

STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SARVODAYA SHANTHI SENNA PEACE PROJECT 2006-2009



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***Strategic Review of the Inter-Religious Peace Project in Sri Lanka
Implemented by Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena - 2006-2009***

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Preface

This report presents the findings of the survey conducted on the performance of Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena peace project from 22 May to 29 May 2009. The project has been receiving a financial support from the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) since 2006.

The NCA mandated the study with following two main objectives:

1. Assess the relevance and outcomes as well as to provide information, lessons learned and best practices from the project since 2006
2. Focus on the added value for both NCA and Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena partnership and hereunder how the NCA-Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena partnership can be strengthened around fund raising plans and strategic partnership with other donors

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROGRAMME

The Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena-NCA Inter-Religious Peace Project which is in force since 2006 has the following four main components:

(a). Inter-Religious Leaders' Dialogues –

The core activities included were the dialogue participated by the religious dignitaries at the district level to understand the social issues and trends against the peaceful coexistence of the people in the area; the formation of inter-religious Council for undertaking the activities to deal with the issues identified; preparation of a policy declaration for the community and participation in district and national level religious conferences.

(b). The Inter-Religious Youth Exchange Camps –

The core activities included were youth staying with host families for three days; flag hoisting and oath taking ceremony, religious preaching, a dialogue conducted by a facilitator, a Shramadana (gift of labour) programme for a community work in the host village, integrative meetings with the villagers; interactive group activities among the participant youths such as meeting, singing, dancing and sports, a cultural event and a farewell to the village and the host families.

(c). The Inter-Religious Cultural Camps –

The core activities included were conducting lectures, dialogues and group activities by the youths facilitated by an expert or a religious leader selected from each religion. The objective of the camp was to provide a practical opportunity for the youth to understand the cultural values attached to each religion in the country.

(d). A Short Story and an Essay Competition - conducted in 2007 and 2008 with the participation of by youths belonged to all religions.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1. The NCA project was commenced in 2006 when the talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the LTTE collapsed and the GOSL was moving towards adopting a containment policy towards the LTTE. In the second and the third year the project was conducted in an atmosphere which was not so favorable for peace activities in the villages as the Sri Lankan security forces were intensifying their military campaign against the LTTE.
2. Most notable feature in the environment was a section of the Sri Lankan media had been engaging in an intense campaign highlighting the certainty of military solution to the ethnic problem giving the impression that the people-based peace activities were obstructing the military campaign against the LTTE.
3. In this context the project implementation became a nerve testing exercise for the organizers as the emerging environment was not favorable for outdoor peace activities. Both the leadership of organization and the grass-root level leaders had to cope with several security issues, especially in organizing the youth camps in villages.
4. Therefore the holding of a youth camp which included activities such as arranging host families for the youth of other communities in the villages for three nights, organizing several outdoor events such as sports activities, cultural events, meetings with village people and a Shramadana activity to undertake community work was a challenging task.
5. We have noticed that the local and village level organizers had overcome most of these security related local issues independently and addressed the concerns of the villages. Such measures as the participation of village level religious leaders and the village elite as the organizers of Youth Camps, pre-camp meeting with the village leaders to organize the Shramadana activity and explain the objectives of the programme have been adopted.

6. In this regard the longevity of Sarvodaya society in the village and its relationship with the community also played as plus factors. The organizers demonstrated a tremendous dynamism in dealing with these issues though they were benefitted from the image of Sarvodaya organization.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS' DIALOGUE PROGRAMME

7. Organizing religious leaders belonged to different religions to make an intervention in the social space regionally and nationally is a significant step as the ethnic hatred and justification of war situation is continuously promoted by the political entrepreneurs through media.
8. The religious forums helped Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena to create certain national and district events directly addressing the social, cultural, economic and political issues that promoted culture of violence, communalism and religious conflicts.
9. The foremost achievement of the religious dialogue programme is Shanthi Sena establishing a permanent relationship with the religious dignitaries to keep them as reserves for their future activities.

YOUTH CAMP PROGRAMME

10. The most effective and powerful element in the Shanthi Sena inter-religious peace project is the Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Cultural Camps conducted in the selected villages. It not only brings the youths from different ethnic and religious backgrounds together but also introduces themselves to a rural community which is different from ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations.
11. The host family concept and the Shramadana programmes are very effective integrative tools as they could create a lasting impact on the villagers, families and the participant youths.

12. The Shramadana work gave an opportunity for the youths to help rural communities and to understand their livelihood issues that existed in different parts of the country. It enabled the young people who grown up in an environment of armed conflict for the last twenty five years and isolated from their own cultural environment to make a constructive engagement with the communities across the ethnic divide.
13. The multi-cultural or multi-religious character of the participant youths in the Shramadana programme always created a notable impact on the villages. The village communities were very pleased to see a youth brigade constituted with young people belonged to different communities working for the betterment of their village.
14. Given the restrictive environment created for the ordinary people to exercise their right to free movement the youth camp provided an opportunity to the communities to interact with young people from another area and community with a righteous purpose.
15. The relationship established by the host families and the youths was the most important visible feature in the youth camp process. Every camp reported a very emotional farewell between host families and the visiting youths.
16. It seems that the youth camp concept of Shanthi Sena has been using carefully the good human natures that exist among the rural communities to promote culture of peace among the communities.
17. The camp programme has proved that the promotion of a culture of peace is very effectively done through interactive activities involving the day-to-day life of the village community and their individual families.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SHANTI SENA & NCA

18. Regarding the continuation of partnership between the Sarvodaya and NCA the following points are highlighted:

(i). The Sarvodaya infrastructure and the commitment of its cadres (both paid and voluntary) is an asset to any international organization which looks for a strategic partner in Sri Lanka for rural development, peace-building and national reconciliation.

(ii). At present there is a great need to have more civil society oriented programmes for national reconciliation in Sri Lanka. In this context the Government of Sri Lanka has a great responsibility in facilitating a space for the civil society. The real test of government's commitment for implementing policies and programmes on national reconciliation cannot be taken place until the end of current electioneering process and it is very likely that it will not end until the first quarter of 2010.

(iii). Both Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena have now commenced internal discussions on their strategic plans for the next five year period. Sarvodaya has been developing a new business model in the light of extension of state apparatus into the villages through poverty alleviation and community development programmes and emerging new global policy measures on environment, human rights and gender equality.

(vi). The Shanthi Sena Strategic plan for 2010 – 2015 envisages to undertake programmes such as peace education and conflict settlement training programme, establishment of Development Centres for the promotion of coexistence, organization of cultural trips and conferences, holding of cultural and sport festivals, youth exchange programmes, programmes for promotion of peace, Inter-Religious Dialogues, Networking with parallel organizations, Awareness programmes for language education, environmental and community health programmes, leadership training programmes, formation of voluntary teams to engage in disaster management and advocacy movement for policy intervention.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRESENT PROJECT

19. The study identified the following strengths and weaknesses in the project implementation through a SWOT analysis:

Strengths

(i). The Youth Camp component of the project is an effective tool in mobilizing the youths to promote culture of peace among the communities.

(ii). The Shramadana activity promotes voluntarism, gender equality, coexistence, environmental concerns, organization and discipline among the youths. This is a very effective tool in creating attitudinal changes among the people and the youth.

(iii). Shanthi Sena has built a balanced participation between the two sexes at the field level programmes.

(iv). The youth programme has moved to different parts of the country, especially to the Northern and Eastern Provinces where more voluntary peace building work is required in future.

(v). So far the youth programme has not created a controversy or invited protest in the host villages.

(vi). The inter-religious district events have brought together religious dignitaries and established some local monitoring team to intervene in the civil commotions.

(vii). The religious dignitaries have developed a strong bond with the programme and thereby are ready to participate in national and regional events created by Shanthi Sena.

(viii). The availability of religious dignitaries to participate and support the youth camp programme and sometimes as the organizers of such programmes.

(ix). Shanthi Sena and its cadres have developed skills to conduct a programme of this nature effectively adapting to the different conditions and changing situations.

Weaknesses

(i). Inadequate attention paid to undertake an objective evaluation by the staff themselves to record the lessons learned from the Youth Camp or Inter-Religious Dialogue or to submit a report with an objective assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the district organizers.

(ii). Non-conducting of a need assessment of the participants in the youth camps on the first day in order to make necessary and possible adjustments in the programme agenda.

