

LONG-DISTANCE PEACEBUILDING: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SOUTH SUDANESE AND SRI LANKAN DIASPORAS IN AUSTRALIA

Denise Cauchi
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Executive Summary

Diaspora communities in Australia are active contributors to peacebuilding in their countries of origin. Their approaches differ significantly to those of other actors, reflecting the unique set of skills, resources, networks and identities that they bring to this work.

While diaspora contributions to development - and to a lesser extent humanitarian action - are now increasingly recognized by researchers, international agencies and governments around the world, their peacebuilding work remains largely invisible. This study seeks to contribute to greater understanding by examining the peacebuilding and reconciliation work of the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan diaspora communities in Australia: their projects, strategies and approaches utilised.

Research carried out in 2018 consisted of interviews and focus groups discussions with 22 peacebuilders, most of whom were leaders and members of diaspora-led organisations. All actively utilised inter-ethnic harmony or reconciliation approaches. Their focus on bridging ethnic and tribal differences reflected a belief that long-lasting peace cannot be achieved through political or military solutions alone, but rather it involves changing the hearts and minds of ordinary people. The critical areas of truth telling and seeking justice for human rights abuses have regrettably not been addressed in this research due to its limited scope.

Key findings

The South Sudanese and Sri Lankan peacebuilders who participated in this study promoted inter-ethnic harmony both in Australia and in their countries of origin, often coordinating with their families and communities who have settled in other parts of the world. Despite the very significant differences between the two communities relating to culture, migration patterns, experiences of settlement in Australia and political contexts in countries of origin, it was striking that their peacebuilding approaches had much in common. Broadly speaking, their initiatives involved: fostering harmony among divided communities in Australia; conflict prevention and resolution in countries of origin; word-of-mouth messaging for peace; and leveraging political influence. The organisations they work through are all consciously multi-ethnic and they model values of tolerance, diversity, and multiculturalism through the structures of their organisations and the methodologies they utilise.

The key findings of this research can be summarised as follows.

1. Peace is built on mindset change

Peace was defined broadly, to encompass both an absence of violence and the presence of conditions that enable people to live a full life and enjoy their rights. Furthermore, sustainable peace was seen as requiring change in values and mindsets at a grassroots level, which entailed moving away from political views embedded in religious, tribal or ethnic tensions and towards values of pluralism, multiculturalism and non-violent resolution of conflict.

The peacebuilders sought this mindset change through a range of strategies. They have implemented projects in South Sudan and Sri Lanka aimed at increasing inter-ethnic understanding and tolerance, or reducing escalating tensions. They also build capacity of local peacebuilders and leaders, focussing on personal transformation as a first step.

Mindset change was frequently seen as requiring a realignment of values. Transmission of values - whether consciously or unconsciously - occurs through communication between members of the diaspora and their families around the world on a range of issues. The conscious use of word-of-mouth messaging via personal contacts to promote peaceful co-existence is an extension of this dynamic and was employed as a strategy by both the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan participants in this study.

2. Community harmony in Australia contributes to peace in countries of origin

Both the Sri Lankan and South Sudanese communities have experienced deep divisions that mirror the tensions in their countries of origin. Typically, when conflicts overseas escalate, relationships and networks in the diaspora deteriorate. Almost all participants were involved in activities that sought to heal these rifts between different ethnic or tribal groups in Australia.

Perhaps the most significant finding was that participants perceived a causal link between building inter-ethnic harmony within their communities in Australia and the prospect for peace in countries of origin. When diaspora attitudes in Australia are more moderate, more tolerant and accepting of the “other side”, these attitudes and values are transmitted to families, colleagues and communities in countries of origin. Furthermore, a more unified diaspora was regarded as better able to collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives and speak with a common voice that is able to influence political decision makers. Community harmony in Australia was seen as a prerequisite for the diasporas to be able to promote peace in countries of origin.

3. Diaspora wield social and political influence

Diaspora contributions to peacebuilding in country of origin can be seen largely through the lens of their multi-layered influence, derived from their family ties, bonds of kinship, and community networks. Their social leverage is reinforced by remittances, which can contribute to peace or conflict, depending on the intention of the sender. Remittances were particularly important in the South Sudanese context for several reasons: they were seen as necessary for family economies, they cemented relationships and they were also acknowledged as a source of influence.

Both South Sudanese and Sri Lankan peacebuilders expressed a desire to bring about change at a political level. This involved advocating to the Australian government to exert its influence over leaders in South Sudan and, to a lesser extent, in Sri Lanka, to influence the respective peace process and post-conflict transition. The imperative to influence political leadership was especially prevalent among the South Sudanese community, given the urgent need for a political resolution to the conflict. This community sought to build community harmony in order to be able to advocate with a more unified, collective voice that would increase their credibility, make their messages more consistent and maximise their impact.

Some peacebuilders utilised their personal connections to political and civil society leaders to directly advocate for peaceful resolution of conflict in South Sudan or to promote democracy and accountability in Sri Lanka. Members of the South Sudanese diaspora have travelled to South Sudan and been directly involved in the formal national Healing, Peace and Reconciliation process.

