BACKGROUND

This report offers a summary of what Karuna Center for Peacebuilding and Sarvodaya have learned through our evaluation process over the course of the Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts and Padaviya Division project, implemented between August 1, 2011 and April 30, 2013.

Our evaluation design grew out of our original theory of change: if key religious leaders from all faiths can develop mutual understanding and positive, tolerant attitudes toward each other and engage in joint activities in their communities, then these broader communities will develop more tolerant, positive attitudes toward each other, and conflict and ethnic tensions will significantly decrease.

It was also based on meeting an outcome challenge that led to the development of progress markers for outcome mapping. At the end of the program, we expected to that “Participating religious leaders from all four faith groups from all three areas (Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Padaviya) have positive, tolerant attitudes towards all ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka, have good relationships with each other, and are actively engaged in interfaith activities at the community level that contribute to positive, tolerant attitudes in the wider community, especially among youth.”

The evaluation design (see Annex I) aims to capture changes in attitudes and behaviors as well as evidence that these changes are related to the project. The design uses quantitative and qualitative tools to uncover changes among the religious leaders and changes in the communities where they are active. In the mid-term evaluation, most of the focus was on changes experienced by religious leaders; in the final evaluations, we were better able to assess the community impact of the project, following completion of the interfaith community activities. The evaluation tools used to analyze the program’s success within this report include:

Written surveys: A baseline survey was administered at the first set of workshops for the 80 core participants in October 2012, followed by a second survey administered at the end of the first interfaith dialogues in February and March 2012. A final survey was administered at the end of the project in March 2013. (See Annex II for survey questions.)

Semi-structured interviews: Mid-term interviews were held with 20 selected religious leaders in July and August of 2012, and were repeated at the project’s completion in March 2013. At this time interviews were also held with six of the 93 young religious committee members who joined the program in the summer of 2012. The interview questions were designed to probe more deeply into the connection between the project activities and changes in attitudes and behaviors. (See Annex III for interview questions.)

Impact interviews: Ten impact interviews of religious leaders, language teachers, and project beneficiaries were conducted by the Sarvodaya consultant who was hired in February 2013 to prepare the Learning Sharing document that was distributed at the National Conference. Olivia Dreier from the Karuna Center also conducted 13 impact interviews with program participants, beneficiaries, and community members at the close of the program. Impact interviews were more
open-ended than the semi-structured interviews. They focused on changes as a result of the program, changes on an individual level and changes in relationships between religious leaders and between the communities they serve.

**Outcome mapping:** Progress markers for outcome mapping were set by the Sarvodaya national and district project staff in consultation with Olivia Dreier at the first workshops in October 2012. (See Annex V for progress markers.) Follow-up sessions were held with the project staff to assess progress in relation to these markers in March 2012, September 2012, and March 2013.

**Significant change stories:** During the August/September 2012 workshop, participants were asked to share “most significant change stories” and reflect together on what changes the stories reveal. Two of these stories were shared in the mid-term evaluation report included as Annex VI. Participants were asked to engage in this process again at the final knowledge sharing/closing symposium. The large number of people (88) present for that event did not lend itself to the collection of stories, and the results from that exercise led instead to an enumeration of attitudes and behaviors that had changed as a result of the program. These results are similar to what was described in the surveys and interviews and are therefore not repeated in this report. Instead, we have culled significant change stories from the final semi-structured and impact interviews and included those.

In order to evaluate the overall success of this project, we discuss results from the above methodologies in relation to the project’s two core objectives: (1) to empower religious leaders to foster community reconciliation through conflict transformation skills, community development, and social empowerment projects that engage a broad range of community members; and (2) to promote and strengthen opportunities for inter-religious/inter-ethnic dialogue in communities to increase understanding and restore trust.

We conclude this report with a summary of findings in which we relate our results to the key questions of our evaluation design.
SURVEY RESULTS

Summary

In March 2013, the Karuna Center distributed the last of three surveys to all members of the core group of religious leaders present at the Final Knowledge Sharing/Closing Symposium. The core participants completed the first baseline survey at the first set of workshops in October 2011 and the second survey in March 2012.

We drew a sample of 24 from the core group of 72 religious leaders who participated in the entirety of the program – 7 Hindus, 5 Christian, 5 Buddhists, and 7 Muslims. This smaller but representative sample allows us to capture the progression of program impact from start to finish. The following quantitative data reflects these religious leaders’ opinions. For the sake of clarity, we will refer to these 24 paired surveys as the “matched core group” throughout the remainder of this report. A qualitative analysis of the surveys follows our quantitative results, and delves deeper into some responses of the matched core group while adding reflections from the total of 56 surveys completed at the Closing Symposium.

It is important to note that a handful of circumstances limit the overall scope of our analysis. While seventy-two religious leaders participated in the full program, there was a small amount of turnover. There were several instances where someone was moved to another district by their religious order and were then replaced by a new participant. As the trainings were large, and religious leaders with busy schedules sometimes came late or had to leave early, we were not successful in collecting surveys from all who participated. Names were used on some surveys, initials on others, and birth dates were not always included. As a result, we were only able to pair 24 of the original participant surveys with their matches in the final batch. (In the mid-term evaluation survey, which is included as an Annex, we were able to match 47.)

We utilized non-parametric statistics in our quantitative analysis of the data, as we could not assume similar variances or representative sampling. Few of the following analyses proved statistically significant, so we cannot extrapolate these results to the larger participant list. Those that are statistically significant are indicated with an asterisk. However, when combined with the more extensive qualitative analysis found later on in this report, the quantitative data still stands to contribute much to the “big picture.”

1 While the program began with 80 participants, 72 remained actively involved for its duration. Of the original 80, two Muslim participants left the country, and six Buddhists who came from outlying regions were only peripherally involved, participating in some trainings and community activities.

2 For the baseline survey, we received 76 surveys. In the mid-term survey, we received 66 surveys.
Quantitative Results of Written Surveys

The second and final surveys included the question, “Would you say program activities have increased tolerance and understanding for most participants?” For obvious reasons, the project team could not compare the final survey to the first, so the second survey was used in lieu of the first for this analysis. We pulled data from the second survey for each of the 24 matched core group members.

The data shows that all members of the matched core group believe the project has made a positive impact in their community—up from 78% one year ago. [Figure 1]

Next, we summarize and present the answers given by the matched core group to the question “What is/are the most serious issue(s) facing your community?” [Figure 2, next page]

Each participant could submit up to three open-ended responses. Their votes were then coded and aggregated by a member of the project team. As the graph shows, religious leaders believe that issues related to the economy, ethnic/religious tensions, morality, and health/substance abuse pose the greatest risk to their communities.

It is interesting to note that religious leaders cited ethnic or religious tensions as a risk more than twice as often at the end of the program as they had at the beginning. What accounts for the sharp rise?

Since there was no follow-up question, we cannot draw any decisive conclusions from their responses. It may well reflect concerns over the new inter-faith/ethnic tensions that have surfaced in Sri Lanka in recent months. Given the overwhelming positive feedback we received from our participants, it is also likely that the data reflects a heightened state of awareness of the tensions that still simmer in the aftermath of years of war and the obstacles these pose to reconciliation and sustainable peace.
We then asked religious leaders which entities they felt were responsible for the problems afflicting their communities [Figure 3, below]. In the first survey, a large portion of the matched core group identified members of “other faith groups” as the culprits. Today, the data paints a different picture.

When we disaggregate the final round of survey data by religion, we see that the matched core group was much less likely to point its fingers at members of other faith groups. Christian and Muslim religious leaders displayed the most progress. They no longer cited “other religious groups” as the part of the problem by the end of the project. Hindu leaders were 72% less likely to cite other
religious groups as the problem. These results were statistically significant, so we can assume that all Hindus, Muslims, and Christians among the 72 program participants would display a similar level of improvement. The Buddhists in our matched core group did not blame other religious groups either at the start or the finish. This may reflect a tendency among Buddhists to blame the war on the LTTE as “terrorists” and to minimize the role of minority grievances.

Next, we asked matched core group members how often they interacted with members of other religious groups. The religious leaders gauged the amount of time they spent with members of other religions on a scale of one to three— one signified low levels of interaction, and 3 signified high levels of interaction (left). We averaged and compared the responses given by the matched core group in the first survey with their responses in the final survey. The results are encouraging; matched core group members reported spending more time with Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians, and maintained a comparable level of contact with their Hindu counterparts.

We used the same methodology to analyze responses to the question, “How would you rate your knowledge of other faiths?” Each participant gave an answer on a scale from one to three—with one signifying little to no knowledge, and three signifying a good
understanding of other faiths. Disaggregating by religion, we find that Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian participants felt they better understood other faiths at the end of the program, while Muslim participants reported no change [Figure 5, previous page].

We also saw broad based improvement in attendance levels at inter-faith events [Figure 6, left]. The percentage of religious leaders who partook in activities with other religious groups in the last month approached 100% by the end of the program.

Finally, members of the matched core group confirmed that there was more peacebuilding work to be done in their communities [Figure 7, left]. Looking at the graph below, we find that the matched core group initially did not strongly rate post-conflict reconciliation as necessary or relevant to their communities. At the close of the program, not one member of the core matched group dismissed the importance of future peacebuilding efforts. Three decades of trauma and destruction cannot be undone in less than two years. Our data suggests that religious leaders recognize that their participation in this project was the first step on a long road to social healing.
Qualitative Results of Written Surveys

Our quantitative analysis of the 24 surveys within the matched core group suggests that participating religious leaders have become more knowledgeable about other religions and less inclined to blame other religious groups for community problems, and have deepened their level of interaction with people of other faiths. A qualitative analysis of the final survey that incorporates a range of open-ended questions provides additional insight into the changes experienced by members of each faith community. The analysis compares responses to the initial, mid-term and final surveys where possible and explores the program’s impact on the 56 participants who completed the final survey, noting both similarities and differences among faith groups. While some surveys impart relatively little information or evidence of personal change, others relate stories of personal transformation and community impact. Overwhelmingly, religious leaders of all four faith groups surveyed at the close of the program—both within and outside of the matched core group—reported an increased sense of acceptance and interfaith understanding in their own work and their communities.

Through interfaith dialogue and community projects, religious leaders appear to have seized opportunities to better understand and respect other faith groups. Many participants began the program without any sense of connection to any other religious group, yet by the end of the program, many of those surveyed reported meaningful relationships both among different faith minority groups and with Buddhist participants. In final survey responses, there is nearly universal appreciation for the knowledge gained about other faiths, a persistent theme of “unity” among members of different religions, and a frequent valuing, among Buddhist respondents, of the egalitarian and cooperative nature of their new relationships with faith minorities. Community impacts—particularly religious unity and understanding, and increased language skills—are echoed repeatedly in the open response questions from all group members surveyed at the end of the program within and outside of the sample group. Responses from participants from all faith groups regarding community impact often include a sense of broader attitudinal shift, including increased understanding, respect, and unity among people of different faiths, as well as reports of youth mingling freely across religious and ethnic divides as a result of language classes and other joint activities.

Perhaps because Sinhalese Buddhists comprise a majority that is reflected in the government, the pressing community problems they list in final surveys are generally different from those of faith minorities—despite the increased understanding reported between groups. Buddhists surveyed appear to be less concerned with structural inequality than communal divides, often mentioning “language” as a pressing issue. Hindus and Muslims who completed final surveys shared concerns primarily about economic issues and poverty, and were joined by many Christian participants in their next most pressing concerns, regarding equal rights and religious freedom. While this may reflect a continuing divide between Buddhist and faith minorities on some level, responses of various religious leaders also reflect a determination to continue working collaboratively across that gap.