(iii). No proper attention was paid to take continued follow-up action after the completion of Youth Camp or Inter-Religious Dialogue in the project.

(iv). Insufficient attention paid to net-working of Shanthi Sena working groups in villages in order to provide them with a work agenda for functioning in their environment and to recruit new members.

(v). Insufficient attention paid to sustain the community work completed through Shrama Dana.

(vi). Insufficient attention paid to identify new components that could be incorporated to the programme in the end of year without changing the existing project mandate.

(vii). Inadequate attention paid to share the experience of Youth Camps and Shramadana with the villagers and youth groups.

(viii). Insufficient attention paid to have regular meetings or discussions with the religious leaders who have participated in the programme.

(viii). Inadequate attention paid to identify second round of activities to utilize the youths and religious leaders participated in the programme to create more national and regional events.

(ix). Non-consideration of anchoring the programme in selected villages with second and third rounds of youth and community activities – programme is looked like a jumble of several activities that do not have inter-connected programmes and net-working for the participant organizations.

(x). The programme has not adequately focused on the youth in the urban areas where the youth is more aggressive and vulnerable to issues related to inter-communal and inter-religious competitions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

About the strategic partnership between NCA & Shanthi Sena

1. Regarding the continuation of strategic partnership with Shanthi Sena, NCA should assess the emerging new situation after the end of war in the North and the East recognizing the fact that the communities in Sri Lanka need time to heal the wounds of twenty five year war which has affected the social fabrics of cultural and religious communities thereby building a larger Sri Lankan identity.
2. If the NCA would be in a position to extend the current strategic partnership with Sarvodaya it is prudent that NCA should enter into a dialogue with the Sarvodaya national leadership to identify the possible areas that could be supported by the NCA as Sarvodaya national leadership has already identified the need of continuation of dialogue among the communities for the development of shared visioning for political, economic and social reforms in their new strategy: “weaving peace from the bottom up”.
3. Although the proposed strategic plan of Shanthi Sena has identified youth camps and religious dialogues as components of its future activities Shanthi Sena strategic plan

must be carefully evaluated to develop a new project proposal focusing on national reconciliation.

About the ongoing project

1. NCA must pay attention to the weaknesses noted in the SWOT analysis. We have noted several weaknesses at the micro level project implementation. They include inadequate attention paid to undertake an objective evaluation on the activities conducted; weak reporting and record maintenance; lack of attention to take continued follow-up action; insufficient attention paid to identify new components and non-consideration of anchoring the programme in selected villages.
2. These weaknesses could have been avoided if the NCA and Shanthi Sena conducted timely evaluations at least bi-annually to review the progress of the project in terms of fund disbursement and projected outputs. We noticed that the project design itself silent on this important requirement.
3. The NCA can play a role in helping the Shanthi Sena to improve its project implementation mechanism and incorporate new activities related to national reconciliation.
4. In the coming months the youth camp programme must focus on the communities in the Northern and Eastern provinces and allow the youths in the south to visit these areas with a goodwill message from the Sinhala community.
5. The Shanthi Sena must pay adequate attention to undertake an objective evaluation to record the lessons learned from the Youth Camp or Inter-Religious Dialogue as each event has its own identity to provide a rich knowledge for the organization.
6. The Headquarter of Shanthi Sena should consider establishing an internal mechanism to undertake “Efficiency Audit” of each activity in order to submit a report with an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses by the district organizers.

7. The camp organizers must take a need assessment of the participants in the youth camps on the first day and make necessary and possible adjustments to the programme agenda (This process would provide information to the dialogue facilitator about the needs of the participants, their knowledge on political and social issues and their educational and social background).
8. Shanthi Sena must seriously think about the net-working of its working groups in villages in order to provide them with a work agenda for functioning in their environment, recruit new members and for the sustainability of community work completed through Shrama Dana.
9. Shanthi Sena must make arrangements to release and circulate DVDs, News Bulletins etc. among the villagers and groups to share the experience of Youth Camps and Shramadana with the villagers and groups.
10. Shanthi Sena must establish office space or meeting place for the religious leaders to have regular meetings or discussions by the religious leaders who have participated in the programme.
11. Incorporation of a component into the project proposal to identify second round of activities in the areas where youth camps were successfully conducted to utilize the youths and religious leaders who have participated in the programme to create more national and regional events.
12. Shanthi Sena should pay attention to anchor the programme in selected villages with second and third rounds of youth and community activities.

13. Shanthi Sena must focus on the youth in the urban areas where the youth is more aggressive and vulnerable to issues related to inter-communal and inter-religious competitions.

14. Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena must think of appointing women to the leadership at both national and regional levels in order to become a gender-based organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Shanthi Sena Sansadaya is the youth brigade of Sarvodaya which is the oldest local Civil Society Organization in Sri Lanka with more than 5000 registered village societies working in 15,000 villages coordinated through 33 District Centers supported by 12 Training Centres with well established training facilities.¹ The Sarvodaya organization which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008 undertakes vocational training, micro-credit and village empowerment programmes mainly with rural communities irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliations. It promotes a philosophy which transcends race, religion, caste, party politics, the North and South identifying the spiritual development among the people as its objective and the establishment of “Grama Rajya” (self-relied village kingdoms) as its ultimate goal. Although Sarvodaya commenced as an organization some fifty years ago targeting the Sinhala villages through its social empowerment programmes it has drawn a considerable membership from Tamil and Muslim communities.²

Shanthi Sena had 119,326 youths belonged to all three major communities actively working with Shanthi Sena and organized into 10,079 units in 2008.³ Although it is affiliated to the Sarvodaya it has independent legal status, registered under the Companies Act of Sri Lanka. The Shanthi Sena Units have been engaging in Leadership training, Educational programmes on Conflict Resolution, Community works through Shramadana (Gift of Labour), Relief Work, Drug and alcohol prevention programmes, Health/First-aid programmes, Training of Sport Instructors and formation of Sport Clubs as their normal activities.⁴ Shanthi Sena which celebrated its 30th anniversary in December 2008 has a rich experience in intervening in the social space with inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace activities for more than 20 years. It conducted Peace Marches in the 1980s after the communal violence erupted against the Tamil minority in 1978 and then in 1983. When the communal violence against the Tamil minority erupted in July 1983 (publicly known as THE BLACK JULY) the Sarvodaya commenced a youth camp programme called “Amity Camps” which was a 30 day long programme for educating and empowering the youth to understand the value of diversity. Under this programme Shanthi Sena organized youth camps in different places in the country covering both Sinhala and Tamil districts. From 2000 to 2006 Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena conducted public programmes such as Peace Meditations, Peace Marches and Inter-ethnic Youth

¹ Based on the information provided by the Executive Director, Shanthi Sena.

² The Sarvodaya Path to a New Century, Sarvodaya Publication, December 2008.

³ Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena, Annual Report for 2008, December 2008.

⁴ Ibid.

Camps. As such Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena has a long history in organizing peace activities with the participation of their members.⁵

2. SARVODAYA SHANTHI SENA-NCA PEACE PROJECT

The Shanthi Sena-NCA Inter-Religious Peace Project which is in force since 2006 has the following four main components:⁶

- 1. Inter-Religious Leaders' dialogues** - The core activities included were the dialogue participated by the religious dignitaries to understand the social issues and trend against the peaceful coexistence of the people in the area; the formation of an inter-religious Council for undertaking the activities to deal with the issues identified; preparation of a policy declaration for the community and participation in national religious conferences. The activities conducted during the period were language classes to teach others' language; Shramadana (gift of labour) by the youth and the communities; programme to prevent the youth from drug and alcohol; meditation programmes and peace marches attended by the priests, ordinary people, youths and school children.

- 2. The Inter-Religious Youth Exchange Camps** - held in the selected villages with the youths from different ethnic groups. The activities included were youth staying with host families for three days, flag hoisting and oath taking ceremony with the participation of the village elders and religious dignitaries, religious preaching, a dialogue conducted by a facilitator on dealing with diversity and problem of national unity, conducting a Shramadana (gift of labour) programme for a community work in the host village, integrative meetings the villagers, conducting a cultural event and a farewell to the village and the host families. They adopted following criteria in the selection of host villages to conduct a Youth Camp:
 - a. Prevalent of cultural mix-up in the village or surrounding area
 - b. The presence of Sarvodaya society in the village
 - c. No previous experience for conducting a youth camp
 - d. The availability of community work for a Shramadana programme

⁵ Based on an interview given by the Executive Director, Shanthi Sena

⁶ Based on the information gathered through "Key Informants' Meeting Method (see below), interviews with the Shanthi Sena Leaders and the Annual Reports of Shanthi Sena.