4. Diasporas are transnational stakeholders and actors

All the peacebuilding work discussed in this report relied to differing degrees on the relationships between diaspora communities in Australia and their families, communities and colleagues in South Sudan, Sri Lanka and other countries of settlement.

The fact that diasporas are part of such networks, through which they share information and resources, coordinate campaigns and projects and provide humanitarian assistance, is a defining feature of diaspora activity. Their capacity to communicate and collaborate across borders has significantly increased through social media, however this has also been particularly problematic for the South Sudanese community, which has been plagued by the spread of hate speech via social media platforms to fuel inter-tribal animosities and incite violence. The peacebuilders in this study consciously worked to counteract hate speech and other negative behaviours.

5. Identity and perspective matter

As diaspora peacebuilders are influential members of societies affected by conflict, their own attitudes and perspectives are of critical significance. Many spoke of the importance of their own personal transformations in overcoming pain, trauma and sometimes antagonism or hatred towards the “other side”, which had led them to regard acceptance of the other as key to peacebuilding. The fact that they promote inter-ethnic harmony or reconciliation however has also made them objects of suspicion among some members their communities in Australia, who have accused them of betraying their own ethnic or tribal groups. Both Sri Lankans and South Sudanese peacebuilders spoke of these difficulties.

They also spoke of their insider/outsider identities in Australia and countries of origin. They spoke of seeing Australia through the eyes of a migrant, and seeing their homelands through an Australian lens. Their intimate understanding of culture and context that was part of their upbringing and lived experience of the conflict gave the peacebuilders a quasi (but not entirely) insider perspective and level of influence. However, they are also Australians whose experience of refuge/migration and settlement has influenced their world views and broadened their perspectives. At its best, Australia has given them a lived example of a peaceful society that respects multiculturalism and political pluralism.

As a result, the peacebuilders and their organisations discussed in this study are products of these multiple world views. This prompted a range of reactions in countries of origin, from being regarded as people with valued connections, skills and resources, to suspicion of their motives and possible resentment of their Australian privilege. These challenges were reported to have been overcome with time however. For some, their insider/outsider identity also enabled them to challenge social norms such as expectations of gender roles in countries of origin. The slightly ambiguous position of diasporas as neither wholly insiders nor outsiders in either society, but a rich hybrid mix, is arguably their greatest strength as peacebuilders.

Challenges

While a range of factors affecting diaspora communities' capacity to carry out peacebuilding work emerged in this study, two are of particular significance.

Firstly, the South Sudanese peacebuilders in particular were conscious of the desires or expectations of government and non-government institutions that they speak with a unified voice that represents the majority of the community. These expectations – which are felt by many conflict-affected diasporas - are unrealistic, given the fact that the divisions within their community mirror the conflict in South Sudan itself. They are also unreasonable, as homogeneity of political opinion is generally not expected of any other grouping in Australian society. These subtle external pressures to form a politically unified grouping are particularly problematic if they are perceived as a prerequisite for engagement.

The second significant challenge related to funding. Most of the organisations and initiatives discussed in this study are largely volunteer-run and reliant on fundraising from within their communities. The single biggest boost to diaspora peacebuilding work would be increased coordination between federal and state government departments that would enable them to understand the value of this work to Australian domestic and foreign policy interests, and fund it accordingly.

Implications for international peacebuilding approaches

The initiatives discussed in this study have shown that diaspora-led peacebuilding and reconciliation is profoundly different to the approaches of other actors, such as communities or governments in countries of origin or external actors such as international NGOs, UN bodies, or other third-party mediators.

Some differences are self-evident and relate to size and scale. Others are related to approaches: diasporas are more likely to design strategies that are based on a specific cultural and political context and often engage with traditional, culturally specific models of conflict resolution. Because of this, they are far less likely than external actors to attempt to apply models in a one-size-fits-all approach.

As they predominantly operate through family, kinship or other personal connections, they have access to groups and individuals that are often invisible to external actors, and are more likely to operate in areas with no international presence because they have identified a gap to be filled.

Furthermore, their conception of a reasonable timeframe for peacebuilding is quite different to that of the international community. For many, it is their life's work, and they accept that change might not even happen in their lifetimes. This sits in sharp contrast to most international NGO programs and UN missions that are bound by fixed terms of several years at most, and a need to deliver tangible, verifiable results that often speak primarily to the needs of donors. They are in it for the long haul.

However, while it is clear that they are not just smaller versions of international agencies, neither can they be considered truly "local", grassroots actors: they have not had a continuous lived experience of the conflict, and the influences of their lives in Australia are at least as important as their understanding of local norms and context.

In this research, diaspora communities have emerged as participants in the construction of peace who operate as transnational, interconnected communities. This would therefore imply that the task of peacebuilding should be more widely recognised as occurring not only in the country in conflict or in the countries that assist in the peace processes, but rather that it needs to be multi-sited to include countries of diaspora settlement.

For international bodies and home country governments engaged in peace processes, transitional justice and post conflict reconstruction, diasporas should be recognised as stakeholders in the process.