Some Hindu members of the matched core group, in particular, began the program with serious concerns about preservation and protection of their faith. Over the course of the program, these participants appear to have developed an openness to collaboration with other groups in order to solve
problems. For example, in the first survey, one Hindu participant identified Christian conversions and “purity of temples” as problems, but in the final survey instead listed “unawareness of the views of other religions.” In her first and second surveys—but not the final survey—she identified “other faith groups” as among the causes of community problems. During the project, she helped to lead interfaith language training classes for youth that she reported successfully broke down barriers between participants and leaders alike. In her final survey, she reflected, “We were people who had no connections with other religious groups, and now are able to smile, say hello, help each other... In order to develop ourselves economically, we can start home industries jointly with other religious groups.” Many other Hindu responses also mention increased “unity” and “understanding” in local communities. One Hindu leader said that there is now “an attitude of respecting all religions, participating in other religious activities, and inviting others to our religious activities.”

Christian participants also reported that they had developed deeper relationships with members of other religions, sometimes showing evidence of dramatic attitudinal change. Within the matched core group of 24, two different Christian members initially identified other faith groups as responsible for problems in their communities. One Tamil-speaking Christian listed, as the most pressing concerns, the impacts made by Muslim, Hindu, and Sinhalese (Buddhist) groups. Another Tamil-speaking Christian listed his top pressing concerns as “By Hindus,” “By Sinhalese,” and “Drunkards.” Both of these participants no longer listed other religious groups as the cause of their problems in the final survey, with the participant who previously listed Hindus, Sinhalese, and drunkards instead listing as his pressing concerns, “lack of unity with other religions,” “lack of understanding of activities of other religions,” and “disrespect of other religious leaders.” This religious leader participated in a number of interfaith activities, including shramadana, activities to paint places of worship, and joint sports activities. When asked about the biggest changes in his own work as a religious leader that are related to the project, he wrote, “We obtained unity, understanding, and knowledge.”

Another Christian, who spoke Sinhala as his primary language, is an example of a participant who entered the program already eager to engage in inter-communal work. In the first survey, he cited a high need for reconciliation but a lack of opportunities for interreligious collaboration. In his final survey, he wrote that within his community, the program has brought about religious knowledge, economic empowerment, increased language skills, and respect for other religions.

Muslim participants likewise reported a deeper understanding of other faiths and respect between religions at the close of the program. One wrote, “I was able to change my attitudes by taking part in interreligious activities and by meetings with religious leaders; I was able to understand the value of others’ prayers.” Some discussed the ways in which the program had helped them to do better service as religious leaders; one stated, “I am able to apply the religious tolerance that my religion teaches,” and another wrote that as a result of this project, “I have confidence we could face any situation.” In terms of the community impact, Muslim participants reported increased tolerance, unity, and respect. One said, “Unity has taken root; we are involved in many group activities.” Another noted, “A sense of respecting people of other religions was created.” Another wrote of his community, “Some have started to talk that we could live happily through dialogues and exchange of views.”
Some participants—most notably Hindu and Muslim group members—continued to mention Sinhala Buddhist “hegemony,” “racism,” and “religion-based oppression” as pressing concerns in their final surveys, but a read into their responses throughout the survey as a whole suggests that they came to experience interreligious collaboration as a valuable strategy for addressing these problems. One Hindu member of the matched core group stated, in his final survey, that the majority is “acting on the basis of Sinhala Buddhist mentality,” yet prescribed a collaborative strategy for solving that problem: “It has come to light that intellectuals are behind the ethnic conflict. We need to win their minds and get their participation for peacebuilding.” A Muslim participant who joined the program in May 2012, and therefore did not complete the first survey, had a similar response during the final evaluation. Though he identified pressing community issues of “domination of the majority group,” “oppression of minorities through politics,” and “religion-based oppression,” he said that the project had “created religious reconciliation,” giving him “the opportunity of working together with members of all faiths.” These responses are not paradoxical: the project did not seek to disregard grievances, but to equip participants with new tools and relationships for addressing problems both in their communities and in society at large.

The survey results of Buddhist participants convey similar stories of personal change. Buddhist respondents often valued the knowledge they obtained about other religions, with one adding, “I attended Hindu and Muslim festivals as a result of the knowledge I gained.” In terms of community impact, many reported new relationships of cooperation formed by working across religious lines. One wrote that the program “built up language skills, created economic empowerment, built up positive attitudes, and built up peace.” Another wrote, “We worked together; everyone is equal.”

One Buddhist participant in particular stands out as someone who appears to have developed a remarkably different understanding of other religious groups' concerns as a result of the project. In the first survey, this individual identified the pressing issues within the community as “jobs for the youth,” “environmental problems,” and “education for small children,” stating that “one of the best religions, my religion correctly analyzes what is correct as correct, and what is wrong as wrong.” After involvement in interfaith dialogues and a Sinhala language class for Tamil and Muslim children, this same participant reported in the mid-term that the pressing community concerns were “language communication difficulty” and “not understanding each other.” In the final survey, after participating in others' religious festivals, co-organizing interfaith activities related to child abuse prevention, and attending the project's national conference, this participant listed the most pressing community concerns as “racism and religion-based oppression,” “land issues,” and “language and communication problems.” This group member identified personal changes as “good listening and tolerance; respecting others' views,” noting that community impacts included not only “improved language abilities” but also “eradication of racism and religion-based oppression from the minds of all participants and their colleagues.”

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\[3\] This term was first translated into English as “religionism,” with a translator’s side note that the term meant “religion-based intensiveness like racism.” To clarify the meaning of this term in English as distinct from religious zeal, we use the phrase “religion-based oppression” here instead.
In terms of improvements to the program, most responses suggested that the program be continued while a few offered concrete suggestions for expansion. One Muslim participant wrote, “As you conduct workshops for us, the religious leaders, you must also help us to conduct workshops in our own region.” A Buddhist participant suggested involving top-level religious leaders; other participants suggested adopting a broader or national scope; and as mentioned previously, another suggested working with intellectuals perceived as antagonists to reconciliation. Some respondents also mentioned a need for continued support for this work.

In their responses to the survey’s questions about the continuation of the program into the future, many respondents expressed a strong desire and need for continued support. Some participants specifically mentioned the need to continue community projects. Some expressed their personal commitment to continuing some form of this work; others felt continued funding and/or guidance was essential. In general, participants were optimistic about the basis the program provided for future work. One Buddhist participant wrote, “Peace has built up among a small number of people, but it needs to continue to work in the whole society; then we will have sustainable peace.”

**FINAL INTERVIEWS**

In addition to the surveys, final interviews were carried out with 26 participants. Seventeen of the 20 religious leaders interviewed during the mid-term evaluation process remained available for final interviews. Of the three religious leaders who were no longer available, one was Christian, one Hindu, and one Muslim. Three new subjects, a Christian and two Hindu leaders, were included in the final interviews in their place. Additionally, six religious committee members were included in final interviews, to incorporate a sample from the group of 93 younger adults who joined the program as it expanded during implementation. These are identified as “youth” participants within the context of religious leadership in Sri Lanka, ranging in age from their 20s to early 30s.

A purposeful sampling process was used, as the overall core group of 72 participants is too small to use a random selection process and still maintain a balanced mix of religions, gender, and geography. Religions and districts were selected as indicated in the tables below. The final interview sample included three female religious leaders and two female youth. Half of the religious leaders selected were considered by the project staff to be active participants and the other half to be “average” participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Leaders</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padaviya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trincomalee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews were conducted in Sinhala or Tamil and translated into English, and translations were summaries and not full transcripts. Two different interviewers, one Tamil-speaking and one Sinhala-speaking, conducted the interviews using the questions in Annex III. The mid-term interview summaries of Buddhist and other Sinhala-speaking participants were brief in contrast with those of Tamil-speaking participants, and this difference remains, though less marked, in the final interview summaries. Subtle differences in the approach of the Sinhala-speaking interviewer and the Tamil-speaking interviewer may also have influenced the content and emphasis of the interviews and summaries.

With these caveats in mind, we have identified repeated themes within the interviews, with particular emphasis on the changes observable both in the group as a whole and in specific participant’s responses. Annex IV provides a summary of responses to each specific question in the final interviews. That summary offers another useful perspective on the overall impact of the project, but for the sake of brevity is not included in the body of this report. A question-by-question comparison of participant responses between the mid-term and final stage of the project was impractical. The mid-term and final interviews were designed both to promote comparison and to elicit different information. Two questions were identical, but the others were somewhat different. The focus during mid-term interviews was to get critical information that would help assess how well we were doing in meeting our objective so that we could, if necessary, make course corrections. The focus at the end was to assess overall impact. Nevertheless, a comparison of responses between the mid-term and final interviews is quite revealing.

**General Observations: Mid-Term vs. Final Interview Responses**

In the mid-term interviews, participants made many references to increased understanding of other religions and how other groups suffered during the war. Many interviewees shared specific information about how other groups suffered during the war years, contradicting previously held beliefs that only their own group had truly suffered. Many expressed a sense of relief after the interfaith dialogues, noting the alleviation of fears they had experienced in anticipation of dialogue, the openness they found in other participants, and the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings about their own faiths. Some also reflected upon the ways in which the biases they had previously held were changed. All reported an increased understanding of the conflicts in their communities and described the inter-religious activities in which they participated; nearly all reported a deeper understanding of their common role as religious leaders in building peace. Many shared appreciation for new friends from other religions and the opportunity to participate in the ceremonies and celebrations of other religions, which most had never
done before. Most spoke of specific modules and exercises in the trainings which deepened their understanding of conflict and ways to rebuild open communication and trust. Overall, they expressed a desire to see the program expand and continue.

In the final interviews, many of these themes continued. Participants continued to find value in interfaith dialogue, relationships, and community projects, and saw the project as having a positive impact regarding interfaith tensions. New themes emerging during the final interview process appear to reflect continued investment in interfaith work, further development of interfaith relationships, and expansion of the program’s impact throughout local communities.

During the mid-term interviews, many participants expressed unease with broader trends they worried could lead to future violence—and this theme continued in the final interviews. Every one of the participants interviewed in Tamil mentioned concerns about discrimination, interethnic tensions, and religious freedom for faith minorities. Though these problems persisted, participants from each faith group generally appeared more aware of the challenges faced by other groups than they did in the mid-term, indicating increased understanding. The most frequent concern raised during the mid-term interviews—a sense of time pressure—does not emerge as a theme within the final interviews. This may be due to the introduction of an additional 93 younger religious committee members to the project who were invited, in part, to address this concern. It may also reflect the work done to build district level interfaith councils as sustainable organizations that will carry this work into the future.

Themes Emerging from Final Interviews

In the following paragraphs, we identify themes that have emerged out of the final interview process in comparison with mid-term responses. On the whole, participants have deepened interfaith relationships, engaged in meaningful community projects, and report an overall lessening of fear both for themselves and between members of different ethnic religious groups in their communities, despite pernicious legacies of the civil war.

*Participant responses in the final interviews seem to reflect a deepening of interfaith relationships since the mid-term.* Similarly to the mid-term, all participants in final interviews noted the value of interfaith relationships built during the program. However, a number of new reflections and stories emerge that suggest a deeper sense of connection. A Muslim participant who had reflected positively on interfaith relationships in the mid-term went on to report in the final interview that he is now “worrying for their sorrows” whereas previously he had not. A few participants mentioned that they now eat together—a development of particular meaning because of the convention for Hindu priests to eat apart from others. A Christian participant who stated, in the mid-term interview, that he had not previously known people of other faiths reported in the final interview that he has now “created a good family” of religious leaders. After a Buddhist mob violently attacked a church elsewhere in Sri Lanka, that Christian leader seemed to be undaunted despite receiving criticism from a vocal minority within his community for his interfaith relationships.