- e. The culture of the villagers - the prevalence of hospitality culture, the non-communal approach and the history of village for non-involvement in violent conflict etc.

3. The Inter-Religious Cultural Camps - held in the selected villages with the participation of youths belonged to different religions. The activities included were conducting lectures, dialogues and group activities by the youths facilitated by an expert or a religious leader selected from each religion. The objective of the camps was to provide practical opportunity for the youths to understand the cultural values attached to each religion in the country.

4. A Short Story and an Essay Competition - Conducted in 2007 and 2008 with the participation of youths belonged to all the religions.

3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study, “Strategic Review of the Inter-Religious Peace Project in Sri Lanka Implemented by Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena” mandated by the NCA with the following two main objectivesⁱ:

1. Assess the relevance and outcomes as well as to provide information, lessons learned and best practices from the project since 2006
2. Focus on the added value for both NCA and Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena partnership and hereunder how the NCA-Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena partnership can be strengthened around fund raising plans and strategic partnership with other donors

With reference to objective No.1, it is expected to focus on the following:

- To assess the effectiveness of the inter-religious peace initiative in mobilizing youth (both men and women) towards creating a culture of peace in the Sri Lankan community.
- Assess the relevance of the youth camps in achieving the objectives of the Shanthi Sena Sansadaya project.
- To look at the significance of the project with regard to the rights based approach and Do No Harm principle.

- To assess whether the project contributed towards empowering both women and men in the communities to work with inter-religious peace initiatives.
- To learn about the relationship between NCA and Sarvodaya, whether Sarvodaya was comfortable with the requirements of NCA as a donor agency and how Sarvodaya dealt with the gender issues and requirements.
- Whether Sarvodaya was satisfied with the assistance given by NCA towards capacity building and implementing the project and if the capacity building targeted gender issues in peace building.
- Suggest how learning and experience from the project could be collated and used in the future efforts.

With reference to the objective No. 2 it is expected to focus on the following:

- Assess both Sarvodaya and NCA's (possible) added values and strengths in inter-religious peace work. What have been used and what could be further utilized?
- How can Sarvodaya and NCA work more strategically together in the future on inter-religious peace – including gender and UN Sec. Res. 1325
- What other stakeholders could be relevant to link up in future? Networks, donors, research institutions, other partners?
- Suggest which elements a future programme on inter-religious peace and reconciliation should contain, and list the roles of Sarvodaya and NCA (and perhaps other stakeholders).

4. THE SURVEY METHOD ADOPTED

Given the short time frame (from 22 June to 29 June 2009) provided for the field survey the following Rapid Appraisal methods were used to collect the data:

1. Key informants' meetings and interviews

This included the meetings with the members of the Director Board of Shanthi Sena and their Accountant, the Executive Director Shanthi Sena and his working team and individual interviews conducted with Shanthi Sena Executive Director (Ref: Debriefing Meetings held on 11 May 2009 and 29th May 2009 and the Debriefing Workshop Conducted on 01 June 2009).

2. Direct Observations

This included the participation of the youth Camp conducted in Nuwara Eliya in the Central Province (From 22 to 25 May 2009) and the field inspection on the Water Canal cleared by the Shrama Dana activity of the Youth Camp participants in Dangahawila, Galle District in the Southern Province and the paddy fields re-cultivated due to the Shrama Dana Activity (28 May 2009).

3. Focused Group Discussions

This included the meetings conducted with the regional religious leaders, Shanthi Sena activists and regional Sarvodaya leaders at the Sarvodaya Centres in the Trincomalee (27 May 2009) and Galle Towns (28 May 2009) and the meetings held in Colombo with the representatives of NCA's other partners (29 May 2009 - evening).

4. Community Group Discussions

This included the meetings held in Muthuwella Village – Polonnaruwa (26 May 2009), Selvanayagam Puram- Trincomalee (27 May 2009), and Dangahawila Village, Galle (28 May 2009).

5. Reviewing of documents

This included gathering data from the CDs, Presentations, Progress Reports and the pamphlets published by Sarvodaya.

5. THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS

It is necessary to analyze the context in which Shanthi Sena conducted the project during 2006-2009 before making our assessment about the process and the outcomes of the project and the lessons learned focusing on the objectives of the study. This would help us to make an objective assessment on the implementation of the project as well as the capacities developed by the organization in conducting the project.

At the outset it must be noted that the project was commenced in 2006 when the talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the LTTE collapsed and the GOSL was moving towards adopting a containment policy towards the LTTE. In the second and the third year the project was conducted in an atmosphere which was not so favorable for peace activities in the villages as the Sri Lankan security forces were intensifying their military campaign against the LTTE. Most notable feature in the environment was a section of the Sri Lankan media had been engaging in an intense campaign highlighting the certainty of military solution to the ethnic problem giving the impression that the people-based peace activities were obstructing the military campaign against the LTTE.

In this context the youth camp organizers had to cope with en-route security related issues such as security personnel at the check-points asking clearance to allow the Tamil and Muslim youth to come to southern districts and vice versa, the security personnel visiting the villages and houses where the Tamil youth are staying for the camp activities or coming to search those houses etc. Therefore the holding of a youth camp which included activities such as arranging host families for the youth of other communities in the villages for three nights, organizing several outdoor events such as sports activities, cultural events, meetings with village people and a Shramadana activity to undertake community work was a challenging task. We found that initially the host villages were not ready to accept outsiders, especially the youth from other communities. They had preconceived suspicions and fears against “others” coming from other parts of the country. For example the Sinhala villages were afraid to take Tamil youths from the North and East and vice versa. On the other hand the parents of participant youths were hesitant to send their children to the youth camps which were to be held at distant places, particularly in villages close to (sometimes inside) the war-torn districts. The organizers had to appraise the parents, villagers as well as the security establishments before the intended event. The village level power elites and the bureaucrats are also not corporative in these events as the community work conducted by Shanthi Sena may challenge their positions and expose their lethargic and bureaucratic approaches.

Even the camp which we observed directly in Nuwara Eliya and attended by a significant number of youths belonged to the minority Tamil community was organized while a section of the organizers were expressing doubts over the success of the event as the euphoria created in the Sinhala areas over the final victory against the LTTE by the security forces in May 2009 was still

continuing. However, Shanthi Sena district leaders and the youth members decided to continue their programme as they were confident of its success. The confidence they have shown could be attributed to the trust they had on the reputation of Sarvodaya for its impartiality and commitment to the principle of non-violence to empower the rural communities. It seems that the Sarvodaya national leadership's cordial relationship with the leaders in the ethnic divide as well as the spectrum of party politics also been benefitted by the Shanthi Sena when they organized their peace activities. At the meeting conducted with us Sarvodaya Executive Director openly stated that their organization did not want to create trouble for their social workers by involving in controversial issues even though the organization had a stance on such issues. This strategy has been beneficial to a civil organization like Sarvodaya which has a long term goal of empowering the rural communities by upholding spiritual development.

We have noticed that the local and village level organizers had overcome these security related local issues independently and addressed the concerns of the villages. Such measures as the participation of village level religious leaders and the village elite as the organizers of Youth Camps, pre-camp meeting with the village leaders to organize the Shramadana activity and explain the objectives of the programme have been adopted. In this regard the longevity of Sarvodaya society in the village and its relationship with the community also played as plus factors.

The organizers demonstrated a tremendous dynamism in dealing with these issues though they were benefitted from the image of Sarvodaya organization. They adopted quickly not only to the social environment but also to the changes in the natural environment. For example although the organizers in the Nuwara Eliya Youth camp which we visited from 22nd May to 24 May 2009 did not face any difficulty for conducting a Inter-Ethnic Youth Camp due to the victorious mood in the Sinhala areas. However it was affected by the sudden change of climatic conditions in the area. In response to the continuous raining the organizers of the Nuwara Eliya camp had to reschedule some of the activities in the original plan. The major event of the camp, the Shramadana which was arranged to gift the labour of the youth to prepare a play ground for the village was cancelled, yet the youth participated in clearing the road and conducted interactive indoor activities with the village youth. The outdoor activities such as sport events, integrative meetings with the villagers were replaced with indoor sport activities and the cultural event. The camp itself proved that the organization had over the time developed knowledge of its

own on bringing youth of different communities together to create an impact on the village communities.