Diaspora peacebuilders are doing something no-one else can do. As neither wholly international nor wholly local actors they operate between, and within, both contexts, utilizing their unique perspectives, resources, skills, and lived experiences. This hybrid nature of diaspora intervention is arguably the most valuable tool they possess for influencing peace.

Section 1. Introduction

Diaspora communities in Australia contribute to the construction of long-term sustainable peace in their countries of origin: by building schools and medical centres in their home towns, sending money to support extended family members, participating in election campaigns and voting for regime change, training peacebuilders, and building bridges within their divided communities to foster harmonious co-existence and reconciliation. This work is the norm, rather than the exception, across a wide range of conflict-affected diasporas in Australia, yet it is largely invisible not only to the wider public but also to government agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs) and researchers who have an active interest in peace and conflict.

The development and humanitarian activities of diaspora communities in Australia have started to attract attention of policy makers in recent years, following similar patterns in Europe and the US over the past two decades.

Increased understanding about what diasporas do and the value of their contributions is enabling government, NGOs and researchers to move beyond outdated discourses that frame diasporas predominantly as war financiers and peace wreckers, towards a more nuanced approach that takes in contemporary realities.¹

Recognition of diaspora communities as valuable partners who can enhance Australia's relationship with the rest of the world has made its way into foreign policy in recent years², and more Australian NGOs are incorporating diaspora engagement into program development. Although this work is still small scale and sporadic, there are indications that it is on the rise. New research on the humanitarian and development contributions of Australian-based diasporas is beginning to emerge.³ Specific attention to diaspora-led peacebuilding has lagged behind in this trend however, despite one or two notable exceptions. Insufficient recognition of diaspora-led development, humanitarian response and peacebuilding results in these initiatives remaining largely unsupported and unfunded, leading to missed opportunities for the construction of peace in conflict and post-conflict settings.

1.1 RESEARCH SCOPE

This study attempts to contribute to fill this gap by examining the peacebuilding and reconciliation work of the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan diaspora communities in Australia: their projects, strategies and approaches they utilised. On the surface, the two communities have little in common: the Sri Lankan diaspora, with its 150-year history of settlement in Australia, is addressing the legacy of a 26 year civil war (1983-2009) and working through a range of post-conflict challenges. The more newly arrived South Sudanese community on the other hand has been living the immediacy of a conflict whose permanent ceasefire was negotiated in June 2018. Yet despite these differences, there are strong convergences in their motivations, the strategies they utilise to promote peace and their views on what they, as diasporas, can contribute.

The peacebuilders who participated in this study defined peace very broadly: as a state in which conflicts are resolved without violence; where rule of law and justice prevail, political power is contested democratically, state institutions are accountable and free from corruption, and all members of society are able to live peacefully with their neighbours of different ethnicities and beliefs, while enjoying equitable access to health, education and employment. Consequently, diaspora peacebuilding constitutes a broad range of activities that contributes to these facets of peace.

¹ Until recently, a dominating discourse in peace and conflict studies has been that of diasporas as peace wreckers, who involve themselves in homeland politics by financing warring parties, or who return to take direct part in the fighting. Among the most discussed were the Tamils in the global diaspora who constituted the funding base for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). After 9/11 and the rise of the terrorism discourse that provided a carte blanche for many governments to delegitimise armed oppositions, diaspora political activity was easily subsumed into the category of terrorism. It is useful to reflect on the role of the diaspora in regime change in many conflicts that are now, in hindsight, considered legitimate armed struggles, such as the independence of East Timor. More recently, the contribution of diasporas to long-term peace has emerged within the migration and development field, which has focused on knowledge transfer, investment in post-conflict economies and, particularly, remittances. Diaspora remittances are currently more than three times official overseas development assistance globally – see Knomad. 2017. "Migration and Remittances. Recent Developments and Outlook Special Topic: Return Migration". *Migration and Development Brief* 28. (accessed 2 November 2018) <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/719531507124177735/pdf/120240-WP-PUBLIC-3-10-2017-22-22-41-MigrationandDevelopmentBrief.pdf>>

² Australian Government. 2017. *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*. (accessed 27 October 2018) , <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>

³ See for example Louise Olliff. 2018. "Refugee diaspora organisations in the international refugee regime: motivations, modalities and implications of diaspora humanitarianism." PhD diss., University of Melbourne.

Barnes et.al 2018. The role of transnational networks and mobile citizens in South Sudan's global community: A pilot study focused on Melbourne and Juba. Rift Valley Institute, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <<http://riftvalley.net/publication/role-transnational-networks-and-mobile-citizens-south-sudan-s-global-community#.W9UcGBMzbJw>>

Diaspora Action Australia. 2014. *Understanding diaspora-led development and peacebuilding: case studies of five African diaspora organisations in Australia*. <<http://diasporaaction.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DiasporaActionAustraliaUnderstandingDiasporaLedDevelopment.pdf>>

Among these are the critical areas of truth telling and seeking justice for human rights abuses, however they have regrettably not been addressed in this research due to its limited scope.⁴

The focus of this study is much narrower however, examining how diasporas utilise an inter-ethnic harmony framework to contribute to long term, sustainable peace (for the full range of peacebuilding activities mentioned by participants, see Annex 2). Its purpose is not to evaluate their success but rather to document their activity and explore the perceptions of the peacebuilders themselves in relation to how they see social change occurring and how they view their contribution to long-term peace.

