with CSOs and CBOs were held around the country as well as ten 3 day meetings for Representatives and Officials, and 20 Joint Combined Meetings for both Officials and Civil Society leaders resulting in raised awareness on the requirement for incorporation of Good Governance in the work of Local Authorities as well as the methods for same.

Following on the experience from the TALG programme, Outreach Unit also provided training on behalf of People in Need(PIN) in partnership with German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) for participants from Kinnya Pradeshya Sabha and Urban Council.

Some challenges faced

The main challenge to the work of the Unit is its reliance on project based funding. This sometimes results in the inability to meet the expectations of partners / stakeholders. Some projects are unavoidably time-overlapped, resulting in serious pressure on staff, which may affect productivity. At times of pressure technical support and administrative staff are sometimes not available to assist.

In some circles negative attitudes about pro-peace civil society organisations and a definite misunderstanding about the Federal Concept result in hostility towards us and clearly a threat to our work.

Finally, practical security issues we face in our work in the North and East and possible State interference in our activities is also a challenge to smooth functioning of our programmes.

FEDERALISM AWARENESS RAISING

-Debunking the Myths, clearing misunderstandings

The main objective here is creating an awareness and understanding of the concept of federalism among the local communities. Training of 20 Trainers was carried out in Aug 2005 and 147 district wise workshops held to educate people on application of the Federal concept and clarify erroneous interpretations of the concept, putting it across as a feasible solution to the ethnic problem: a method for a peaceful negotiated solution. Participants were selected from a base of CBO members, teachers, religious leaders, student leaders, & community leaders who have expressed their interest. The final symposium “the Future of Sri Lanka and the Federal Idea” was held on the 6th February 2006 at the BMICH, Colombo and saw an attendance of over a thousand participants from all over the island. Of note was the fact that this was the largest ever such gathering in the country discussing the theme of a Federal Solution.



The Programme to 2006 involved a total of 40 Trainers and a planned 320 workshops island-wide. For 2007 we hope to be able to train a further 60 Trainers and through 800 further workshops bring the total number involved to 20,000. This will be in 100 selected Divisional Secretariats. The figures for 2008 are planned to expand to 200 trainers and final involvement of a total of 40,000 persons.

The goal:

- Introducing communities to the concept of Federalism,
- Educating people on its applications, and clarification of erroneous interpretations of the concept, through 144 Awareness Raising Workshops conducted in conjunction with grassroots partner organisations.
- Putting federalism across as a feasible solution to the ethnic problem: a method for a peaceful negotiated solution.
- Creating a “Federalism sensitive” community, through dialogue and debate



- Comparative analysis of the applications of these principles in international situations- for e.g.- demonstration of the workings of Federal solutions to such problems in other countries. Emphasizing the historical adaptability of this idea to localised situations.

- Explanation of the dynamism of this concept according to the requirements of different peoples, in varied backgrounds.

- Creating an awareness and understanding of the concept among the local communities with the objective of finally building up a “federal society”

SHARING LESSONS LEARNT



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A number of publications originated from Outreach Unit beginning with compilations edited by Co-ordinator Lionel Guruge, subsequently amply assisted by Unit Staff.

As a rule these publications aim to be relevant, topical and very clear avoiding jargon and over-technical language so that the objective of reaching its intended audience is achieved. Through its regular periodicals like Sama Vimarshi and Samadana Nokku, Outreach Unit maintains effective communication channels with upto 20,000 contacts island-wide, including schools, universities, local authorities, provincial councils, religious institutions, community organisations and academia.

SOME PUBLICATIONS

- Ethnic Problem and its Solutions
- The Ethnic Conflict and the Responsibilities of Ethnic Minorities;
- Devolution of Power; Evolution of the Federal Concept in Sri Lanka;
- Buddhism and Conflict Resolution;
- Local Governance; Regional Government & Roles and Responsibilities of their Representatives;
- Local Government Institutions;
- Regional Governance, Aims, Origin and Procedures;
- Local Governance and your right to information;
- Strengthening the Provincial Council System;
- Power Sharing, the Federal Idea and Sri Lanka; etc.
- LEXICON on the Federal Idea