6. THE RAPID APPRAISAL CONDUCTED - A NARATIVE

6.1 THE FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

We received an opportunity to meet the religious dignitaries and Shanthi Sena functionaries at the regional level when we visited the Sarvodaya regional Centres at Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee and Galle cities. Apart from these meetings we conducted a meeting to listen to the representatives of Congress of World Religions, National Christian Council and National Secretariat of Young Men's Christian Association with the Shanthi Sena Executive Directors to understand the different perspectives and methodologies applied by the NCA's other partners who are engaged in inter-religious peace activities.

At the meetings conducted with the religious dignitaries at the Sarvodaya Centres we met priests belonged to all four religions in the country. We noticed that these religious leaders were very closely working with Shanthi Sena while independently intervening in civil disputes in the area. They had participated in the district inter-religious events conducted by Shanthi Sena and the national inter-religious conference held in December 2008 and attended the inter-religious youth camps to deliver religious preaching. We also met a Buddhist Monk who involved in organizing a Youth Camp in his village. They all participated in submitting the policy document presented to the government after the national inter-religious conference held in December 2008.

The Buddhist priest we met in Polonnaruwa held the view that time had come for the promotion of closer inter-dependence and corporation between major religions in Sri Lanka though there were controversies between the Buddhists and the Christian groups in the colonial era until 1960s. He highlighted the importance of Shanthi Sena religious dialogue as the programme focused on the role to be played by all religions engaged in competition some time back in bringing the different communities together.

One Buddhist priest we met in Galle stated that the very word "inter-religious" represents a powerful "force" which demands justice. He further claimed that a village working with Sarvodaya is concerned with environment, morality, hard-work and ethnic and religious unity. He pointed out that the Shramadana programme of Shanthi Sena teaches the importance of preserving environment, organization, unity and nurturing of good morals in the young

generation. Another Buddhist Monk who had personally participated in organizing a youth camp explained how they have addressed the concerns of the villagers for keeping outsiders in their homes and how the visiting youths from other ethnic groups had an impact on the villagers.

The Buddhist monk attended the meeting held in Trincomalee requested Shanthi Sena to identify the renovation of religious worship places belong to all major religions in the North East Provinces as an activity of the Shanthi Sena Shramadana programme. The religious dignitaries of other religions highlighted the importance of conducting more inter-religious activities in the near future pointing to the emerging new situation after the ending of North-East war. The Hindu priests attended the Trincomalee meeting highlighted the importance of inculcating values such as paying respect for priests belong to other religions referring to an incident faced by him, i.e., some Sinhala youths throwing fire crackers on to his legs during the celebrations in the town when the security forces won the war. He requested the Shanthi Sena to introduce a component to the Youth Camp programme to teach religious values and advised the Sarvodaya to establish a centre for learning other's language and religion.

According to the annual report submitted by Shanthi Sena for the period from 2006 to 2008 it has conducted 33 Inter-Religious Dialogues covering many districts except Jaffna and Mullathivu districts in the Northern Province. The religious leaders were invited to form an Inter-Religious Council for the district, issue a peace declaration and identify the activities relating to Shanthi Sena youth brigade to implement in the projected year. Though we met a small number of religious dignitaries during our field visits we found that Shanthi Sena had established a very cordial relationship with the religious leaders who had attended their programmes. They showed a greater enthusiasm towards the Shanthi Sena activities and pledged to play an active role in the future activities. Most of them pointed out that the end of war would open up enormous space for Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena to continue the activities they conducted under the current project as the Sarvodaya stayed as a non controversial civil society initiative for a united country, maintaining their long standing relationship with the rural communities.

The NCA's other partners who attended the meeting held on 29th May in Colombo highlighted the repercussions of the Anti-Conversion Bill identifying it as the major concern for the Christian minority in the country. Some of them pointed out that the inter-religious programmes conducted in the recent past had focused on the ethnic conflict only. These

programmes had not paid much attention to the country's marginalized religious groups. This is at variant with the focuses in the Shanthi Sena inter-religious peace programmes which has identified the unity among the ethnic groups as the key concern though the programme has "inter-religious" dimension as the major thematic focus. This discussion pointed out an important concern to be incorporated into the peace programme, namely, the concerns of the religious minorities.

6.2 THE COMMUNITY GROUP MEETINGS

We conducted community group meetings at the Muthu Wella Village in the Polonnaruwa District, Selvanayagam Puram village in the Trincomalee District and Dangahawila village in the Galle District.

The Chairperson and the Secretary of the Sarvodaya Society in Jayasiripura, organized the Ikiriweva Inter-religious Youth Camp and also attended the Muthu Wella meeting. They had travelled nearly 27 kilo meters to come to Muthu Wella. Both Muthu Wella and Selvanayagam Puram meetings were attended by a considerable number of ordinary members of Sarvodaya societies and also a large number of women members.

The leader of the Shanthi Sena in Muthu Wella and the Secretary of the Jayasiripura are female members. The discussion at Muthuwella provided the information about the youth camp conducted in Ikiriweva in October 2007 and the initial work done by the youth leaders who received training at Sarvodaya Head Quarters. The youth leaders narrated how they applied the knowledge they gained in the training to establish a Shanthi Sena organization in their villages and later to send their members to the Youth camps and other events organized by the parent organization. A female trainee who received negative experience in her village in organizing a youth group narrated her experience providing us a comparable case highlighting the conditions under which they had to operate and achieved success in their work.

It was very visible that the youth camp held in Ikiriweva had an impact on the villages. They expressed that they had developed a balanced view on the ethnic conflict and towards the minority communities after the youth camps. The Sarvodaya leaders of the Ikiriweva narrated their experience on the organizational aspects of the youth camp and confirmed the difficulties noted in our context analysis in the beginning. They were highly impressed about the Shramadana programme conducted and the impact created by the young people belong to other

communities. They said that some youth were still continuing the personal relationship they established with the host families. Their view was that the camp and its related activities helped the villagers to look beyond the military and political conflict to understand the value of diversity and ethnic unity.

The Muthuwella village leaders requested the Shanthi Sena to offer them an opportunity to organize a Youth Camp in their village showing the enthusiasm they had on the activities of the youth camp. Further they pointed out that the adjacent villages around Muthu Wella were settlements of Tamil and Muslim communities whose members had to pass their village to go to the nearby town. They highlighted the urgent need of integrating these minority communities into the mainstream of society as the ending of war might influence these minority communities to isolate themselves from the larger society.

At Selvanayagam Puram we met the leaders and members of two Sarvodaya Societies, who involved in organizing the host families and other events for the Youth Camp held in their village in 2007. Both societies were led by female Chairpersons and Secretaries. The woman members who participated in the discussion expressed their appreciation to the Shanthi Sena for giving them an opportunity to interact with Sinhala youth and hosting them at their homes. They narrated their experiences of offering meals that are typical to Tamil culture for the Sinhala youth, working with them in their gardens and taking photographs by the Sinhala girls wearing their jewelry and cloths etc. Some said that their children learnt some good cultural practices such as worshipping the parents every morning before they leave home from the youth stayed with them. Every host family had its own story for their experience in interacting with the Sinhala youth stayed in their homes. It is worth to note a comment from one participant:

“When I took Sinhala youths home, first day I felt that I have some unknown persons in my home; Second day, I thought I have some relatives visiting my home; Third day I felt that someone from my own family was leaving us”.

Since this village is in the predominantly populated Tamil area in the Eastern Province and the LTTE organization was very closely watching the movements of these villagers their initiative in taking the responsibility of keeping the Sinhala and Muslims in their homes was admirable. The success of the particular programme illustrates the good working relationship that exists between the village level Sarvodaya societies and the regional leaders of Shanthi Sena and Sarvodaya.

At Dangahawila we met the leaders of the Sarvodaya societies in both Dangahawila and Randenigama villages. The Chairperson of the Sarvodaya society and the Shanthi Sena youth

leader were female members. Like in other places the Dangahawila Youth camp also had created a memorable experience for the villagers. They said that the misgivings they had for Tamil people have misplaced after the camp. According to the woman leaders the youth stayed in their homes had helped them in their household work and joined them to visit religious shrines in the village. The people we met at the meeting expressed their gratitude to Shanthi Sena for helping them to look differently at the minority communities. Some held the view that Shanthi Sena Shramadana programme highlighted the problems faced by the rural communities belonging to all ethnic groups in the country. Some argued that the success of Shramadana programme had created a trust on the civil initiative in rural development activities. For them this had highlighted their mistrust towards the public bureaucracy. The Sarvodaya village leaders made a special reference to the Muslim girls who normally do not mix with the people from other cultures for their participation in gifting their labour for their village.