1.2 KEY FINDINGS

The South Sudanese and Sri Lankan peacebuilders who participated in this study promoted inter-ethnic harmony by:

- building community harmony in Australia;
- leveraging political influence;
- implementing projects in countries of origin; and,
- modelling values of tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism through the structures of their organizations and project methodologies.

In the implementation of these activities and strategies, five significant themes emerged.

1. Peace was defined broadly, to encompass both an absence of violence (negative peace) and the presence of conditions that enable people to live a full life (positive peace). Furthermore, sustainable peace requires a change in values and mindsets at a grassroots level. This entailed a moving away from political views embedded in religious, tribal or ethnic tensions and towards values of pluralism, multiculturalism and non-violent resolution of conflict.
2. Participants perceived a causal link between building inter-ethnic harmony within their communities in Australia and the prospect for peace in countries of origin: activities here produced results there. When diaspora attitudes in Australia are more moderate, more tolerant and accepting of the “other side”, these attitudes and values are transmitted to families, colleagues and communities in countries of origin. A more unified diaspora is also better able to collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives and speak with a common voice that is able to influence political decision makers.
3. Diasporas communities wield significant influence at both a social level and political level.
4. Diasporas are transnational stakeholders in the construction of peace who utilise a range of intellectual, social, cultural and financial resources.
5. The identities and perspectives of diasporas place them in a unique position as peacebuilders.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The 22 diaspora participants who were interviewed for this research self-identify as carrying out activities aimed at contributing to peace in their countries of origin. They are members of 12 diaspora-led organisations or initiatives that are deliberately multi-ethnic or multi-tribal (See Annex 1 for a list of organisations discussed in this research). Within each of the two communities, many of the individuals are known to each other and have collaborated on one or more initiatives. Importantly, they all apply inter-ethnic harmony or reconciliation methodologies: initiatives that do not include these approaches lie outside the scope of this research.

The Sri Lankan cohort is predominantly made up of people who were born in Sri Lanka but have lived in Australia for several decades. Many had been politically or socially active in Sri Lanka and have continued this work after migrating. Almost all the South Sudanese participants had come to Australia through the humanitarian program in the early 2000s and have completed their schooling or tertiary education in Australia. The two groups represent a mix of tribal, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

⁴The imperative to clarify the truth of human rights abuses, particularly during the last stages of the war, remains an inadequately addressed element in the transitional justice process in Sri Lanka and a key claim of the Tamil communities in Australia and internationally.

Research was carried out through 11 semi-structured interviews, two focus group discussions, and review of documents such as project reports, press releases and media articles.

One of the challenges of this study has been identifying women peacebuilders. While six women (27%) were interviewed, only two were heads of their organisations, though others held leadership positions on boards or committees. Most organisations sought women's participation to some extent – and one was an exclusively women's organisation - but fewer had mentioned applying gender-specific strategies to their initiatives. This contrasts with development projects or community work focused on settlement in Australia, which appear to have higher rates of women's participation and leadership⁵.

Positionality

As primary researcher I had previously worked with many of the interviewees in this study, which constitutes both a strength and a limitation⁶. On the one hand, it provided a deep background knowledge of several of the projects and relationships of trust with many of the interviewees. On the other hand, this also means that the sample group was made up of those leaders with whom I had pre-existing relationships as well as others they recommended. The overall sample group therefore is largely self-selected and should not be considered representative of the two communities.

A note on terminology

Throughout this paper the term “community” refers to both the individual ethnic or tribal communities as well as for the whole group of people who originated from a particular country. For example, in some instances reference is made to the “Sinhalese community” and in others “Sri Lankan community” according to the context. It must be acknowledged however that conflict-affected diasporas who are contesting power or even the legitimacy of the state itself do not necessarily consider themselves to part of a community that is defined by the nation state. Similarly, the depth of divisions within a particular group may be such that people do not feel that there is enough of a collective identity to be considered a community. The same can be said of the term “diaspora”, and it is perhaps more accurate to speak of multiple diasporas originating from the same country or region. While acknowledging these issues, the terms “diaspora” and “community” refer to all people of Sri Lankan or South Sudanese background and have been used throughout this paper for ease of expression: this usage is not intended to diminish the very real complexities related to how people identify and feel a sense of belonging.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

Section 2 will provide a brief context of the two communities in Australia, particularly their relationships with South Sudan and Sri Lanka and the effects of the conflicts on settlement patterns and experiences. Section 3 will present the key findings of the research. Section 4 discusses the research findings and explores the implications of diaspora-led peacebuilding for other sectors such as the Australian Government, international NGOs and others working in the peacebuilding space. The final section provides recommendations for key stakeholders.