*In the final interviews, participants reported broader and more profound impact of interfaith projects in their local communities.* During the mid-term evaluation process, participants reflected on the
opportunities that community projects were providing for building interfaith relationships. In the final interviews—which took place after a total of 53 interfaith community projects had been implemented—many participants discussed the impact these projects had beyond directly project-related activities. This suggests that the interfaith relationships referenced during the mid-term interviews have resulted in a broader community impact. Many noted that community members are now taking initiative to visit the homes and places of worship of people of other faiths. They are attending each other’s religious festivals, special feasts, weddings, and funerals. Several participants mentioned that the language classes for youth are creating good relationships between the parents as well. A Muslim participant who had participated in the palmyra production project and shramadana activities was emphatic that “more than 90% of community people” had changed their opinions and thoughts about other religions since the program’s start, noting that Hindu and Muslim children have begun walking to school together. A Hindu participant from the same district told the story of a local Hindu girl who got into an accident on the road and was soon visited at her home by a group of Muslim girls wishing her well, who were in turn invited into the homes of surrounding community members. He attributed this turn of events to the project’s impact.

Participants from every faith group reported lessening fear when interacting with members of other communities—despite a rise in inter-communal tensions in Sri Lanka as a whole. Mid-term interviews reflected relief from fears about initial contact with members of other faith groups. The theme of reduced fear continues in the final evaluations, across all faiths, with two significant developments. First, the decrease in tension felt by participants occurs despite frequent mention of incidents targeting faith minorities in Sri Lanka, as Bodu Bala Sena (an extremist Buddhist organization) gained power during the early part of 2013. Secondly, some participants reported feeling more courage and comfort not only within the structure of the organized program, but also in their travels and interactions within the broader community. One Hindu participant noted that Hindus and Muslims in Batticaloa can now travel to each other’s villages without fear, and attributed this new development to the success of the community programs. This reduction in fear was reported by members of all faiths, both in terms of interactions between Buddhists and members of minority religions and in terms of interactions between members of minority religions.

Participants continued to reflect a deepening understanding of the experiences of people in other faith groups. In the mid-term interviews, many participants remarked on their new understanding of others’ faith traditions and the ways in which other groups had suffered during the war. In the final interviews, nearly all participants stated that they had a better understanding of other faiths and/or a heightened awareness or respect for diverse points of view. While most Hindu, Muslim, and Christian participants expressed concern in the final interviews over rising interfaith tensions in Sri Lanka as a whole, the majority of those who did mentioned not only their own group but also concern for the rights and wellbeing of people of other faiths. Although only one Buddhist participant commented on these rising tensions, this concern was completely absent from Buddhists interviewed in the mid-term interviews.

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4 The palmyra (palm-weaving craft) project engaged participants from Hindu and Muslim border villages occupied by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Sri Lankan Army respectively. Tensions had remained high since the end of the war. The palmyra project was the first to engage participants from both these communities.
fact, during mid-term interviews, two Buddhists even commented on the lack of tension. No Buddhists identified a lack of tension during the final interview summaries, a change that would seem to reflect an increased awareness of and sensitivity to tensions. Nearly all Buddhist participants reported greater understanding of other faiths and greater respect for other religious leaders.

Youth Participant Responses

Ninety-three members of local religious committees were brought into the program in the summer and fall of 2012 in order to broaden the scope of the program and enhance the peacebuilding capacity of younger community members. As we prepared to implement the interfaith community projects, we anticipated that incorporating the leadership of religious committee members could also alleviate concerns that arose in the mid-term evaluation surrounding time constraints.

Among the six youth members who were interviewed for the final evaluation, themes emerge similar to those in the mid-term interviews of religious leaders who had discovered new knowledge and friends through interfaith dialogue. Every one of the youth interviewed conveyed a sense of attitudinal change. A young Buddhist woman from Padaviya said, “It was the first time I participated in this kind of training program. I did not have any idea of any other religions except Buddhism. After the training program, I attended a youth camp at a mosque, and that was also my first time visiting a mosque. I think I have built good relationships with Muslim friends in my area. Earlier, I did not have such friends.” Others felt less anger toward other groups and more comfort interacting with other faith groups.

Youth participants also cited the community impact of the project. A young Muslim man who taught English to Hindu, Muslim, and Christian children through this project observed that in earlier lessons, children were of a “suspicious mindset,” but that “after one week it had changed.” He echoed religious leaders’ observations that the language classes also brought parents together across faiths.

Perceptions of Sustainability and Future Needs

In the final interviews, the last question asked participants, “Do you think any changes in your community related to this project will continue even though it is now over?” This question was not included in the mid-term interviews. It elicited similar responses between religious leaders and youth interviewed. Though some anticipated that aspects of the program would continue—friendships across faiths, and various cooperative efforts—many felt that continued funding and leadership from Sarvodaya and Karuna Center were important to the sustainability of community-based reconciliation efforts. One youth participant said that if funding stopped, “the project will go on like a car without a driver, and soon will collapse.” This theme of worry about future funding appears, for many, to be connected to their own interest and willingness to continue investing time and energy in reconciliation efforts. In their responses to this question, many participants also shared ideas for expanding the program to reach more youth, top religious leaders, politicians, or additional districts. Several noted that 12-18 months was not enough time to adequately address the damage brought by nearly three decades of war. Perceptions of sustainability may vary according to level of involvement in the interfaith councils. The Batticaloa council, for example, has begun initiating its own activities out of its own fundraising. Impact interviews with members of the council’s core group gave a more optimistic picture
of sustainability. Nevertheless, sustainability is clearly a legitimate concern.

Impact Interviews

In addition to the 26 evaluation interviews, a total of 23 impact interviews were conducted with religious leaders from the core group, young religious committee members, community project beneficiaries, language teachers, and one community member. All described significant shifts from social distance and/or hostility between faith groups to increased levels of contact, friendship, and joint initiative. The only concerns expressed are related to how to carry the work further and gain greater support from political leaders. As the results are very similar to what has been described in the surveys and semi-structured interviews, the impact interviews are not summarized in any further detail here. Instead we have extracted stories of both personal and community change and presented them as significant change stories.

OUTCOME MAPPING

Our “outcome challenge” and progress markers for what we would “expect to see,” “like to see,” and “love to see” were established in a meeting with Karuna Center and the Sarvodaya project manager and district staff at the start of the program (see Annex V). Progress on each of the 14 progress markers was assessed in March 2012, in September 2012, and in March 2013.

In our March 2012 meeting, the staff noted strong attendance at workshops and overall enthusiasm for the community projects as indicators of strong engagement, estimating that 95% of the leaders were involved with at least one project. Initiatives to create divisional and district level interfaith committees to support the projects was cited as another example of commitment. The staff noted that after the interfaith dialogues there was considerable warmth and physical contact between leaders of different faiths—for example, walking arm and arm—which they saw as unusual within Sri Lankan culture. Project staff also cited examples of religious leaders showing initiative to deepen their contacts with each other apart from organized activities, which included inviting each other to religious festivals and attending each other’s community project events. Referring to our list of progress markers, we determined that we were already seeing much of what we would “like to see,” in terms of relationship-building and commitment to the program, but we were not yet seeing the kind of initiative that would guarantee sustainability beyond the life of the project.

Our September 2012 meeting about the progress markers led to a discussion of the ways in which participants were demonstrating deeper changes in attitudes and behaviors. It was noted that in the beginning of the program, there was a reluctance to speak openly. In the first interfaith workshop the importance of religious tolerance and peace was lauded, but in-depth discussion of tensions and challenges in the districts was avoided. By September, religious leaders of all faiths seemed comfortable speaking honestly about their concerns. Relationships seemed relaxed, participants sat in mixed groups, and Buddhist monks did not seem to mind if their chairs did not have white cloths. During shramadana events, the leaders took care to make sure the other leaders had places to pray according to their own customs. Religious leaders had made a strong showing at each other’s project-related events and seemed to recognize the symbolic importance of being seen in public working together. Discussions at
the district level interfaith councils reflected growing commitment to sustainability. Some weaknesses were noted in the support for the many activities taking place in Trincomalee, and this discussion led Sarvodaya to replace the Trincomalee project manager. One Trincomalee Hindu participant got inspired to organize an interfaith shramadana at his temple, independently from our project and with temple funds. We hoped that such examples would increase as the project proceeded. As we looked at the indicators for what we would “love to see,” we noted that the religious leaders were very comfortable publically supporting each other’s events, but that they did not seem ready to advocate together around perceived injustices.

In our final meeting, there was general consensus that the impact of the program exceeded expectations. As of March 2013, we reflected that most of the following progress markers from our “love to see” section had either been partially or fully met:

1) **Religious leaders take initiative for developing new multi-ethnic/multi-religious projects at the community level that will extend beyond the life of the program.** The religious leaders have created interfaith councils with clear organizational structures and governing bodies in each district. These councils will continue to implement community projects and address interfaith tensions as they emerge. The Batticaloa council has already started raising its own funds and implementing “awareness” programs, using materials from the religious leaders’ trainings.

2) **Religious leaders challenge intolerant statements from others.** Buddhists participants have criticized the uproar over Halal meat and statements suggesting that Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country. Religious leaders from Batticaloa came together to help repair a Buddhist statue that was damaged in Ampara.

3) **100% of religious leaders participate in community development and social empowerment projects and/or lead interfaith community dialogues.** All (100%) of the religious leaders have at least partially participated in community projects, and the majority of participants have been very active.

4) **Religious leaders together advocate with government authorities for policy changes that benefit all communities.** In preparing and reading their joint statements for interfaith tolerance at the national conference, the religious leaders had their first experience of advocating for policy change. In the Hoivopatham area of Padaviya and in the Kantale area of Trincomalee, Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders have formed interfaith committees in collaboration with local government and police to address rising Buddhist/Muslim tensions.

5) **Religious leaders will establish a national peacebuilding network.** This target was not attempted, as it seemed neither wise nor realistic given the rising interfaith tensions in the country at large. Deepening the work at the regional level was seen as more effective, and efforts were made to strengthen the district level interfaith councils. However, the director of Sarvodaya’s Shanti Sena movement is the South Asian representative of United Religions Initiative (URI) and plans to create regional chapters that could serve as the framework of a
national interfaith network. The fact that URI is an international group could make it less subject to Sri Lankan politics.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES

As part of our final evaluation process, we looked for stories of “significant change” among participants in the program. We collected stories from the impact interviews conducted by Sarvodaya and Karuna Center staff and the final interviews. They come from core participants, a young religious committee member, a language teacher, and a local Muslim businessman whom we include for a community perspective.

The theory of change that has driven this project is the idea that if key religious leaders from all faiths develop mutual understanding and positive, tolerant attitudes toward each other, and engage in joint activities in their communities, then these broader communities will develop more tolerant, positive attitudes toward each other, and conflict and ethnic tensions will significantly decrease.

Following this logic, we first include in this section stories of personal transformation: the attitudinal shifts that religious leaders report, resulting in greater tolerance, understanding, and participation in inter-religious community activities. We next explore stories of community impact, in which participants reflect upon the changes that inter-religious activities have brought to their communities. Because we actively sought out stories of significant change, rather than surveying a representative sample, these stories obviously do not provide quantitative data. Nevertheless, themes of community impact emerge that support the outcomes anticipated by the project’s theory of change and give more detailed examples of trends noted in the surveys and interviews.

Stories of Personal Transformation

1. Buddhist monk and core participant, Trincomalee

Although Sarvodaya gave an introduction about the program before it started, this Buddhist monk did not join the training with much awareness. “There was multi-religious representation at the training programs, but (at first) we did not acknowledge their presence even with a smile,” he reflected. “We were full of our religion, our concepts only. We had no occasion to work with people of other religions, nor did we have any idea about their attitudes and work… We started discussing, arguing and working together and the gap between us started narrowing down.”