6.3 THE DIRECT OBSERVATIONS:

6.3.1 The Nuwara Eliya Youth Camp:

The Inter-Ethnic Youth camp in Nuwara Eliya was attended by more than 200 youths from the districts of Ampara (Eastern Province), Kandy (Central Province), Hatton (Nuwara Eliya District – Central Province). My understanding was that the majority of the youth who attended the camp were between the age group of 16 and 18 years. Later it was proved that when the facilitator asked the participants to raise their hands if they were above 18 years of age a very few raised their hands. The religious services were conducted by a Buddhist monk, a Hindu Priest and two youths belonged to Muslim and Christian communities. After the welcome speech an open dialogue was conducted by an invited facilitator focusing on the issue “what is to be done to bring permanent peace to the country?” Later the youths participated in group work and discussions on the assigned topics.

The ensued discussion demonstrated the problems faced by the facilitators in conducting a dialogue with a larger gathering (there were more than 200 people inside the hall) such as difficulty in maintaining the ground rules of the dialogue, a few leading members in the crowd taking the floor and majority becoming just on-lookers, the discussion moving from different directions forcing the facilitator to restrict the freedom of speech or move from one topic to another abruptly ending the on-going discussion etc. In this context the dialogue process became

a very hasty discussion bringing the topics such as gender, human rights and importance of reconciliation etc. just to show the observers that the necessary ingredients were added to the process. We noticed that when confronted with the problem of time management the facilitator unnoticing passed incorrect information to the youths (For example the facilitator stated that only the people above the age of 18 are citizens in Sri Lanka. This is incorrect. This age limit is applied for the registration of voters not to decide the citizenship).

Following day the youth were given freedom to interact with one another while some engaged in clearing the nearby road despite the rain as the organizers had to cancel the Shramadana due to heavy rain and landslides. In the evening the cultural event was held according to the original schedule inside the school hall. The event was facilitated by a female member of the Shanthi Sena organization working as the main announcer of the event. The youths representing different districts presented various cultural and entertainment items at the event. The interesting aspect was the adults from the host village not only participated in the event but also presented items showing a great enthusiasm and appreciation. The cultural event demonstrated that the camp had effectively built a closer integration between the villagers and the youths on the one hand and between the Sinhala and the Tamil—Muslim youths on the other. The feedback forms filled by the participants before and after the event illustrated this very clearly. The comments and answers given by the youths demonstrated that they were highly impressed on the event. It seems that not the dialogue forum but the interactive activities in the programme that had created a lasting impact upon the youth. The feedback forms given by the participants demonstrated the interactive activities such as staying with host families, engaging in community activities, group works such as sports and singing and above all the personal interactions among them had created a mindset change among the participant youths. When going through their feedback forms I found that they had received a social space to interact with the village community, the host families and the youths from other communities though the rain disrupted the pace of the programme.

The dynamism showed by the Shanthi Sena organizing team in adapting to the changing scenario shows that they have learnt from their past experiences. Since the young people prefer to have more interactive activities and entertainment rather than listening to adults the change of agenda was not seriously felt by them though some had expressed the difficulties they felt in adapting to the cold weather in Nuwara Eliya.

The youths belonged to the three communities had openly stated that the hate and the fear they had against other communities had changed and they received an opportunity to understand the others' value systems, morals, culture and religion. Almost all the youth irrespective of their cultural, religious and ethnic differences stated that before the camp they had certain fears and hatred regarding other communities and the camp had changed these misgivings.

Following comment was from one of the Sinhala participants:

“Actually before this youth programme I thought that only the Sinhalese are highest and correct. Now I know the other communities too have good morals, behaviors and manners. They are very good people. The feeling I had earlier was totally transformed and changed due to this camp. I earnestly feel that the conducting of camps like this would enhance the unity among nations in our society and improve good virtues such as co-existence, unity and respect for others. Conducting these camps is a yeomen service.”

Following comment was from one of the female Tamil participant:

“I learned Sinhala language. I got good friends. I am sad I am going to lose the family I had in the village. I knew that such good things as solidarity, peace, tolerance and anticipation are exist among the Sinhala speaking people. Sarvodaya has built a good kin-relationship between us”

The comments made by the participants on the questions relating to the politico-economic situation and the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan society in their feedback forms reflect the mindset of a very young age group. They showed very fresh minds devoid of ethnic-stereo types and biases that existed in the larger society. I found most of them wanted to keep themselves distanced from the communal and religious biases of their adults, especially to bury the bad memories of the recent past. The challenges they perceived in Sri Lankan society are included such expectations as free from unemployment, terrorism, drugs and other abuses, acquiring new technologies, bring sustainable peace and harmony to the country by establishing national unity and capture future for themselves.⁷

6.3.2 The inspection of the Shramadana site in Dangahawila, Galle District:

We inspected the water Canal cleaned through Shramadana by the youth who attended the Dangahawila camp with the leaders of the Sarvodaya Society. The youth had cleaned nearly 300 meters long water way enabling the farmers to use abandoned paddy fields. The farmers who earlier expressed their reservations about the young people's ability to complete the hard work involved had joined the youth when they found that the team was serious in completing the

⁷ Please see the appendix for the ideas presented by the youths in their feed-back forms.

work. We noticed that participation of Tamil and Muslim youth in the Shramadana programme had created an impact on the villagers. However, we found that the farmers were not properly maintaining the Canal, showing the problem of ownership and sustainability. It would have been prudent if the Shanthi Sena could sign an MOU with the Community Based Organizations/Sarvodaya Society in the villages for the maintenance of the community work before or after the Shramadana in conformity with the Sarvodaya “Grama Rajya” Concept which visualized the creation of self-reliance villages.

7. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

7.1 The Inter-Religious Dialogues

Organizing the religious leaders belonged to different religions to make an intervention in the social space regionally and nationally is a significant step as the ethnic hatred and justification of war situation is continuously promoted by the political entrepreneurs. The formation of inter-religious councils at the district level and mobilizing these council-led activities parallel to the youth camp programme was the key objective identified in the project proposal. The religious forums helped Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena to create certain national and district events directly addressing the social, cultural, economic and political issues that promoted culture of violence, communalism and religious conflicts.

Although it was difficult to measuring of the impact of these events through an evaluation of this nature the context analysis made in the beginning highlights the difference that could bring to the social space by the united stance taken by the religious dignitaries on the public flat form. It is no doubt the mere presence of inter-religious leadership on a public flat form and expressing their concern on the violent culture in society and the disunity among the communities that create an impact on the society. One of the achievements of the religious dialogue programme is Shanthi Sena establishing permanent relationship with the religious dignitaries to keep them as a reserve for their future activities.

However, during our field visits we noted that at **the district level the Inter-Religious Forums were not functioning on a regular manner. This may be due to the fact that the project proposal itself does not identify follow-up activities for the programme or Shanthi Sena has put its full weight on to the activities with the youths.** It is prudent if the organization instructs the district level Shanthi Sena leaders **to arrange a meeting place in their**

Centres for these religious leaders and coordinate their participation with activities of the youth front. The Shanthy Sena must avoid the idea that their initiative in arranging these dialogues would automatically lead to other events or the religious dignitaries themselves take up the responsibility of finding their own way to move forward in the turbulent situation existed in the country. Another aspect related to the inter-religious dialogue process is finding ways to **establish linkages with other inter-religious forums such as the inter-religious activities conducted by other NCA partners - the World Congress of Religions, National Centre of Young Men's Christian Association etc.** That would bring the concerns of the religious minorities into these religious forums and prepare themselves to the future events.

7.2 The youth camps

It is no doubt that the most effective and power full element in the Shanthy Sena inter-religious peace project is the Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Ethnic Cultural Camps conducted in the selected villages. It not only brings the youths from different ethnic and religious backgrounds together but also introduces themselves to a rural community which is different from ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations. The host family concept and the Shramadana programmes are very effective integrative tools as they could create a lasting impact on the villagers, families and the participant youth.