⁵ As an example. In April 2018 a group of South Sudanese women convened a women's only conference addressing education, health, parenting and relationships. <https://au.iofc.org/south-sudan-women-create-community-led-solutions>. Also, see case study of the development work of the Melbourne-based Mamaland Hope for Future Foundation in *Diaspora Action Australia* 2014.

⁶ This research was born from nine years of observation and collaboration with diaspora communities, in my capacity as Executive Director of Diaspora Action Australia (DAA). Many of the observations in this paper – and the need for the research itself – were informed by years of working with the diaspora organisations involved. DAA's work with diaspora-led peacebuilding is documented in reports such as:

Diaspora Action Australia. 2014. *Understanding diaspora-led development and peacebuilding: case studies of five African diaspora organisations in Australia*. (accessed 1 October 2018) <<http://diasporaaction.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DiasporaActionAustraliaUnderstandingDiasporaLedDevelopment.pdf>>

Diaspora Action Australia. 2017. *South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue: Final Report*. (accessed 2 November 2018)

<<http://diasporaaction.org.au/south-sudan-peacebuilding-dialogue>>

Miletic, T., Diaspora Action Australia., Diaspora Learning Network. (2018). *Diaspora Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Seminar: Outcomes Report*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326842534_Diaspora_Peacebuilding_and_Reconciliation_Seminar_Outcomes_Report

Section 2. Diaspora community contexts

2.1 SOUTH SUDANESE DIASPORA

Australia is home to around 30,000 people of South Sudanese origin, the majority of whom came to Australia through the humanitarian program in the later stages of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) that resulted in South Sudan's independence from Sudan.⁷ Many had spent years in refugee camps in the region.

The community is highly organised with formal, recognised leadership structures in all areas of settlement around Australia. Most identify as belonging to sub-communities, roughly correlated to around 60 tribal and sub-tribal groupings. While the largest groups are Dinka, there is a very significant Nuer population, which is believed to be one of the largest in the world. In addition to this structure, the communities have formed a plethora of associations, organisations and groups that are involved in cultural, social and political activities in Australia, as well as those dedicated to development, peacebuilding and humanitarian activities in South Sudan.

2.1.1 Identity

Ties to South Sudan are strong, especially for the first generation who have immediate family members still in South Sudan or in the region who they support financially and with whom they maintain intimate connections. Remittance sending is expected of the diaspora as part of their obligations to extended family and cements the bonds between them, however it also places a significant strain on the community, many of whom face financial challenges as they settle in Australia and bring up young families.

For the younger generation that have been either born in Australia or raised here from early age, identification with South Sudan is more mixed. Some see themselves as primarily Australian and are not interested in South Sudan, while others feel strongly connected to their heritage. From a peacebuilding perspective, this generation's attitudes to the conflict often differ significantly to that of their parents. They can lack the heat of inter-tribal animosity, as described by a young woman:

"We don't even know what you guys are mad about. We weren't even born when this situation that you guys are talking about happened, so why should we be holding grudges against people we don't have grudges for?" (Interviewee 3)

Some within the diaspora have voiced hopes that this younger generation offers opportunities for different approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation within Australia and South Sudan.⁸ For many of the elders however, the younger generation's lack firsthand knowledge equates to a lack of credibility.

2.1.2 Political engagement with South Sudan

The relationships between the diaspora and the South Sudanese government or opposition are very much alive and immediate. Since independence, many have returned to take up positions in government and have close links to political leaders. Others have returned as combatants for both government and opposition armies.⁹

Both the ruling party Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the two factions of the opposition SPLM-IO have active chapters in Australia and their representatives have visited Australia and conducted community meetings.

According to one respondent, of SPLM-IO supporters living in the diaspora around the world, the majority live in Melbourne. Currents of political thought flow freely between the two countries. According to one leader, "Whoever controls power in South Sudan still controls their thinking here ... it's almost like we wait for signals from South Sudan." (Interviewee 5)

⁷ According to the 2011 Census, 5.6% of the South Sudan-born people in Australia arrived before 2001, 72.4% between 2001 and 2006 and 18.4% between 2007 and 2011. See Australian Government, Department of Social Services. nd. *Community Information Summary. South Sudan-Born* (accessed 1 November 2018) <https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/south_sudan.pdf>

⁸ Diaspora Action Australia. 2017. *South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue: Final Report*. (accessed 2 November 2018) <<http://diasporaaction.org.au/south-sudan-peacebuilding-dialogue>>

⁹ Personal correspondence.

While this has significant implications for how the diaspora is influenced by politics “back home”, politicisation and influence also flow from the diaspora back into South Sudan and to other diaspora communities around the world. Perhaps the most significant example is the role played by the Australian-based diaspora in spearheading the spread of hate speech since the resurgence of conflict in 2013. Social media platforms such as Facebook have been used to spread misinformation and propaganda, manipulating historical tensions to incite tribal violence. According to a recent report commissioned by the Australian government, news of events in South Sudan - particularly human rights abuses - is repackaged and disseminated by the Australian diaspora to fuel antagonism among the diaspora as well as in South Sudan itself.¹⁰ This spread of hate speech has been identified by international actors and the South Sudanese government as a key issue affecting the peace process¹¹ and is also a cause of great concern among those within the diaspora who have sought to promote a non-violent political resolution to the conflict.