“At the early stages it was our race, our religion, but the experience received from the program made us think of other religions and ethnic groups in the same way we thought of our race and religion, and that there should be unity and co-existence among all religious and ethnic groups. Now we are a dedicated group, keenly interested to achieve this goal, shouldeering responsibility at the highest level. Already, 30 religious leaders from all religions in Trincomalee, because of this program alone, work in unity, extending goodwill, inculcating peace, harmony and wholesome attitudes in the minds of people.”

To promote inter-religious co-existence, he and other religious leaders celebrated Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Maha Shivaratri, Ramadan and Christmas as international festivals with inter-religious
participation. He is hoping for more support from government officials for interfaith religious festivals. “On our part we are able to do what is needed in an organized manner. The parties responsible, the government, the political leaders should act with more responsibility. Then only is sustainable peace possible. Although it will take a long time and is a somewhat difficult task, if the government, civil society organizations, and the general public join in the effort, it would not be such a difficult target to achieve.”

2. Hindu priest and core participant, Trincomalee

This Hindu priest speaks both Tamil and Sinhala, and has been involved in previous interfaith work. He was particularly struck by the ways in which Buddhist monks have been changed by this program. He feels that the interfaith dialogues, as well as the exchange visit with the interfaith group in Galle, had a pivotal role.

He was glad that the monks now interact freely with members of the other faith groups and do not insist on sitting on white cloths. He is particularly impressed with a young monk who is president of the Trincomalee interfaith council. This monk did not seem very interested or engaged at the beginning of the program, but over time has become very active. He even personally apologized for the comments of a well known Buddhist monk who described Sri Lanka as a “Sinhalese Buddhist country” at the national conference, and he has spoken out against the Buddhist protests regarding Halal meat. “With the other Buddhist monks I can now speak openly, but with this monk I feel I can really collaborate,” this Hindu priest explained. “Given what is happening with Bodu Bala Sena, collaborating with Buddhist monks is especially important.”

3. Christian priest and core participant, Batticaloa

He had experienced peace-related activities in the past, and has taken part in high-level peace and reconciliation forums. However, he said that this project has increased his curiosity for peacebuilding activities and allowed him to forge more inter-religious relationships.

Through this project, he assisted with language classes, awareness programs, sports festivals, and palmyra craft training. He also arranged an essay competition about interfaith thought and human morality, which will result in a published book. He recounted an instance where, at a church opening ceremony, 1350 people arrived though he had only arranged food for 1000. In front of the huge crowd, he asked for help from a Muslim religious leader who was able to provide what they needed.

He reports that his thinking about the importance of peace and reconciliation has increased, and he has gained greater knowledge about other religions. As a result, he is now planning to enter a doctoral program in interfaith dialogue in Rome.

4. Young Hindu religious committee member, Batticaloa

This young Hindu man reported that he began the program very angry with Muslims, because he had been negatively affected by them, but that the training sessions have totally changed his attitudes and thinking. Now, he is even travelling with a Muslim Imam to attend programs in other parts of Sri Lanka.
He reported that he and his peers used to be “addicted to talk about racism and riots,” and called Muslims and Buddhists bad names. Now he admires the Buddhist monks in the program who sit with members of other groups and talk to them without hesitation. Now he realizes that “everyone has a good heart and humanity.”

Through the program, he participated in language classes, organized a cultural program, facilitated leadership trainings, and attended a Muslim Iftar festival. He has formed a justice and conscience group, which is identifying community problems and creating street dramas to promote awareness. The last one was on peace and social cohesion. He has also started a local newspaper that features peace related activities, and writers and poets who are writing about sustainable peace.

Stories of Community Impact

1. Participants in the palmyra project, Batticaloa

Participants in this project came from two Hindu and Christian villages, Aarmuhaththan and Kudiyiruppu, and the Muslim village of Eravur. During the war, the LTTE occupied the two Hindu/Christian villages and the Sinhalese army occupied the Muslim village. Villagers were accused of being collaborators by both sides. Muslims thought all the Tamils were “terrorists,” and Tamils thought all Muslims were spies for the army. Shops and houses were burned and civilians lost their lives. Before the start of this program, relations remained distant and/or hostile, and youths often became involved in fights with each other. Women from the different faith groups had no contact with each other at all. While Christians and Hindus lived in the same villages, they lived in different sections.

The first group of participants included 21 women: 7 Hindus, 7 Muslims, and 7 Christians. During the course of the program, they got to know each other well and became friends. Since the end of the training, the women have continued to work in interfaith teams on a daily basis in each other’s homes to fill orders. They now have an order for 500 baskets. The women hope to open their own shop in town, so they can sell directly to customers and get better prices. They will collaborate with the second group of women who completed their training in February.

When interviewed, the women elaborated on the ways that their joint training and subsequent shared work has helped to build better relations. They now attend weddings, funerals, and festivals in each other’s villages and bring along their families and friends. If they witness trouble brewing among youths, they warn each other, call the religious leaders, and if necessary, call the police. Some of the youth from the villages also participated in cultural programs, sports programs and Sinhala language classes organized by the religious leaders. The women think these activities also greatly contributed to improved relations between young people.

2. Muslim manager for Lanka Mineral Sands, a local mining operation

Not a participant in the project—a community member

This company manager works in Pulmoddai, a coastal village in Trincomaltee District with a majority Muslim population and Hindu and Sinhala minorities. The village came under heavy fire from both sides
during the war, and bitter feelings lingered on among all three groups. Though he was not directly involved in the program, he supported the religious leaders in the community projects, which he saw as important for healing community relations. He works with all communities at his factory and wants to see better relations in the village.

He reported that his local community had language classes, a sports festival and a cultural exchange program. He helped the religious leaders organize the activities and showed up at related events. He was especially pleased that the local Buddhist monk also offered his support. He sees that as a result of these activities relations between groups have eased. Members of different groups are now attending each other’s religious festivals, weddings, and funerals.

3. Hindu English language teacher, Trincomalee

In her part of town, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people all live in close proximity. She said, “It is natural for problems to crop up in an area inhabited by people who do not understand one another’s language, as they are ignorant of each other’s needs and attitudes.” This project provided the first opportunity for inter-religious language classes in her community.

Prior to launching the project, the religious leaders visited local schools, met with principals and senior students, explained what the project is all about, and encouraged their participation. Classes began with only a few students, but as the news spread, the numbers started increasing. Students studying in (O) level, G.C.E. (A) level, and following degree courses, as well as young office workers, all attended the classes.

For her, what is most significant is to have students of Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil ethnicity, belonging to four different religions, all studying together. All other classes she had previously taught were divided by ethnicity. At the beginning, it was a little difficult to build connections, as students grouped themselves by ethnicity. But gradually, they started mixing with others in the class and building friendships. During breaks, everybody gets together and starts singing in English, Tamil, and Sinhala. “This brings us joy as teachers, and also some pride,” she reports. When she was interviewed, the class was ending and there were many requests for continuation of the program.

4. An Imam and youth members of his mosque who participated in language classes, shramadana, and a sports festival in Maharoofnagar, Kinniya

According to the Imam, this program offered his first opportunity to work with leaders of other religions and their followers. Before the program, “It was about our religion, our race and us...After the training program experiences, there was belief that unity among us would bring greater stability...At a program in a hotel in Dambulla, all the religious leaders had their meal seated together. People who saw us thought that there was a problem and gazed at us in a funny way, as if it was very strange that people of all religions were seated together. This gave us a special message...By our example, we can change the conditioning of peoples’ minds and lead them to be more open-minded.”

Youth described how new friendships were formed with other ethnic groups through the language
classes, *shramadana*, and sports festival. Muslim, Tamil and Sinhala students attending the language classes raised money and put on a cultural festival at which Tamil and Muslim youth made presentations in Sinhala, and Sinhala youth made presentations in Tamil. At the conclusion of the *shramadana*, which was held at a church, Muslim and Hindu religious leaders, army personnel, and police shared their views, noting they were there because the youth had taken the initiative to organize the event and they felt inspired to promote similar events in the future.

**5. Buddhist nun, Padaviya**

This Buddhist nun lives in a poor, rural area, and she entered the project already active in social service. But previously, she explained, leaders from each religion conducted relief activities separately and did not have the opportunity to work together. “Unlike engaging in social service work alone, when one joins a group of Muslim, Tamil and Sinhala religious leaders and works in unity, it brings great strength,” she said.

In order to implement interfaith community projects, she had to overcome obstacles to cooperation. First, the Grama Niladari (village head) called youth and religious leaders from the area together for a community meeting, where he fervently spoke against the plans for inter-religious classes in language, sewing, and mushroom cultivation.

This Buddhist nun explained, “Such a situation was never expected. We were very keen that the program should be conducted and I waited until he became calm. I spoke firmly. I reminded him that when the school in our area was built, it was good that Muslim people helped. If we did not have divisive thinking then, why should we think divisively now? Even the President of this country has reminded us of the need for national unity. I requested the Grama Niladari to patiently join the program and see for himself the outcome. The Grama Niladari was silent. One day he came to the monastery bringing alms and told us to start on the program, that it was a good one and that he would also help.”

Yet more obstacles remained. Initially, they did not have enough people to start the mushroom cultivation classes, because people were hesitant to work with other religious groups. In response, religious leaders held meetings to convince villagers of the value of unity, and went from house to house to explain the program. Once people began to participate in the program and see its benefits, their attitudes started changing. There were instances where poor mothers were able to send their children to school with the earnings from the mushroom project. Youth also began attending language classes quite willingly, and soon requested more. A Muslim village invited a Buddhist village for a *sharamana*—then the Muslims came to their village and did *shramadana*. By the end of the program, a majority of the people that had viewed the projects with doubt or displeasure had participated in joint activities.

The exposure visit to Galle also gave religious leaders confidence in interfaith work and got rid of fears about working with people of other religions. Now, she and other religious leaders in the area are working together, along with parents, to create awareness among the general public about child abuse and sexual harassment. In her community, religious leaders now mingle with groups other than their own at festivals. She claims, “Religious leaders have ensured that we will never again have religious conflicts in this area. This is a great victory.” This is of course wishful thinking, but this nun’s optimism
and sense of possibility has shown itself to be a formidable force for change.

SUCCESS IN MEETING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts and Padaviya Division project was built around two core objectives, each with two expected results:

**Objective #1:** Empower religious leaders to foster community reconciliation through conflict transformation skills, community development, and social empowerment projects that engage a broad range of community members.

*Result #1:* Religious leaders from four faith groups develop skills in conflict mitigation/resolution skills.

*Result #2:* Religious leaders take initial steps at becoming social change agents in their communities by initiating community development and social empowerment projects that engage a broad range of community members.

**Objective #2:** Promote and strengthen opportunities for inter-religious/inter-ethnic dialogue in communities to increase understanding and restore trust.

*Result #1:* Religious leaders participate in facilitated inter-religious dialogues.

*Result #2:* Religious leaders facilitate inter-religious or inter-ethnic dialogue in their communities

The results of surveys, interviews, outcome mapping, and significant change stories would all suggest that our first objective was successfully met with the expected results. The religious leaders who participated in our program have developed greater understanding for the sources of conflict and skills for bridging divides between themselves and among their communities. During the impact interviews and our mid-term evaluation interviews (within Annex VI), religious leaders reported that they were using many of the models and skills that they learned in the program’s series of trainings in their community-based peacebuilding and awareness-raising projects. Our outcome mapping reveals that they have taken their role as social change agents seriously; they have developed three ongoing district-level inter-faith councils to continue community-based interfaith projects and publically model interfaith collaboration. In the Hoivopatham area of Padaviya and in the Kantale area of Trincomalee, Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders have formed interfaith committees in collaboration with local government and police to address rising Buddhist/Muslim tensions.