The Shramadana work gave an opportunity for the youths to help rural communities and to understand their livelihood issues that existed in different parts of the country. On the one hand it enabled the young people who had been growing up in an environment of armed conflict for the last twenty five years isolated to their own cultural environment to make a constructive engagement with the communities across the ethnic divide. The multi cultural or multi religious character of the participant youths in the Shramadana programme always created a big impact on the villages. The village communities were very pleased to see a youth brigade constituted with young people belonged to different communities working for the betterment of their village. For the youths Shramadana programme helped them to understand many things including the values of voluntarism, power of unity, the importance of punctuality, the duty to protect the environment and the need for a disciplined life.

On the other hand host villages and families received an opportunity to communicate with youths representing another village or community through the youth camps. Given the

restrictive environment created for the ordinary people to exercise their right to free movement the youth camp provided an opportunity to the communities to interact with young people from another area and community with a righteous purpose. The relationship established by the host families and the youths was the most important visible feature in the youth camp process. Every camp reported a very emotional farewell between host families and the visiting youths. It seems that the youth camp concept of Shanthi Sena has been using carefully the good human natures that exist among the rural communities to promote culture of peace among the communities.

It is very clear that both the villages and the youths have changed their biases and fears that existed towards the other ethnic groups. **The camp programme has proved that the promotion of a culture of peace is very effectively done through interactive activities involving the day-to-day life of the village community and their individual families.** It seems that these interactive methods are more effective than the dialogues facilitated by an expert in mobilizing the youths towards the promotion of culture of peace in Sri Lankan society.

However, **the young people who have emotionally attracted towards the idea of culture of peace need to be educated carefully if we want to keep them for the future peace activities. As such a follow-up education programme is imperative for the youths attended the youth camp programme. They should be offered educational opportunities to advance their knowledge on specialized topics such as multiculturalism, equality, rule of law, gender and unity in diversity etc. It is worth to propose that every youth camp programme must select a team of youth for such an advance civic education.** It will help them to settle their changed mindsets with the goals of the project. There is no doubt that these youths would voluntarily participate in the activities and the public events to be conducted by Shanthi Sena in future in the building of culture of peace in the larger society as the “catch-them-when-young” policy still has a validity in Asian societies. The mobilization of these youth towards the promotion of culture of peace in the larger society could be more effective if these youths have gone through a civic education programme. This will give these youths who have a very good standing in their formal education an opportunity to understand the issues such as gender, multiculturalism, justice, human rights, peace building, social capital etc., which are not the focuses in the syllabi in the formal education.

The most important recommendation to be made in the direction of strengthening the current programme is to **rescue the programme from just conducting the youth camps at a**

place and moving to another place envisaging that the youths and village societies find their own way to enter the social space. It is better if Shanthi Sena identify some villages as model villages which could continuously work with Shanthi Sena peace project. The anchoring of the peace project in selected villages all over the country with a youth front and an inter-religious Council would provide better space for creating an impact on the society.

Next will be a SWOT analysis which provides clear insights on the detailed aspects relating to the objective number one.

8 SWOT ANALYSIS

8.1 Strengths

1. The Youth Camp component of the project is an effective tool in mobilizing the youths to promote culture of peace among the communities.
2. The Shramadana activity promotes voluntarism, gender equality, coexistence, environmental concerns, organization and discipline among the youth. This is a very effective tool in creating attitudinal changes among the people and the youth.
3. Shanthi Sena has built a balanced participation between both sexes at the field level programmes.
4. The youth programme has moved to different parts of the country, especially to the Northern and Eastern Provinces where more voluntary peace building work is required in future.
5. So far the youth programme has not created a controversy or invited protest in the host villages.
6. The inter-religious district events have brought together religious dignitaries and established some local monitoring team to intervene in the civil commotions.
7. The religious dignitaries have developed a strong bond with the programme and thereby are ready to participate in national and regional events created by Shanthi Sena.

8. The availability of religious dignitaries to participate and support the youth camp programme and sometimes as the organizers of such programmes.
9. Shanthi Sena and its cadres have developed skills to conduct a programme of this nature effectively adapting to the different conditions and changing situations.

8.2 Weaknesses

1. Inadequate attention paid to undertake an objective evaluation by the staff themselves to record the lessons learned from the Youth Camp or Inter-Religious Dialogue as each event has its own individuality to provide a rich knowledge for the organization.
2. Inadequate attention paid to undertake an “Efficiency Audit” on each activity by a team appointed by Sarvodaya or submit a report with an objective assessment of the strength and weaknesses by the district organizers.
3. Non-conducting of a need assessment of the participants in the youth camps on the first day in order to make necessary and possible adjustments in the programme agenda. This process would provide information to the dialogue facilitator about the needs of the participants, their knowledge on political and social issues and also the educational and social background of the participants.
4. No proper attention was paid to take continued follow-up actions after the completion of Youth Camp or Inter-Religious Dialogue in the project in order to make necessary adjustments in the ongoing project implementation or to identify new areas for the next year activity plan.
5. Insufficient attention paid to net-working of Shanthi Sena working groups in villages in order to provide them with a work agenda for functioning in their environment and to recruit new members.

6. Insufficient attention paid to sustain the community work completed through Shrama Dana – an MOU with the CBOs to maintain the community work could be signed.
7. Insufficient attention paid to identify new components that could be incorporated to the programme in the end of year without changing the existing project mandate – we have received several proposals from the community and religious leaders during our discussions.
8. Inadequate attention paid to share the experience of Youth Camps and Shramadana with the villagers and groups – DVDs, News Bulletins could be circulated among the village societies about the project activities.
9. Insufficient attention paid to have regular meetings or discussions with the religious leaders who have participated in the programme – there were requests from the clergy to arrange them meeting-places in Sarvodaya district Centres.
10. Inadequate attention paid in the project proposal to identify second round of activities to utilize the youths and religious leaders participated in the programme to create more national and regional events.
11. Non-consideration of anchoring the programme in selected villages with second and third rounds of youth and community activities – programme is looked like a jumble of several activities that do not have inter-connected programmes and net-working for the participant organizations.
12. The programme has not adequately focused on the youth in the urban areas where the youth is more aggressive and vulnerable to issues related to inter-communal and inter-religious competitions – the annual reports of Shanthi Sena indicate that the increase of youth units and membership are taking place in rural areas and not in urban areas

8.3 Opportunities

1. The good image that was built over the time by the Sarvodaya movement as a longest serving voluntary organization and a non controversial body has been beneficial to Shanthi Sena.
2. Availability of Sarvodaya Villages with strong credit and voluntary programme in most of the districts in Sri Lanka is also beneficial to Shanthi Sena to reach the village communities.
3. The ending of war has created a space for more multi-cultural activities focusing on national reconciliation and spiritual development - the youths have identified the emerging situation as an enabling environment for them to have similar activities in other parts of the country.
4. The people who have undergone attitudinal changes due to their participation in the programme are ready to support the future activities.
5. There are religious and community leaders ready to participate in educational programmes.
6. Shanthi Sena has trained field staff and volunteers to engage in the improvement of the present programme or to undertake internal performance audits.
7. The main activities conducted by the Sarvodaya organization could be used to anchor the programme in selected villages and opening up continuous activities for the Shanthi Sena youths using these villages as centres for clustering the activities in the area.
8. Sarvodaya infrastructure facilities at the District level could be used to establish meeting places and language teaching centres.

9. Shanthi Sena can attract school children and youths in the urban areas through Sarvodaya organizations which can establish service centres to undertake programmes for micro credit, language education, vocational training, kinder gardens or Montessori schools.

8.4 Threats

1. The political power struggle and electioneering in the coming months may affect the pace of the programme.
2. The issues such as Anti-conversion bill may create religious conflicts affecting the Shanthi Sena work.
3. The youth leaving the programme for higher education and employment.
4. The entering of more state institutions into the rural development activities may attract the village people.
5. Restriction of funding from outside sources due to bureaucratic restrictions.

9. THE NCA-SARVODAYA SHANTI SENA PARTNERSHIP

The NCA has met an active partner, Sarvodaya of Sri Lanka, through its linkage with the Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena Peace Project. Shanthi Sena as the youth front of Sarvodaya has proved that it has the capacity to take up the responsibility of organizing island-wide programmes. The Sarvodaya infrastructure and the commitment of its cadres (both paid and voluntary) is an asset to any international organization which looks for a strategic partner in Sri Lanka for rural development, peace building and national reconciliation.