It has also influenced the way the diaspora is perceived in South Sudan. Before the civil war broke out in 2013, they had been generally regarded as a positive force for change, however the negative social media activity, combined with the return of some to take part in hostilities, have resulted in increased wariness among South Sudan residents. They are now increasingly likely to consider the diaspora as a potential threat and competition in the job market, and there exists a pushback against diaspora engagement in political life in South Sudan.¹²

Strong ties between the diaspora and South Sudan – due to identity, family ties, remittances and political connections – are strengthened by their increasing mobility. Many move frequently between the two countries on both short-term and long-term visits and almost everyone is in frequent contact with family, friends, colleagues, and institutions. In addition, they are connected to the rest of the diaspora around the world, particularly in the UK, US, Canada and Africa.

2.2 SRI LANKAN DIASPORA

The Sri Lankan community in Australia is over four times the size of the South Sudanese, (118,908, recorded in the 2016 Census) and has been here considerably longer, with Sri Lankans first appearing in the census in 1871.¹³ While there have been multiple migration flows of Burghers, Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims over that time, the most recent significant pattern has been the arrival of thousands of Tamil asylum seekers after the end of the civil war (1983-2009). These Tamils have borne the brunt of Australia’s increasingly punitive immigration policies, which have been condemned by successive UN reports: many still languish in immigration detention or are being forcibly returned to Sri Lanka. While this group has been the most visible face of recent Sri Lankan migration, it is interesting to note that more than 70% of Sri Lankan arrivals between 2009-14 were actually skilled migrants.¹⁴

2.2.1 Tamil and Sinhalese diasporas

The highly organised diaspora has formed many associations and organisations, including sporting clubs, cultural groups, old school networks and business associations as well as those formed for humanitarian and philanthropic purposes in both Australia and Sri Lanka. During the civil war, groups formed for a political purpose on both sides of the divide, aligned formally¹⁵ or informally with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or the Sinhalese-led government and connected through transnational networks of organisations and individuals in the diaspora. While the global Tamil diaspora’s financial and political support to the LTTE has received most of the international attention, it must be noted that hardline Sinhalese pro-government groups have also been very active in Australia, pushing anti-Tamil, militaristic, punitive agendas. The capacity of both sides to raise funds, mobilise support and leverage influence was due in part to the fact that they were well established in Australia, with education, income and labour force participation all above the national average.¹⁶

¹⁰ Barnes et al. 2018

¹¹ See for example Video message of Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Other Atrocities to South Sudan Peacebuilding Dialogue 2017. <http://diasporaaction.org.au/south-sudan-peacebuilding-dialogue>

¹² Barnes et al. 2018; Interviewee 1.

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016. *2016 Census*. <<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016>>

¹⁴ Australian Government, Department of Social Services. 2014. *The Sri Lanka-born community* (accessed 29 October 2018) <<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-sri-lanka-born-community>>

¹⁵ Diaspora Action Australia documented 144 groups and organisations in 2012. Of these, 14 were primarily focused on development, humanitarian, human rights or peace-building activities.

¹⁶ Department of Immigration 2014.

2.2.2 Intra-community tensions

Tensions between the different ethnic groups in the diaspora, particularly between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, reached virulent levels during the civil war. Community leaders recounted instances of multi-ethnic events and gatherings sabotaged by pro-government nationalists, formal public meetings degenerating into wrangles requiring security guard intervention, and political manoeuvring by one side aimed at cutting off opposing groups' credibility with, and access to, the Australian government.

In contrast, many in the diaspora are sustained by memories of a pre-war era of coexistence and inter-ethnic friendships, both in Australia and Sri Lanka. A Tamil participant, for example, recalls being saved during riots by a high-profile Sinhalese neighbour (Interviewee 10). This vision of a return to the best of the past provides hope for the future and inspires them to promote inter-ethnic harmony.

Among respondents there was a frequently voiced perception that the diaspora has always been more polarised than communities living in Sri Lanka. This was attributed to several factors. Firstly, time: like all long-term migrant communities whose identity is bound with an imagined homeland, many had been stuck in a remembered past that no longer exists. It has been suggested that as social and political change have occurred in post-conflict Sri Lanka, its residents have moved on from the Tamil-Sinhalese political binary but the diaspora has not. Another related view was that the diaspora does not feel the same imperative to abandon old animosities and accept compromise because there is less at stake in Australia:

“[The] business of living together [in Sri Lanka] requires you to arrive at a modus vivendi ... to accommodate” (Participant, Focus Group 2).

Another explanation offered was that being in the safety of a country like Australia allows the airing of political views that would have been dangerous to express in Sri Lanka. This allowed groups at the more extreme ends of the political poles to be organised and active. For the multi-ethnic moderates who took part in this research, they felt a need to counteract the noisier nationalist/separatist platforms, particularly to the Australian Government.