In evaluating our success in achieving the second objective, we can say that the community projects clearly had the effect of increasing mutual understanding and restoring trust at the community level. However, for the most part, this was accomplished through joint activities and “awareness and peacebuilding programs,” rather than stand-alone dialogues. While the religious leaders gained
tremendous insight from their own dialogue experiences and incorporated dialogue-like discussions into community programs—particularly those with youth—these discussions were not the kind of in-depth dialogues the religious leaders themselves engaged in as part of their training. In-depth dialogue requires experienced facilitators, especially when the topics are sensitive. The religious leaders chose wisely the kinds of activities that they could manage and that their communities would be ready to receive as a first step in rebuilding relationships. In retrospect, result #2 was overly ambitious and would be more appropriate in a future phase, both for the religious leaders and for their communities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At the beginning of this project, we developed a series of key questions that are intended to evaluate our program’s success in meeting the outcome challenge (Annex I). We expected that fostering increased tolerance and cooperation among religious leaders would, through interfaith projects, lead to positive shifts in attitude in the wider community. The key questions we created to evaluate our success are:

- **Is there evidence that attitudes are changing and in the desired direction?** If so, is the change linked to the program? And if so, how/why? **Is there evidence that behaviors are changing**—are participants doing more with participants in the program from other faiths? **Outside of the program?** If so, is there evidence that the change is linked to program? And if so, how/why?

- **Is there evidence that the broader society is being exposed to more tolerant attitudes?** Is there evidence of broader societal attitudinal changes? **Is there evidence that youth are becoming involved in reconciliation or conflict prevention activities?** Is there evidence that this engagement is changing their attitudes or behaviors?

- **Is there evidence that the program is affecting overall levels of conflict/violence in any way?**

Our surveys and semi-structured interviews reveal that religious leaders’ attitudes changed substantially as a result of their participation in the program. Many participants dismantled previously held stereotypes about other religious groups, often attributing their newly gained understanding to the interfaith dialogues. Many also reported reduced fear or anxiety while interacting with members of other faiths, with some mentioning that they were positively influenced by interfaith dialogues and/or the exposure visit to Galle.

An overwhelming majority of religious leaders surveyed and interviewed at the close of the program reported that they had developed an increased sense of acceptance, respect, and/or understanding of other faiths. All participants in final interviews spoke to the value of the interfaith relationships built during the program. Our survey data shows that religious leaders were far less likely to blame other religions for community problems at the close of the program. These themes are also found within the impact interviews and stories of significant change, in which participants discuss the ways in which the program has broadened their thinking. In interviews, some participants reported feeling more courage and comfort not only within the structure of the organized program, but also in their travels and interactions within the broader community.
Annex I: Evaluation Design

Theory of Change – If key religious leaders from all faiths can develop mutual understanding and positive, tolerant attitudes towards each other, and engage in joint activities in their communities, then these broader communities will develop more tolerant, positive attitudes toward each other, and conflict and ethnic tensions will significantly decrease.

Outcome Challenge - Religious leaders from all four faith groups in all three communities have positive, tolerant beliefs about all ethnic/religious groups in Sri Lanka, have good relationships with religious leaders from other faiths, and are actively engaged in multi-ethnic activities which contribute to positive, tolerant attitudes in the wider community with a particular emphasis on engaging youth.

Strategy
1. Empower religious leader to become social change agents for community reconciliation through conflict transformation skills development.
   - Provide training in homogenous and the heterogeneous groups
   - Provide individual support and mentoring
2. Promote and strengthen opportunities for inter-religious/inter-ethnic dialogue in communities to increase understanding and restore trust.
   - Support religious leaders to hold inter religious dialogues in their communities and other inter religious activities, events, celebrations, etc.
Key questions:

1. Is there evidence that attitudes are changing and in the desired direction? If so, is the change linked to the program? And if so, how/why? Is there evidence that behaviors are changing – are participants doing more with participants in the program from other faiths? Outside of the program? If so, is there evidence that the change is linked to program? And if so, how/why?

2. Is there evidence that that the broader society is being exposed to more tolerant attitudes? Is there evidence of broader societal attitudinal changes? Is there evidence that youth are becoming involved in reconciliation or conflict prevention activities? Is there evidence that this engagement is changing their attitudes or behaviors?

3. Is there evidence that the program is affecting overall levels of conflict/violence in any way?

Evaluation Components:

1. Log – log for number of meetings, number of attendees, number of projects related to peacebuilding initiated by participants, number who attend those projects/events, number of media events.

2. Survey – administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the project

3. Semi structured interviews – administered at the middle and end of the project

4. Reflection journals – Include progress markers developed by Sri Lankan staff, reflection journals and log...(Staff include as evidence their perceptions, things they hear in the community, conversations, thoughts, feedback from those outside the project, their intuition, etc.)

5. Most significant change stories

Matching key questions to evaluation components:

1. Evidence that attitudes and behaviors of religious leaders are changing in the desired direction and other information related to the inter-faith peacebuilding and dialogue workshops.

   A. Pre-training, interim, and closing survey of attitudes and behaviors – includes attitudes, knowledge of conflict transformation, and activities leaders undertake to transform conflict in their communities. Project participants indicate increased understanding of viewpoints of other faiths, identify commonalities (beliefs, goals). At end of survey include an open-ended question about what else they might want to share.

   B. Select semi-structured interviews in middle and end, which include query about attitude changes and if any, why they changed and if related to workshops, what aspects of the workshops. Query about change in activities related to conflicts, inter-religious activities, other related activities, and if so, is this related to workshops, and if so how and why? In terms of changes in attitudes and behaviors – what other influences are contributing?

   C. Most significant change stories – participants and program staff tell stories of most significant change, and discuss stories, in middle of and towards end of program– these will
be analyzed for themes, degree of changes in attitudes and behaviors and other impacts intended or unintended.
D. Staff reflection write-ups.

2. Evidence that broader society is being exposed to more tolerant, understanding attitudes and activities, and some of them are changing their attitudes?

A. Log of number of public peacebuilding activities, inter religious activities, media events, etc. location and number who participate, etc.
B. At end of project – in select interviews – query if people leaders work with, have themselves initiated inter ethnic activities, etc and/or reported changes in their behaviors.
C. Does this show up in most significant change stories and discussion?
D. Look for evidence in media, in informal conversations with others, staff observation in the field – to be recorded in staff reflection.

3. Evidence that in some longer term way changes related to this project imply sustainable, or at least temporary changes in conflict and violence – patterns of conflict, overall conflict, etc.

A. In final survey ask
B. In structured interviews
C. Most significant change
D. Staff reflections

Limitations to keep in mind in terms of attributing causality:

KCP/Sarvodaya actually control the delivery of training programs, support and mentoring. Religious leaders actually control their own activities of speech, organizing, meeting, etc.. Youth and adults decide on attitudes and behaviors, influenced by many different factors in their environment. All this is occurring in a very complex and dynamically changing environment. While trends can be observed, it is difficult to confirm causality.
Annex II: Mid-term and Final Survey Questions

A written survey was administered to religious leaders three times during the project: at the start of the very first set of intra-faith workshops in October 2011 (before any training activities had begun), at the end of the first inter-faith dialogue workshops held in February and March 2012, and finally, at the end of the program in March 2013.

Slight adjustments were made to the survey questions between the time of the baseline and mid-term surveys in order to clarify meaning, and substantial changes were made for the third and final administration of the survey. The mid-term and final versions of the survey questions are included here. The surveys were translated and distributed in Tamil and Sinhala.

Mid-term Attitude Survey

Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Padaviya Districts

Project locations: Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Padaviya

Initials: ____________________  Date of birth ___________________
District: ___________________  Religion: ____________________

(Personal information will be removed and replaced with a number before the survey is reviewed so that all information is confidential and for evaluation purposes only)

Dear participant,

This is a survey trying to check your ideas toward different issues along the project. Therefore, the same survey will be handed out several times throughout the project. There are no right or wrong answers, Just answer based on your opinions, experience and thoughts at this time. It helps us to understand how you think and act, related to a number of topics, and how this changes over time, so please answer honestly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What are the three most pressing issues in your community?
   1.____________________________________________________________________________
   2.____________________________________________________________________________
   3.____________________________________________________________________________

2. Who do you think is responsible for the existence of those issues in your community?
   Government  Politicians  Myself  Other faith groups
   Everyone  Other

3. Who do you think is responsible for addressing these problems?
   Government  International community  Community based organizations
   Myself  Faith groups  Everyone
   Other

4. What or who contributes most to addressing these problems or overall improving life in your community?
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
5. Please answer with your general sense of your relationships to people in other ethnic/religious groups. Please fill out for each of the other groups. Just leave your own community blank.

1= very little direct communication or shared activities.
2= talk irregularly, and occasionally work together on a specific issue.
3= talk with some regularity, sharing information, working on shared issues in the community

a. In regards to the Muslim community I …… (please circle one number.)
1 2 3

b. In regards to the Buddhist community I …… (please circle one number.)
1 2 3

c. In regards to the Hindu community I …… (please circle one number.)
1 2 3

d. In regards to the Christian community I …… (please circle one number.)
1 2 3

6. How would you rate your knowledge of other faiths?

high         medium        low               none

7. Which of the other faith group do you understand the best?

______________________________________________________________________________

8. Which of the other faith group do you understand the least?

______________________________________________________________________________

9. How well do you understand the feelings and perspectives of other faith groups about the war and the impacts of the war?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

10. My religion says that peace is

______________________________________________________________________________

Please tick all that apply from the given options in the questions stated below

11. How will you define peace?

Absence of war
Absence of violence       Fair distribution of wealth
Justice                   Tolerance for all religious and ethnic groups.
Other________________________

12. What types of conflicts do you mostly face in your community?

Perceived violation of trust       Heightened emotions       Miscommunication
Competition for power               Disputes over property or resources
Other________________________

13. How do you usually resolve your disputes?

Arguing              Involve elders/others
Dialogue             Legally
Walking away         Other________________________

14. Have you been engaged in mixed religious or inter-religious activities in the last month?

yes         no
If yes, please describe __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

15. Would you say the need for activities relating to reconciliation or healing of divisions in 
your community after the long civil war are:          high         medium        low               none

16. What is the biggest obstacle(s), if any, to reconciliation in your community? _________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

17. What does post-conflict reconciliation mean to you?____________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

18. Have you ever engaged in post conflict reconciliation?
   Yes           No
   If yes, please describe an example___________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

19. What is the best way to build inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and 
reconciliation at the community level?
______________________________________________________________________________

20. Have you undertaken any new inter-religious and/or reconciliation activities?
   Yes     no
   Please briefly describe them ___________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

21. Would you say the activities you describe in question #20 have increased tolerance and 
understanding for most participants?
   Yes           No

22. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share? __________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you!
Final Attitude Survey

Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Padaviya Districts

Project locations: Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Padaviya

Name: ____________________  Date of birth ____________________
District: ___________________  Religion: _____________________

Date you began participation in this project (day/month/year) __________

(All information is confidential and for evaluation purposes only)

Dear participant,

This is a survey trying to check your ideas toward different issues along the project. Therefore, the same survey will be handed out several times throughout the project. There are no right or wrong answers, Just answer based on your opinions, experience and thoughts at this time. It helps us to understand how you think and act, related to a number of topics, and how this changes over time, so please answer honestly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What are the three most pressing issues in your community?
   1.____________________________________________________________________________
   2.____________________________________________________________________________
   3.____________________________________________________________________________

2. Who do you think is responsible for the existence of those issues in your community? (please circle all those you think most responsible)
   The Government  Politicians   Myself   other religion groups
   Everyone    Other___________________

3. Who do you think is responsible for addressing these problems? (please circle all those you think most responsible)
   Government    International community       Community based organizations
   Myself   Faith groups    Everyone
   Other__________________

4. Please answer with your general sense of your relationships to people in other ethnic/religious groups. Please fill out for each of the other groups. Just leave your own community blank.