Shanthi Sena members' commitment for voluntarism is proved beyond doubts in the project is being reviewed by this study. This has been proved by the selection of a large number of

Sarvodaya volunteers by the government to handle the relief activities in the IDP camps established in the North amidst tight military security.⁸

Both Sarvodaya and Shanthi Sena have now commenced internal discussions on their strategic plans for the next five year period. Sarvodaya has been developing a new business model in the light of extension of state apparatus into the villages through poverty alleviation and community development programmes and the emerging new global policy measures on environment, human rights and gender equality. The presentation made by the Executive Director of Sarvodaya at the briefing session conducted at the Sarvodaya Head Quarters by the Executive Director of Sarvodaya titled: “Weaving Peace” indicates that Sarvodaya has identified reconciliation among the communities across the ethnic divide as the priority issue in the coming months. The new plan envisages linking relief and peace building, mobilizing communities for peace and contributing to national process in order to operate within the strategic arena of social mobilization as identified in the document. This strategic arena is included with political actors who have the hold on decision making and the different ethnic groups whose mutual acceptance is important to move within the civil space according to the presentation. It is no doubt that the Sarvodaya would easily move in this space utilizing the capacities and the past experience.

The Shanthi Sena Strategic plan for 2010 – 2015 envisages to undertake programmes such as peace education and conflict settlement training programme, establishment of Development Centres for the promotion of coexistence, Organize cultural trips and conferences, holding of cultural and sport festivals, youth exchange programmes, Programme for promotion of peace, Inter-Religious Dialogues, Networking with parallel organization, Awareness programme for Language Education, Environmental Programmes, Community Health, Leadership Training Programmes, Formation of Voluntary Team to engage in Disaster Management and Advocacy Movement for Policy intervention.

However, Shanthi Sena-NCA future strategic partnership should be assessed against the backdrop of emerging situation after the end of war in the North. After a more than 25 years of

⁸ According to Sarvodaya sources a survey conducted by Ministry of Health with the participation of 300 local volunteers working in the camps 75 (25%) had training or worked with Sarvodaya.

armed conflict and terrorism the country now needs time to heal the wounds of war and conflict to take a leap forward to achieve national reconciliation. The ordinary people need time to come out of their mental partitioning created by terrorism and armed conflict as reflected by the youths and the villagers of Shanthi Sena project in such statement as “hatred and fears towards others”. These mental partitioning that prevailed in the larger society must be removed from the psyche of social life. The continuation of such mindset factors provide enormous space for further creation of social conflict as the global economic and technological forces constantly create economic and social disparities in society. Sri Lanka needs a time to heal the wounds of twenty five years war which has affected the social fabrics of cultural and religious communities thereby the building of larger Sri Lankan identity.

Organization such as Sarvodaya which has an island-wide net work, reputation for impartiality and above all philosophically motivated membership for a spiritual developed peaceful society should identify its role in the civil sphere to take up this noble task. The strategic planning document presented by Shanthi Sena Directors in conformity with the thinking of Sarvodaya national leadership demonstrates that they have already identified the task ahead. The overall assessment of the implementation of the Shanthi Sena project is that the organization can make adjustments in the present programme implementations to match with the need of national reconciliation. Under weaknesses in the SWOT analysis we have noted several new ideas to understand such changes and adjustments.

NCA can play a role in helping the Shanthi Sena to incorporate activities related to national reconciliation, adopting a flexible approach to make necessary adjustments and changes in the on-going project. The current intercultural youth camp programme and the religious leaders’ dialogues must accommodate activities focusing on national reconciliation. The inter-religious dialogue programme has the potential in creating wider awareness among the communities on the urgency of reconciliation. In 2009 the youth camp programme must focus on the communities in the Northern and Eastern provinces and allow the youths in the south to visit these areas with a good will message from the Sinhala community.

10. CONCLUSION

The report has adopted two methods in presenting the findings. First was the narrative method. The second was the SWOT analysis. The narrative part presented the reviewer's own impressions based on the rapid appraisal conducted during a period of one week. The SWOT analysis paid special attention to identify the lapses on the part of the NCA and the Sarvodaya in the implementation process.

It is worth noting that the reviewer did not receive the freedom to select the project areas or the communities using an objective criterion. The religious dignitaries, the community groups, youths and the activists who have attended the meetings at the regional locations were selected and invited by the Shanthi Sena regional leaders. The fact findings were based on the group discussions. A very few of the participants were interviewed individually. Also the reviewer did not receive the records based on objective assessments to evaluate the events conducted during 2006-2008 except the annual reports submitted by Shanthi Sena. As such the reviewer felt that the best way was to use the narrative method and present his own impressions about the events conducted by the project.

The intention of using SWOT analysis was mainly to highlight the lapses on the part of both NCA and Sarvodaya. This section focused on the weaknesses attached to the technical side of the project implementation. Most of the weakness noted under SWOT analysis could have been recognized and avoided if NCA and Shanthi Sena conducted at least bi-annual progress review meetings. In the executive summary we have noted most of these weaknesses and presented some suggestions to rectify them.

11. APPENDIX

11.2 Shanthy Sena Project Progress

	2006	2007	2008	2009 Up to May	Total
Youth leaders training for Conflict transformation	04 (128)	04 (129)	06 (278)	06 (235)	20 (770)
Inter Religious leaders dialogue District Level	09 (444)	12 (630)			21 (1074)
Inter Religious leaders dialogue Provincial Level	-	04 (513)	-		04 (513)
Inter Religious leaders Conference National level			01 (483)		01 (483)
Inter Religious Youth exchange camp	03 (405)	06 (1084)	12 (1761)	01 (180)	22 (3430)
Inter Cultural exchange camp	-	-	15 (1671)		15 (1671)
Printing & Distribution of Children Stories Book for peace		2000 copies			2000 copies
Essay Competition for National Coexistence Sinhala & Tamil			171 entries		171 entries
To Produce a documentary film for peace camps			01 film	01 film	02 Films

(Source: Shanthy Sena Head Quarter Information)

11.2 Feed-backs of the youths attended the Nuwara Eliya Camp (From the Form No. 1 – Completed before the camp)

11.2.1 What do you expect from the programme?

Sinhala Group

1. To acquire new experience
2. To become a youth leader
3. To work and unite with others
4. To gain a spiritual knowledge
5. To build my personality
6. To learn how to do things intellectually
7. To improve my capabilities
8. To have some entertainment
9. To become a good citizen
10. To have broad outlook on contemporary society
11. To meet different people
12. To gain new knowledge

13. To have new friends
14. To work as a team
15. To develop solidarity among youth
16. To organize youth
17. To know how Shanthi Sena work with international organizations
18. To participate inter-district youth exchange program of Sarvodaya
19. To set aside the communal and religious divisions and forge a unity with others
20. To gain the knowledge on other religions
21. To learn how to practice principle of equality
22. To exchange views with youths belong to other communities
23. To work and corporate with other ethnic groups

Tamil Group (There were few Muslim youths in the group):

1. To make new friends
2. Acquire new experience
3. Learn another language to share our views with them
4. Learn about other religions and cultures
5. Help others to get an idea about our thinking and aspirations
6. Get an opportunity to work with unity
7. Learn the strength in unity
8. Make new friends
9. For discussion and dialogue with others
10. To bring peace to the country
11. To work and corporate with youth belong to three ethnic groups
12. To create an influence on peace in the country
13. To learn a new approach to peace
14. To learn the other ethnic groups' ideas on "peace"
15. To work for peace with other ethnic groups
16. To get an opportunity to understand the core values of all three nations in Sri Lanka
17. To learn about peace
18. To bring genuine peace

11.2.2 In your view what are the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan youths?

Sinhala Group:

1. Preventing themselves from drugs
2. Preventing themselves from participating social abuses
3. Having a country free from corruption & oppression
4. To have a united country
5. Protecting archeological treasures
6. Remove corrupt people from the country
7. To capture future for themselves
8. Unemployment
9. Security of the country
10. Financial crisis
11. Non availability of clear direction & guidance for the youth
12. Lack of religious training & guidance for youths
13. Seeking a terrorism free country
14. Assuring that terrorism would not emerge again
15. Seeking a united country
16. Pass the examinations
17. To have a society devoid of communalism & religious conflicts
18. To alleviate bad impact of war
19. Inability to adjust and move forward with new technology
20. To develop empathy

Tamil Group:

1. Live with peace and harmony
2. Live without communal, religious and caste divisions
3. Work with all people
4. Removal of conflict among youths through programmes like this
5. To bring peace to the country

11.2.3 What is your opinion about the politico-economic situation in the country?

Sinhala Group:

1. Increasing economic costs due to corrupt politics
2. Looking for a country which is developed than the present level
3. Increase the foreign aid
4. Less opportunity to seek economics benefits
5. Slow political & economic progress adversely affect the poor in society
6. Economic situation is not satisfactory – unemployment is high
7. Political divisions affect the country’s progress – but people maintain unity
8. There are signs that the political problems are on the decrease
9. Public places and roads are being developed
10. Satisfactory political situation is emerging
11. To have a mental peace youth need good politics
12. The ending of terrorism/war will bring good/ economic progress
13. Now country has entered the path of development
14. National unity should be the number one in the political agenda
15. “Freedom for everyone” is becoming a realistic hope
16. Treating all nations equal
17. Peaceful political system required
18. We are going to have country devoid of ethnic conflict
19. The present governing party is working carefully to develop the country
20. The country have a correct leadership now
21. The economy is in a continuum between inflation & deflation
22. There is a confrontational politics but we have a political leadership with a clear vision.