In this post-war era, the tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamils have abated but not disappeared altogether. In addition, there are now other dynamics at play. There exist differences in perspective within the Tamil community, between those who have been in Australia for decades or generations and those (mainly youth) who came as asylum seekers after the war. This latter group has experienced directly the brutality of the final stages of the conflict and the process of asylum, compounded by what has been, for many, the trauma of long-term or indefinite detention in Australia. Politically, they have a stronger focus on clarifying the truth of human rights violations against the Tamils and bringing perpetrators to justice rather than prioritising reconciliation. While the older Tamil community may also share the commitment to truth and justice, they are more likely to simultaneously promote co-existence and forgiveness.

Another emerging issue is the rising tension in Muslim-Sinhalese relations in Sri Lanka, most recently the April 2018 outbreak of violence against Muslims near Kandy. This is a concern for the Muslim diaspora in Australia, who have been fundraising to rebuild burnt and looted houses and shops, however it does not yet appear to have negatively affected relationships between the Muslim and Sinhalese diasporas. Among the peacebuilders who took part in this study, their work is aimed at bridging these historical and emerging divides.

Section 3. Findings:

Building peace through inter-ethnic harmony

The participants in this study all elected to pursue peacebuilding by utilising (to differing degrees) an inter-ethnic harmony framework. They regarded the building of relationships and tolerance between antagonistic communities as fundamental to long-term sustainable peace, particularly where political and military solutions have proven inadequate for addressing root causes of conflict.

Inter-ethnic harmony initiatives and methodologies were implemented in countries of origin, in Australia and in other parts of the world where diaspora communities reside. While the end goal is peace in South Sudan and Sri Lanka, peacebuilding is pursued across different geographical contexts according to capacity, resources and opportunity: those who were able to carry out work overseas generally did so; others aspired to this. For all however, building community harmony in Australia was regarded as a necessary part of this process. Community harmony in Australia and long-term peace in countries of origin were seen as inextricably linked.

This section will present the research findings by examining how South Sudanese and Sri Lankan diaspora peacebuilders seek to contribute peace through:

- building harmony among communities in Australia;
- leveraging political influence;
- implementing peacebuilding projects in countries of origin; and
- embodying the change they seek to bring about.

Furthermore, it will explore their theories of change - how they see these strategies as contributing to social and political change.

3.1 COMMUNITY HARMONY IN AUSTRALIA

All participants in this study were involved in some way in building community harmony in Australia. This was seen as necessary for the wellbeing of the diaspora here as well as increasing their ability to work on countries of origin.

Both the Sri Lankan and South Sudanese communities have experienced deep divisions that mirror the tensions in their countries of origin. Typically, when conflicts overseas escalate, relationships and networks in the diaspora deteriorate, resulting in hate speech, breakdown of friendships and associations between people of different communities, and have included instances of violence. This dynamic, reported by both communities, is frequently experienced by conflict-generated diasporas. These tensions affect social and psychological wellbeing, with community members frequently reporting distress, anxiety and feelings of increased social isolation. Community leaders' attentions are also diverted away from other activities that enhance community wellbeing.

Divisions within the communities also affect their ability to collaborate to promote peace in their countries of origin. Participants reported that several initiatives had been put on hold or abandoned altogether when conflict increased because it was too difficult or risky to attempt to bring communities together to work on projects. Conversely, when community relationships and networks are functioning well, collaboration becomes possible. The most striking example of this was the coordinated mass mobilisation of the South Sudanese community to vote in the referendum on the independence of South Sudan in 2011, which saw Australia with the highest numbers of out-of-country voters outside Africa¹⁷. The theory that bridging ethnic, tribal and religious divides in Australia can contribute to peace in countries of origin was voiced by all participants in this study and encapsulated in the words of a South Sudanese community leader: "If we are united here, this will impact the lives of people back home and our politicians there" (Interviewee 6).

¹⁷ Australian Broadcasting Corporation News. 2011 "Australia's South Sudanese vote for secession". 20 January 2011. <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-01-20/australi-as-south-sudanese-vote-for-secession/1912256>>

3.1.1 Creating unified community structures

The South Sudanese diaspora in Victoria took a highly structured approach to community harmony in mid 2013. A group of community and church leaders from different denominations and tribal backgrounds formed the South Sudanese Unification Committee and embarked on an 18-month process of travelling around the state, talking to all the sub-community leaders with the intention of bringing together all sub communities in the state. They sought to form a diverse umbrella body because they saw a dual need: on the one hand they saw the need for a representative body that would provide a focal point for addressing the settlement issues facing the community in Victoria and liaising with government; and on the other hand they wanted to foster unity so that they were better able to contribute to peace in South Sudan. Many leaders voiced the ambition that this process could serve as a model for other communities in Australia and in other parts of the world. The fact that they were connected with counterparts in the UK, US, Canada and several African countries, and that the process was reported in online media and radio in South Sudan and internationally, reflected the reach of their influence.

BUILDING A REPRESENTATIVE BODY

South Sudan Unification Committee

A group of community and church leaders from different denominations and tribes sought to unify the community in Victoria and form a diverse and representative umbrella organisation that would officially represent the voices of all South Sudanese communities in Victoria and promote human rights and development in South Sudan. In 2013, the South Sudan Unification Committee (SSUC) embarked on an 18 month process of travelling around the state and talking to all the sub-community leaders, encouraging them to work together towards peace within their own sub-community groups, and at the same time convinced the two rival community associations (which were divided across tribal lines) to disband in favour of the new organisation.