   a. In regards to the Muslim community 1 …… (please circle one)
      1= have very little direct communication or shared activities.
      2= talk irregularly, and occasionally work together on a specific issue.
      3= talk with some regularity, sharing information, working on shared issues in the community

   b. In regards to the Buddhist community 1 …… (please circle one)
      1= have very little direct communication or shared activities.
      2= talk irregularly, and occasionally work together on a specific issue.
      3= talk with some regularity, sharing information, working on shared issues in the community

   c. In regards to the Hindu community 1 …… (please circle one)
      1= have very little direct communication or shared activities.
      2= talk irregularly, and occasionally work together on a specific issue.
      3= talk with some regularity, sharing information, working on shared issues in the community
d. In regards to the Christian community I …… (please circle one)
1= have very little direct communication or shared activities.
2= talk irregularly, and occasionally work together on a specific issue.
3= talk with some regularity, sharing information, working on shared issues in the community

5. How would you rate your knowledge of other faiths? (please circle one answer)
   Low      Basic understanding           High degree of understanding

6. Have you been engaged in mixed religious or inter-religious activities in the last month?
   yes      no
   If yes, please describe ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

7. Would you say the need for activities relating to reconciliation or healing of divisions in your community after the long civil war are (please circle one answer):
   high      medium        low               none

8. What is the biggest obstacle(s), if any, to reconciliation in your community? ________
   ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

9. Have you undertaken any new inter-religious and/or reconciliation activities since the beginning of your participation in this project? 
   yes      no
   Please briefly describe them __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

10. Would you say the activities have increased tolerance and understanding for most participants?
    Yes      No

11. What are the biggest changes you have seen in your own work as a religious leader that are related to this project?
    ________________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________________

12. What, if any changes do you think have happened in your community because of this project?
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________

13. Do you think these changes will continue after the project is over? ______________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________

14. How might this type of program be improved in the future?
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
    _________________________________________________________________________
15. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you!
ANNEX III: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following evaluation questions were asked in semi-structured interviews, followed by prompts as necessary. Mid-term interviews were conducted in July and August 2012 with 20 religious leaders; final interviews were conducted in March 2013 with 17 of the original 20 participants plus three more religious leaders and an additional sample of six younger members of religious committees.

Mid-term interview questions

1. Did you learn any new principles of conflict transformation or reconciliation in this program? (If YES continue, if NO skip to next question) Would you share with me the principles that you learned in this program?

2. Would you say your attitude toward people of other faiths has changed during this program? (If yes) Do you know what in particular in one or more of the trainings or program activities affected your attitudes?

3. What, if anything, have you learned about the way people of other faiths have been affected by the war or think about current conflicts or tensions in the region?

4. What, if any, community projects are you involved in related to this program? Please describe the activities in some detail. What are you learning through this? Do you see any impact in your community?

5. Are you engaged in activities not specifically related to this project that are either interfaith and/or related to resolving interethnic tensions in your community? If yes, please describe.

6. What you have found most useful in this program so far? Has it affected your actions in any other ways, not already discussed in previous questions? What do you suggest would strengthen this program?

7. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the effect this program is having on you and your community?

Final interview questions

1. Would you say your attitude toward people of other faiths has changed during this training? (If yes) Do you know what in particular in the training affected your attitudes? Were there other things going on in your community that affected your attitudes?

2. What, if any, community projects are you involved in related to this program? Please describe the activities in some detail. What are you learning through this? Do you see any impact in your community?

3. Has participating in this program inspired or led you to initiate other peacebuilding efforts outside the program? If yes, please describe.
4. Is there anything else you want to tell me about what you learned from this project, or ways your actions or attitudes have changed?

5. Is there anything else you want to tell me about if or how things have changed in your community related to this project?

6. Do you think any changes in your community related to this project will continue even though it is now over? (If yes, go on.) Please tell me more about what you think will be different.
Annex IV: Summarized Responses to Final Interview Questions

1. Would you say your attitude toward people of other faiths has changed during this training? (If yes:) Do you know what in particular in the training affected your attitudes? Were there other things going on in your community that affected your attitudes?

All of those interviewed reported positive changes in their attitudes toward people of other faiths as well as a deeper understanding of other religions. Many reported that previously held misconceptions, prejudices and biases were changed toward acceptance and appreciation of others. For many, it was the first time to work with religious leaders of other faiths. Several mentioned how important it was to talk with others and even share meals together. Many reported developing friendships with leaders from other faiths.

A Hindu man reported that whereas he had previously been “really angry with Muslims” because he was affected by them, the training sessions had changed his attitudes and thinking so that he realized “everyone has good heart and humanity.” A Buddhist monk explained, “At present I am the leader for the district inter-faith council in Trincomalee district. This is a great example to show how my attitudes have changed.” A Muslim man said, “My attitudes towards other religion practices have been changed and I have started to think that every religion has similarities where we can sit together and work together for a better future.”

At the same time, there are deep concerns for the future. These interviews were done in the midst of new attacks on Muslim businesses as well as mosques, and small but steady occurrences of attacks on Christian places of worship and proposed legislation to restrict religious conversion. Many responses indicated a concern about attacks on minorities, a dominance by the majority, threats to freedom of prayer, and a concern about future riots. A Hindu man said, “The aggressive action over minorities by Bodu Bala Sena is currently affecting my attitudes.” Another person was concerned that all the government people in his area are Sinhala. Several also indicated a desire that top religious leaders would work for peace. It was striking that almost all these concerns were shared by Hindu and Muslim leaders. Few of the Buddhists interviewed mentioned these issues. It isn’t clear if this is a reflection of who was doing the interviewing, or those interviewed.

Religious committee members all stated they had learned a lot and appreciated participating. They have learned to share and work with people from different faiths. One mentioned inviting people from other faiths to be part of an NGO he works with. A Buddhist committee member said, “I attended a youth camp which was at a mosque and it was also my first time visiting a mosque. I think I have built up good relationships with Muslims friends in my area. Earlier I did not have such kind of friends.”

2. What, if any, community projects are you involved in related to this program? Please describe the activities in some detail. What are you learning through this? Do you see any impact in your community?
Participants described initiating and participating in projects related to palmyra palm handicraft production, language classes, awareness programs across religions, and joint sports programs. Many mentioned the initiation and continuance of interfaith festivals, holidays and other religious events. Most of the participants were involved in at least one and many in two or more of these activities. All those who were involved mentioned the value of inter-faith projects in promoting connections and understanding between people. In many communities, this has led to new friendships and a greater freedom of movement between communities. Many noted the need for further economic development projects. Several noted an increased willingness to do business with people from other faiths. An interesting side benefit to the language classes was that the participating youth not only developed new language skills and friendships, but also their parents developed connections across ethnic lines. The youth participants interviewed also found their activities valuable for bringing together young people across ethnic and religious divides, making new friendships possible.

A Hindu man stated that “community people are welcoming this project, and they have also now started to visit other ethnic peoples’ homes as well as take some family trips.” A Buddhist woman reported, “I was responsible for implementing a women’s empowerment project in mushroom production which benefited 25 families. I also supervised a sewing class run by Sister Preethika. During the second phase of community projects, I implemented Tamil language classes for Buddhist and Christian children... I participated in a shramadana work camp that was at a mosque. This was the first time I visited a mosque and it helped us to understand other religious practices and values.”

3. Has participating in this program inspired or led you to initiate other peacebuilding efforts outside the program? If yes, please describe.

A number of the participants were already involved in inter-ethnic committees, while several initiated or joined such groups because of the project. A couple of participants have started efforts to encourage writing and poetry oriented toward promoting peace. A few mentioned specific projects undertaken in their communities, such as fixing a school fence, that included people from several faiths. Several answered that while they are not part of any formal projects or activities, they have more informal contacts with other religious leaders now. One of the religious committee members is planning a program at his university with support from Sarvodaya and another is involved in a moral education project for young people from all the different religious groups. One interviewee was involved with organizing a prayer and peace march in which 2000 people walked 10 kilometers.

A Buddhist monk reported, “During the last two months, religious tension has been increasing and incidents of invisible violence are happening. As a member of the inter-faith district council, I initiated bringing responsible people together and we are going to set up a divisional inter-faith council with the help of government institutions such as police, the divisional secretariat and local government.” A Muslim man said that, motivated by the project, he gathered some of his
villagers to construct a toilet for a widow: “A Christian women has donated a door, a Muslim person gave the cement blocks and a Hindu mason did the labor (masonry).”

4. Is there anything else you want to tell me about what you learned from this project, or ways your actions or attitudes have changed?

Many of the responses to this question repeated what had been said for question one. They reported a decrease in prejudice and an increased understanding and appreciation of other religions. One mentioned that this was now an experiential understanding, not just intellectual learning. Several reported new friendships, a greater ease in visiting and working with people of other faiths, and a deeper caring about what happens to people in other communities. A Christian man said that he is “giving priority to other ethnic people” whereas he earlier did not. Several mentioned the need for this work now given current tensions, feeling more brave or a new courage to do this work, and how multi-faith efforts are an important example in their communities. A few reported an increased sense of their leadership in addressing inter-communal tensions and working for peace. Several mentioned that they learned about the conflict tree and the need to understand and address the root causes of violence. One priest is going to do his doctorate in Rome on interfaith dialogue.

Religious committee members mentioned learning about how different communities were affected by the war and conflict management tools. One mentioned that his participation in the program has increased his courage to move in other ethnic communities and know other people. Two suggested that the project should have involved young people from the beginning, as youth involvement in these kinds of projects will increase the impact. A young Hindu woman said, “in this world we can find only one caste; it is human.”

5. Is there anything else you want to tell me about if or how things have changed in your community related to this project?

Many of the respondents indicated that this project has increased the connections between people across various divides. This has resulted in shared projects, shared meals, and families visiting each other. It has set a good example of inter-faith cooperation. Most felt that their communities supported these changes. One noted he had been able to use the connections made through this program to recommend people in his community for jobs with others. One Christian leader shared that while most people in his community are supportive, others criticized his involvement after a Buddhist mob violently attacked Christians in southern Sri Lanka. One Hindu leader has been invited by local police to be part of a civil security unit. One young person interviewed noted that the palmyra production project has increased relationships between Hindu and Muslim communities in his area. Others said it is good to see religious leaders working together, and that it is a good example for Sri Lankans, especially at this time.

A Muslim man said that “more than 90% of community people [in his community] have changed their opinions and thoughts about other religions,” compared with before; that “earlier, a
Muslim girl could not go to class alone because boys were disturbing in roads, now it has changed dramatically. Earlier, Muslim children were going to class or school with Muslim people. But now they are mixed with Hindu children.” A Buddhist monk explained, “I would say that my behaviors have influenced my followers. They think that I am a peace loving person so they also want to behave as the way I behave. This is the community impact I see.”

6. Do you think any changes in your community related to this project will continue even though it is now over? (if yes, go on.) Please tell me more about what you think will be different.

Most of those interviewed felt that the projects will not continue without further funding and leadership from Sarvodaya and the Karuna Center. A few thought that some aspects of cooperation and friendships across divides will continue, but still note the need for support and leadership. Several noted the increased tensions and riots and the need to involve top religious leaders as well as politicians. Other suggestions included expanding the program to all districts. One person suggested having an island-wide sports festival. Another pointed to using literature as a weapon for peace. Several noted that the war had lasted for nearly 30 years and 12-18 months is not long enough to make deep changes. One person noted the remarks of a high-level Buddhist monk who had not participated in the project—and who stated that Sri Lanka is a “Sinhala Buddhist country” at the national conference in March 2013—as indicative of the need for a much larger program. The religious committee members, who were generally younger, again suggested that it was important to involve young people from the beginning and that the program needs funding to continue.