Tamil Group:

1. Now three nations can live peacefully
2. There is good environment in politics now
3. The economy is growing
4. There is an enabling environment in politics for amity between three nations

5. Declining of confrontational politics
6. The war is over
7. The economy is facing some problems

11.3 From the form No2 – completed after the camp

11.3.1 What are the new experiences you have received from the camp?

Sinhala Group

1. Learned about other ethnicities
2. Learned different languages
3. Learned about hidden skills in us
4. Got an opportunity to work in unity
5. Learned to work with different language groups
6. Learned other languages
7. Learned about other's religions
8. Learned Empathy
9. Learned the value of punctuality
10. Developed solidarity
11. Removed bad feelings/attitudes towards Tamils
12. Learned to forget differences through working for a common objective
13. Learned how to develop working language to work with other language speakers
14. Learned how to adopt to a new climatic conditions
15. How to achieve our objectives while overcoming barriers
16. Learned about the life styles of different regions
17. Acquired leadership skills
18. Met new friends
19. Experienced the joy in friendship and unity
20. Learned about the differences in Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Christian people
21. Learned many Tamil words
22. Received security from new parents from a new village
23. Learned about the importance of silence
24. Learned the strength in unity and diversity
25. Learned about the importance of working as a one nation
26. Recognized the emerging new society
27. Learned the importance of team work

28. Learned many things previously unknown
29. Learned how to work with previously unfamiliar people
30. Learned that all are same though they have cultural, linguistic differences

Tamil Group

1. Received a new home and parents
2. Received a new Mother
3. Enjoyed the same happiness that I have in my own home
4. Opportunity to work with other language speakers
5. Got an opportunity to understand the attitudes of other communities
6. Education-wise learned lot because we met a very educated crowd
7. Worked with solidarity and happiness
8. Work with inter-religious people
9. Learned many new things
10. Learned that we could overcome obstacles such as fear, suspicion and rain through working together
11. Learned the ideas that are important for the young people
12. Learned about the good management practices
13. Learned how to work and behave with others
14. Learned well about the objectives of the programme
15. Received many experience in the beautiful estate environment
16. Learned about the good things in other religions
17. Learned about the friendship of others
18. Learned about the importance of division of work
19. Learned to live with others regardless of their religious, linguistic and cultural differences
20. Felt the sadness of leaving people and friends
21. Learned that team work will bring speed, punctuality, organization and method
22. Experienced what peace and co-existence are

11.3.2 What are the personal benefits you have received from the program?

Sinhala Group

1. Understood the importance of punctuality
2. Improved my own capabilities
3. How to adopt to a new climate which was very cold

4. Understood the importance of team work
5. Gained the skills how to develop a working language to work with different language groups
6. Learned others' language
7. Met the people belonged to different ethnic and religious groups
8. Made new friendships
9. Leaned the importance of unity
10. The way of gifting my labour for community work
11. Did a service to the Kikilyamana village
12. Learned how to organize group-work in diversity
13. Learned about other cultures
14. Learned few Tamil words

Tamil Group

1. Learned another language
2. Got an opportunity to live with Sinhala people
3. The hate I had for Sinhala people is now removed/detached
4. Learned about the gifting of labour for the community
5. Received a new home and a family
6. Built new relationships
7. Got an opportunity show my abilities
8. Came to a new environment
9. Met good friends
10. Got an idea about the needs of youth
11. Learned about the Shanthi Sena programme
12. Shared our experiences with others
13. Received advices needed by young people
14. Learned about multi-cultures
15. Learned to live with others ignoring ethnic and religious difference
16. Got a new Mother
17. Got a new joyful family

11.3.3 What are the Strengths you have identified in the programme?

Sinhala Group

1. Our ability to complete the programme though rain disrupted the schedule

2. Learning of other languages
3. Learning of other religions
4. Unity
5. Able advisors from Shanthi Sena
6. Bring the village elders to work with us
7. The protection provided by the families in the village
8. Hospitality and warmth from the village people
9. Dynamism shown by the programme organizers
10. Foods were provided by the families in good quality

Tamil Group

1. The new friends we met were well educated thus we received good ideas and experiences
2. Provide us an opportunity to learn another language
3. Learned many good things
4. Got an opportunity to get on with new people
5. Got an opportunity to coexists with multi nationals
6. Coexistence
7. Youths' gifting their labour
8. Gifting labour to the host village
9. Receiving good friends

11.3.4 Named the weaknesses you have noticed in the programme.

Sinhala Group

1. Personal competition among the youths
2. Rain disrupted the programme
3. Delay in commencing the programme

Tamil Group

1. There were people who looked at our ides erroneously that was not good
2. We faced lot of difficult experiences
3. Climate was very cold
4. Language difficulties created problem
5. Weaknesses in the organizing committee in the village
6. Rain disrupted our plans

11.3.5 Identify any attitude changes you personally experienced.

Sinhala Group:

1. Importance of treating everyone equally
2. Recognized the importance of recognizing values of other people
3. Understood others' feelings well
4. Changed to adopt to other's culture
5. Removal of divisive attitudes I had for other religions and cultures
6. Removal of caste from my mind
7. Understood others' religions and cultures
8. Learned that the Tamil people have morals that are in higher standards
9. Removed the wrong attitudes I had for Tamil people
10. Learned to respect others religions
11. Learned that they also wanted to work together
12. Understood the value of team work
13. Sadness for my inability to talk to them

Tamil Group

1. Found that the Sinhala people too have good things such as tolerance, anticipation, solidarity and peace
2. Changed the fear that I had earlier in speaking to Sinhala people
3. Developed a irresistible desire to speak Sinhala
4. Developed good understanding on life and love
5. Developed a good attitudes towards Sinhala and Tamil unity
6. Changed my attitudes due to the friends with whom I worked
7. Lessened the sadness I had in mind due to the companionship we entertained throughout the camp
8. Developed an understanding about others
9. Desire to develop companionship with others
10. Desire to learn Sinhala
11. Desire to learn about the culture of Sinhala people
12. Learned that other people are like us
13. Learned that other people also wanted to get -on with us
14. Learned the power of unity

15. My behavior changed because of the new environment
16. We gave a strength to the programme by contributing our organized ideas
17. I removed the fear I had earlier to stay in a Sinhala village
18. Learned that Sri Lanka have a one nation

19.3.6 Their proposals for the coexistence between different ethnic and religious groups

Sinhala Group

1. Guarantee equal treatment to schools in the country
2. Conduct more camps like the present one
3. Abandon caste and ethnic divisions
4. Respect of other ethnicities
5. Promote the understanding that others have same feelings
6. Bring all religious groups to these camps
7. Conduct more camps in the Northern and Eastern Provinces
8. Teach different languages in Schools
9. Try to speak other languages
10. Build multi ethnic cluster villages
11. Create more multiethnic occasions for gifting labour for community work
12. The camps like this must started with small communities and spread it to whole country

Tamil Group

1. The camps like this which promote the feeling that all of us are Sri Lankans should be conducted to guide the youths
2. Develop the programme jointly by the national groups
3. Think as Sri Lankans though we are different in culture, religion and language
4. Work hard for the betterment of the country ignoring our cultural and religious difference
5. More team work