One Hindu participant recommended that religious leaders dedicate 30 minutes each week in their place of worship to educate their congregations about what other religions state about peace and love, and that exchange visits would also help to create new interfaith relationships and spread the concept of peace. He stated, “Sarvodaya and Karuna Center for Peacebuilding created a good foundation to lead sustainable peace; whether it is supported or not, we are going to continue this project through the Sarvodaya interfaith district forums.”
Annex V: Progress Markers

**Outcome Challenge:** Participating religious leaders from all four faith groups from all three areas (Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Padaviya) have positive, tolerant attitudes towards all ethnic and religious groups in Sri Lanka, have good relationships with each other, and are actively engaged in inter-faith activities at the community level that contribute to positive, tolerant attitudes in the wider community, especially among youth. (Describe specific attitudes, actions and relationships that will exist if the project is 100% successful at the end of the project or even just beyond to 3 years out)

Expect to see: In each religious leader what you minimally expect to see during the project.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attend almost all project trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religious leaders significantly increase their conflict transformation understanding and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Religious leaders participate in community development and social empowerment projects and/or leaders lead inter-faith community dialogues 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Religious leaders develop at least 2 community projects in each district</td>
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Like to see: In each religious leader what you would like to see during the project.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Religious leaders show initiative in deepening the impact of the community based projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Religious leaders demonstrate respect and understanding for other ethnic/religious groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Religious leaders participate in community development and social empowerment projects and/or leaders to lead inter-faith community dialogues 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Religious leaders develop other inter-religious activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Religious leaders develop community level peace building committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Love to see: In each religious leader what would indicate high achievement of the project goals

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Religious leaders take initiative and responsibility for developing new multi-ethnic/multi-religious projects at the community level that will extend beyond the life of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Religious leaders challenge intolerant statement from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Religious leaders participate in community development and social empowerment projects and/or leaders to lead inter-faith community dialogues 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Religious leaders together advocate with government authorities for policy changes that benefit all communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Religious leaders will establish a national level peace building network</td>
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Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts and Padaviya Division

Grant# ARD048

Mid-term Evaluation Report

October 26, 2012
BACKGROUND

This report offers a snapshot of what Karuna Center and Sarvodya have learned through our evaluation process thus far. Our evaluation design grew out of our original theory of change: if key religious leaders from all faiths can develop mutual understanding and positive, tolerant attitudes towards each other and engage in joint activities in their communities, then these broader communities will develop more tolerant, positive attitudes toward each other, and conflict and ethnic tensions will significantly decrease.

The evaluation design (see Annex 1) aims to capture changes in attitudes and behaviors as well as evidence that these changes are related to the project. The design uses quantitative and qualitative tools to uncover changes among the religious leaders and changes in the communities where they work. To date most of the focus has been on the former, but with the completion of the first round of community projects, we shall begin giving more attention to the latter. An effort has been made to integrate evaluation with implementation to allow ongoing, regular tracking of emerging changes in attitudes and behaviors and potential unanticipated effects in order to strengthen the program as it unfolds.

Our evaluation design consists of several components. A baseline survey was administered at the start of the program, followed by a second survey administered at the end of the first inter-faith workshops in February and March 2012. A final survey will be administered at the end of the project. Mid-program semi-structured interviews were held with 20 selected religious leaders in July and August. These will be repeated at project completion. The questions were designed to probe more deeply into the connection between the project activities and changes in attitudes and behaviors. Outcome mapping sessions have been held with district project staff during the last two visits of Karuna Center and will be repeated in upcoming visits. During the August/September workshop participants were asked to share “most significant change stories,” and reflect together on what changes the stories reflect. This process will also be repeated at the end of the program.
SURVEY RESULTS

SUMMARY

A written survey was given to the religious leaders at the start of the very first set of intra-faith workshops in October 2011 before any training activities had begun. This second survey was administered at the end of the first inter-faith dialogue workshops held in February and March. (See Annex 2 for the second survey, which was the same as the first with a couple of added questions to capture changes.)

A series of circumstances limit the overall applicability of the data. There has been some turnover within the core group of 80. Other participants remain in the program, but were unable to attend the event where the second round of surveys was handed out, and so there viewpoints were not captured. Some of these participants attended a make-up workshop held by Sarovdaya in May along with some newly recruited leaders, but the survey was not administered. Some names also appear to have been entered differently on the two surveys, and the project team is still in the process of matching these. Finally, a handful of questions appear to have been misinterpreted or “lost in translation,” notably question #5 which sought to capture levels of contact with other faith groups. The team has learned from these missteps, and we are coordinating with our staff in the field to ensure that we prevent similar errors with the final surveys. When it came time to compare surveys, the shrunken sample size prevented us from drawing more robust and reliable trends from the data. As we match more of the surveys, we will redo the calculations.

The project team was able to pair 47 of the original participant surveys with their matches in the second batch, and we used this sample to draw conclusions on the program’s impact. These 47 paired surveys are what we refer to when we say “matched core group”.

BASIC TRENDS

The second batch of surveys includes the question, “Would you say program activities have increased tolerance?” The data was pulled from all those who responded to the second survey, even if they were newer to the program and not part of the original core 80. The data shows that more than three quarters of respondents believe that the program has made a positive impact in their community (left).

We can pull several trends out of the data when we disaggregate for race, age range, and religion.

First, Hindus and Muslims were more likely to describe the program’s impact as positive than their Buddhist and Christian counterparts.
Second, those born before 1970 were more likely to describe the program’s impact as positive than those born on or after 1970.

Finally, Tamil and Muslim participants were more likely to see the program’s impact in a positive light than their Sinhalese counterparts.

As mentioned, the question aimed at capturing rates of interaction with other faith groups appeared misunderstood, as many answered it for interaction with their own faith group. However, the question: “How would you rate your knowledge of other faiths?” proved more useful. Each participant gave an answer on a scale from 1 to 3 – 1 signifying little to no knowledge, and 3 signifying a good understanding of other faiths. The results show that respondents improved their knowledge of other faiths between October and March by 21%.

In another promising pattern, the percentage of religious leaders who partook in activities with other religious groups nearly doubled in the interim between surveys. When the second survey was handed out, many community projects – a key component of the Karuna Center’s work – had yet to be launched. Thus, the project team expects that close to 100% of religious leaders will have joined in mixed religious activities by the end of the program.
We summarized the answers given by the matched core group to the question “What is/are the most serious issue(s) facing your community?” above. Each participant could submit up to three open-ended responses. Their votes were then coded and aggregated by a member of the project team. As the graph shows, religious leaders believe that issues related to the economy, education, racial, and spirituality pose the greatest risk to Sri Lankan society.

We then asked religious leaders which groups were responsible for the problems afflicting their communities. In the first survey, a large portion of the matched core group identified members of other faith groups as the culprits.

When we disaggregate the second round of survey data by ethnicity, we see that the core group was much less likely to point its fingers at members of other faith groups. This trend holds even when we disaggregate for religion, gender, and district. The Tamil religious leaders displayed the most progress, citing other religious groups as the problem 54% less the second time around. Muslims
and Sinhalese were respectively 43% and 52% less likely to point the finger at other faith groups. The project team hopes that inter-ethnic relations will continue to improve in the coming months.

The final graph (below) shows that religious leaders have become more supportive of collaborative problem-solving as time goes on. To follow up on the question, “What is the most serious issue facing your community?” we asked respondents which party should take the lead in solving community problems. Looking at the matched core group’s responses, we see a 31% increase in favor of faith groups assuming a leadership role, suggesting that participants are beginning to view one another more as a solution than as a problem.
MID-TERM INTERVIEWS

In addition to the surveys, mid-term interviews were carried out with 20 participants. A purposeful sampling process was used, as the overall sample is too small to use a random selection process and still maintain a balanced mix of religions, gender, and geography. Religions and districts were selected as indicated in the table below, and the sample included three women. Half of the religious leaders selected were considered by the project staff to be active participants and the other half were considered average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Buddhist</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padaviya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trincomalee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were conducted in Sinhala or Tamil and translated to English. The translations were summaries and not full transcripts. The summaries from the Buddhist interviews were particularly brief. With that caveat in mind, we have done our best to summarize the range of responses and identify repeated themes. Overall, participants reported many positive outcomes from their participation. These include many references to increased understanding of other religions and how others also suffered during the war; a deep appreciation for new friends from other religions and the opportunity to participate in the ceremonies and celebrations of other religions, which most had never done before; an increased understanding of the conflicts in their communities and their responsibility and capacity as leaders to address conflicts; and descriptions of interreligious activities they have initiated and their positive assessments of the impact of these activities. The most frequent concern raised was a sense of time pressure. As religious leaders, they have many responsibilities, and a number of participants noted it was hard to find as much time as they wished for program activities. Some stated a desire that the program could be continued for a longer period to allow for activities to be implemented at a slower pace.

While overall, there did not seem to be significant variation by religion, one did stand out. People of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian faiths mentioned a sense of tension and potential conflict related to the government promotion of Buddhism and/or Sinhala interests. There was no mention of this by the Buddhists interviewed. This seems to reflect ongoing political dynamics in Sri Lanka.

Summary of Responses to Specific Questions

Question One – Did you learn any new principles of conflict transformation or reconciliation in this program? (If YES continue, if NO skip to next questions) Would you share with me the principles that you learned in this program?

Nearly all those interviewed mentioned the conflict tree (a model that explores the different roots of conflict and its effects, depicted in the branches). A number of them went on to explain the need to understand and address the root cause or real reason for a conflict in order to resolve, reconcile, and prevent further conflicts. Several shared examples of conflicts they had
experienced and how they came to understand the roots. A Muslim Moulavi compared this process to medical treatment. Addressing symptoms is not enough, if we do not know what is causing the illness. However, another participant noted it is often important to address immediate tensions first, and then proceed to underlying concerns.

A few participants spoke of the responsibility of religious leaders to take leadership to stop violence and to act as a bridge between people and the government. One participant noted how conflicts can arise at different levels: individual, organizational, or group and noted that conflicts arise through a “mismatch” of ideas and/or lack of respect for others’ feelings. Others spoke to value of learning different methods for conflict resolution and dialogue, and one especially valued hearing about how conflicts have been addressed in other countries. Another highlighted the need to promote tolerance in war-affected areas where different ethnic and faith groups are living side by side. Answers to this question were quite similar across faiths.

**Question 2 - Would you say your attitude toward people of other faiths has changed during this program? (If yes) Do you know what in particular in one or more of the trainings or program activities affected your attitudes?**

Virtually all those interviewed stated their attitudes toward other faiths had become more positive. They felt they understood more about the other faiths and their prejudices against other faiths had decreased. As one Buddhist monk put it “my attitude towards other faith groups has been changed in terms of now seeing them as human beings.” One Hindu man mentioned that previously he had negative feelings about pastors, thinking all of them were trying to convert people, but this had now changed. One Christian man spoke of being able to clarify the worries others had about Christian conversions. Many credited the mixed peacebuilding workshop and especially the inter-faith dialogue as being the activities that really changed their perspectives, and a few mentioned the trip to Galle, where they witnessed the work of a very active inter-faith council. In the workshops, they said they learned about each other’s religious practices and their respective experiences during the war. One interviewee was still left with questions about other religions, but nonetheless felt she understood more and felt more positively. Most notably, a number of the Hindus spoke of coming to the recognition that they were not the only ones who suffered during the war; they now realized that Muslims and Buddhists suffered too. One Hindu mentioned he felt hurt by some of the comments made by Buddhist monks, but that in the end he felt more understanding and closeness. Several mentioned coming to appreciate that while each faith is different, all are good.

**Question 3 - What if anything, have you learned about the way people of other faiths have been affected by the war or think about current conflicts or tensions in the region?**

In response to this question many interviewees shared specific information they learned about how others suffered during the war years. Again, this contradicted their previous belief that only their group had suffered. They (particularly Hindus and Tamil Christians) noted that the loss and suffering their group had experienced, had been a basis for mistrusting or disliking people from other faiths. Many Hindus, Muslims, and Christians also mentioned concerns about the current situation in which they feel Buddhism is being promoted and other religions are less privileged by the government. Government permission for celebrations of religious festivals or the construction of monuments by non-Buddhists can be hard to obtain, and lands are being unfairly taken. A number told stories of incidents they felt were causing anger and fear. They
noted this provides fertile ground for further violence in the future. One Moulavi observed that while the war is over, many people still carry “heart wounds.” These are exacerbated when “Buddhist structures or “identities’ are spread into the living areas of other faith groups.” Buddhist respondents also spoke to a better understanding of how other faith groups suffered during the war, but did not identify any current tensions.

Question 4 - What, if any, community projects are you involved in related to this program? Please describe the activities in some detail. What are you learning through this? Do you see any impact in your community?

All but one of the participants described involvement with community projects. These include organizing and supervising shramadana (voluntary community work) which has mostly involved different faith groups coming together to refurbish places or worship; inter-faith activities such as sports meets, language classes, and exchanges; income generating projects; and inter-ethnic awareness programs and cultural exchanges. Almost all spoke to the success of these programs and noted their inter-faith aspects. They are bringing people together from different groups and building relationships across divides. The leaders also see the activities as widely appreciated by community members. A couple of interviewees spoke of expectations from their communities that they could provide more economic benefit, which they wish they could do. For many of the religious leaders, shramadana activities offered the first opportunity for them or their congregations to visit places of worship of another faith, or to have other faiths visit theirs. One respondent noted that the projects have given the religious leaders an opportunity to be seen as working for the good of their communities, instead of just remaining in their places of worship. As they are religious leaders, he thinks their motives are also trusted.

Question 5 - Are you engaged in activities not specifically related to this project that are either interfaith and/or related to resolving interethnic tensions in your community? Is yes, please describe.

A number of the respondents are members of regional or national interfaith peace groups. Several shared stories of local inter-ethnic conflicts they had helped to defuse or solve through these organizations. Several of them are also members of government-organized groups that include members of other faiths, though inter-faith collaboration is not their expressed purpose.

Question 6 - What you have found most useful in this program so far? Has it affected your actions in any other ways, not already discussed in previous questions? What do you suggest would strengthen this program?

For most, the new relationships and friendships they have developed with people from other faiths have been the most important part of the program. Many repeated that they had not previously known or been close to people of other faiths. Others mentioned the trainings, new concepts, working together on community projects, the district-level meetings, and the trip to Galle. In describing a shramadana work camp at a mosque, Buddhist monk said, “That was not only cleaning and painting a mosque, it was a program of painting and cleaning people’s hearts.” In referring to his new inter-faith friendships a Hindu priest said, “The bad thinking about others’ faiths is totally removed from my heart.”
Most interviewees felt that this program should be expanded and serve all districts, or at least a larger number. Some stressed reaching the grassroots, others emphasized the importance of involving people with influence. Several felt the program should be made more visible. One person suggested creating an immediate response team from this group to quickly address emerging conflicts as soon as they hear about them. Many also mentioned their lack of time to participate as much as they would like to.

**Question 7 - Is there anything else you want to tell me about the effect this program is having on you and your community?**

There were many different responses to this question. Several people mentioned that they had a better understanding of their responsibility as religious leaders to promote good relationships with other faiths. As was mentioned in responses to question #6, a number of interviewees from all four faiths spoke to the importance of building broader awareness of the program. Suggestions included inviting more government officials and VIPs to project events, engaging higher level leaders from Colombo and soliciting their advice, and recruiting more volunteers to participate in community activities. One interviewee thought an inter-faith center should be created in each district, where events can regularly take place.

Others stressed the importance of more language classes to reduce barriers, more engagement with youth (as they are the next generation), more sports festivals, and more programs in universities where prejudices are apparent. A Buddhist monk spoke of the value of introducing inter-faith cooperation into school curriculums, to counteract actions “that keep people separated.” Others identified the importance of addressing basic economic needs, especially those of war-affected people.

In general, interviewees spoke to the value of expanding what has been piloted in this program. A Buddhist monk said, “This was a program which healed people’s wounds and pain after 30 years of war, and so it is very important to initiate this kind of work in each part of the country.”

**Outcome Mapping**

Our “outcome challenge” and progress markers for what we would “expect to see,” “like to see,” and “love to see” were established in a meeting with Karuna Center and the Sarvodaya project manager and district staff at the start of the program (see Annex 3). Progress on each of the 14 progress markers was assessed in March and again in September.

In our March meeting, the staff noted strong attendance at workshops and overall enthusiasm for the community projects (after the initial hurdles were overcome), as indicators of strong engagement. They estimated that 95% of the leaders were involved with a project, and they planned to work with the other 5% to get involved. Interest in creating divisional and district level inter-faith committees to support the projects was cited as another example of interest.

Project staff also cited examples of religious leaders showing initiative to deepen their contacts with each other apart from organized activities. A Hindu priest in Trincomalee invited leaders of other faith groups to the Thai Pongal festival in January, and Buddhist monks participated in Christmas festivals in Padaviya. The religious leaders were showing up at the inaugurations of each other’s community projects, visiting the community centers where each other’s projects
were taking place, etc. The staff noted that at the dialogue workshop the Muslims joined the Hindus one day for their special meal from the temple and that after the dialogues there was considerable physical contact between the leaders, walking arm and arm, etc., which they saw as unusual for the culture. Referring to our list of project markers, these indicators suggested that we were already seeing much of what we would “like to see,” in terms of relationship building and commitment to the program, but we were not yet seeing the kind of initiative that would guarantee sustainability beyond the life of the project.

Our September meeting on the progress markers led to a discussion of ways participants are demonstrating changed attitudes and behaviors. It was noted that in the beginning of the program, there was a reluctance to speak openly. In the first inter-faith workshop the importance of religious tolerance and peace was lauded, but in depth discussion of tensions and challenges in the districts was avoided. Now religious leaders of all faiths seem comfortable speaking honestly about their concerns. Relationships seem relaxed, participants sit in mixed groups, and Buddhist monks don’t seem to mind if their chairs do not have white cloths. During *shramadana* events the leaders have also taken care to make sure the other leaders had places to pray according to their own customs.

We also discussed indicators of commitment to the project. Attendance at trainings and district meetings has been good. Participation in community projects has been very strong in Batticaloa and Padaviya, but could be improved in Trincomalee. In general, the religious leaders have made a strong showing at each other’s project-related events and seem to recognize the symbolic importance of being seen in public working together. We also discussed examples of religious leaders taking initiative to start their own inter-faith activities independent of our project. During Ramadan many of the Moulavis invited their colleagues from other faiths for fast-breaking feasts. One Hindu participant got inspired to organize an inter-faith *shramadana* at his temple, independently from our project and with temple funds. It is hoped that such examples will increase as the project proceeds.

As we looked at the indicators for what we would “love to see,” we noted that the religious leaders are very comfortable publically supporting each other’s events, but that they do not seem ready to advocate together around perceived injustices. Our initial hope for this may well have been unrealistic given the political climate. We noted that during the final months of the program work on the district level inter-faith committees may be the best way to promote sustainability.

In general these markers have provided a useful guide for focused staff discussions on program strengths and weaknesses.

**Significant Change Stories**

During the August and September workshops participants were asked to write up “significant change stories,” vignettes that describe some significant change in attitude or behavior in themselves or the community that they would ascribe to the project. These were then discussed and assessed in groups, and each group selected one story to share in plenary that they felt was especially pertinent. Those stories were reviewed by Sarvodaya staff, and two were highlighted as “most significant.” They are included in Annex 4. There was some confusion about the instructions, and not all the stories were especially relevant. However, the process seemed to
sharpen the participants’ thinking about what change looks like. This process will be repeated at the end of the program during the TOT.

LEARNINGS

An important role of a mid-term evaluation is to see if we are implementing our expected objectives and achieving our anticipated results or whether we need to make course corrections. This project’s objectives and results are:

OBJECTIVE #1
Empower religious leaders to foster community reconciliation through conflict transformation skills, community development, and social empowerment projects that engage a broad range of community members.

Result #1: Religious leaders from 4 faith groups develop skills in conflict mitigation/resolution skills.

Result #2: Religious leaders take initial steps at becoming social change agents in their communities by initiating community development and social empowerment projects that engage a broad range of community members.

OBJECTIVE #2
Promote and strengthen opportunities for inter-religious/inter-ethnic dialogue in communities to increase understanding and restore trust.

Result #1: Religious leaders participate in facilitated inter-religious dialogues.

Result #2: Religious leaders facilitate inter-religious or inter-ethnic dialogue in their communities

The combined results from our evaluation tools suggest that the program design is supporting our two objectives, and we are successfully meeting the first three anticipated results. Result #2 of objective #2 is still very much a work in progress. Religious leaders are facilitating inter-faith awareness sessions and discussions in the context of language class exchanges and camps. They also have worked hard to prepare their congregations for inter-faith shramadana activities and to address related concerns. They had more practice in facilitating actual dialogues in the last set of workshops, and they are being encouraged to now start facilitating community dialogues. We recognize that not all of the leaders will develop the skills to facilitate actual dialogues, and this result may have been framed in overly ambitious terms. Many of the leaders are helping to bridge divides and ease tensions by example, and in many instances their public actions might mean more than words.

The results of our evaluation suggest that the religious leaders have understood, absorbed, and been affected by the content of the trainings and dialogues. Their joint work on the community projects has given them an opportunity to recognize the value of working together and being
seen together. The community projects have also given the leaders confidence that they can affect change. While the number and variety of community activities has been a challenge from the perspective of project management, it has offered the possibility for widespread engagement and putting new concepts into practice. Most importantly, the leaders have forged strong working relationships with each other.

The religious leaders are naturally sensitive to their political context. They have become surprisingly honest in their discussion of challenging issues and concerns with each other, but as yet seem understandably cautious about their potential role as advocates for greater equality and social justice. While the level of enthusiasm for the program is palpable, many express feeling constrained by time and other duties. These concerns should affect our thinking about how to best support the transition to sustainable structures for inter-faith cooperation at the district level.

For the most part our evaluation tools have provided useful information. However, translation problems with the written survey compromised its validity on a couple of the quantifiable questions. We will do our best to correct these problems in the final survey and construct some new questions to better assess attitudinal and behavioral change.
Note: This mid-term evaluation report originally contained six annexes, five of which are not included here. The information within those annexes is repeated within the preceding five annexes of this final evaluation report.

The following significant change stories were included as Annex VI of the mid-term report:

SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES (Mid-term)

Story #1:
Under the program implemented by the Sarvodaya movement with the support of the Karuna Center, with the participation of four religious groups we organized a volleyball tournament on 28 April 2012. This tournament went from day into the day and night and teams represented Ampara, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa districts. This event provided an opportunity for the participants to interact with each other. Another volleyball tournament was then held on 21st May 2012, and 21 sports clubs from all three districts, representing four religious groups took part. More than 400 people, including trainers, spectators and cheering groups were present at the venue. They cheered the teams through the night. People from different faiths freely interacted with each other and became friends. They had their meals together and exchanged addresses and telephone numbers. (Indeed it was a novel experience for us. It was almost like a dream). Now sports clubs remain very much anxious to participate in the next tournament and ask us about it. They also feel that in participating in such tournaments they can learn the traditions and customs of other religions.

Story #2:
Recently we conducted a seminar for teachers who teach Hinduism in the Sinmaya mission and for Hindu Sunday school teachers. At such seminars we normally used to discuss only ideas related to Hinduism. However, at this seminar we discussed topics such as peace and the perspective of others faiths. Since all the participants were teachers who inoculate values among children, they will definitely pass the ideas we discussed at this seminar to their students. We hope that the transmissions of such ideas to children will have a positive impact.