When conflict erupted in late 2013 the whole process came to a standstill for several months, as high levels of tension made it too risky to call for a gathering that brought different groups together. It was restarted when peace talks began in Addis Ababa and inspired enough optimism within the diaspora to attempt unification.

The culmination of this process was a three-day peacebuilding leadership retreat, attended by 62 sub-community leaders from across Victoria. It consisted of workshops, presentations and discussion around themes such as peacebuilding, ethical leadership, conflict resolution and community unity. Participants agreed on the draft constitution for the new umbrella body. A group statement was produced.

Several months later, the SSUC organised and oversaw the elections for the new umbrella body, with retired judges from the community counting the votes. The new organisation was formed shortly afterwards. Media after the event included an article in US online magazines from the US and South Sudan, plus Victorian local media and radio.

This process had the support from external community organisations and the State government. The role of these external bodies was significant: Through discussions with the community, the Victorian Multicultural Commission was aware that intra-community divisions made it very difficult to find a focal point that would enable them to address issues affecting the community. They convened a meeting between Diaspora Action Australia and the SSUC, and provided the financial support for the retreat process. DAA played an external third party role as the primary organiser and facilitator of the event, in conjunction with the SSUC. It was also supported by Catholic Care and Victoria Police.

3.1.2 Fostering tolerance and co-existence

The Sri Lankan diaspora has also addressed the need to bring together people from different ethnic backgrounds at various stages during the conflict. During the war, seminars, meetings and events designed to include people from different ethnic groups occurred with regularity, in an attempt to find some common ground, a space for dialogue or a willingness to collaborate. That fact that they were often sabotaged by hardline Sinhala pro-government groups who supported a military solution or were poorly attended by one ethnic group or another is possibly less remarkable than the fact that they were able to occur at all.

Since 2009, the post-war context has been more favourable as tensions have eased and the appetite for reconciliation has grown. As an example of what has become possible, the diaspora in Victoria has made use of the state government's annual Harmony Day by running a series of reconciliation events convened through the Uniting Church (2014-17). Social and cultural activities have been used as drawcards, with an underlying intent to use that unity to influence peace in Sri Lanka:

“We said, come play cricket, come and listen to some lovely music, come and eat hoppers and we will make them for you and then we’ll talk a little about how we can help, and how by us being together in this peaceful and lovely country where we live together without anger and hate, then maybe we will have something to offer back home.” (emphasis added, Interviewee 8)

These events have also incorporated more explicit attempts at bridging ethnic divides, such as conflict resolution theatre that involves the audience in determining the course of the plot towards a conciliatory conclusion, or the highly significant singing of the national anthem in both Sinhalese and Tamil. According to the organiser:

“There were people in our audience crying. For years, they were not allowed to sing it in Tamil in their country ... Symbolically, it’s magic really.” (Interviewee 8)

The Harmony Day events have led to other instances of inter-ethnic collaboration, such as the Muslim community’s approaches to other groups resulting in a delegation that met with the Sri Lankan Consulate in Melbourne and advocacy to the Sri Lankan government. Another initiative has been the formation of the ConChord choir, comprised of over 60 Tamils, Sinhalese, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. They hope to go on tour to Sri Lanka in 2019.

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Australian Advocacy for Good Governance in Sri Lanka

In its promotion of democracy and accountability in Sri Lanka, Australian Advocacy for Good Governance in Sri Lanka (AAGGSL) has sustained a body of advocacy and campaigning work since its inception in 2014. Its activities have included:

- Advocacy on constitutional reform, abolition of the executive presidential system, and promotion of free and fair elections
- Campaigning in presidential elections in Sri Lanka in conjunction with civil society organisations
- Public meetings and seminars in Melbourne
- Promotion of values such as human rights, gender equality, minority rights
- Dissemination of media releases, opinion pieces and reports
- Fundraising for flood victims in 2017
- Advocacy on diaspora-related issues such as the reinstatement of dual citizenship.

AAGGSL is a not-for-profit organisation with members of diverse backgrounds aimed at creating awareness of the lack of democracy, accountability and good governance in Sri Lanka, in particular due to the executive presidential system. It is committed to promoting democracy and rule of law in Sri Lanka and respect for the rights and will of all its peoples.

<https://www.facebook.com/Australian-Advocacy-for-Good-Governance-in-Sri-Lanka-396840260480513/>

3.1.3 Building understanding and common narratives

A feature of several community harmony activities among both the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan diasporas has been attempts to unpack and explore the different lived experiences of the conflicts, so each side can better understand the perspective of the other and challenge the polarised narratives that fuel conflict. One respondent described the task of peacebuilding as fostering the ability to see through the eyes of “the other”:

“The truth that you hold dear may very well be questioned by someone else’s seeing and experiencing the very same events that you were part of, but seeing them experienced from another position on the spectrum. And part of our work in peacebuilding is getting people to see that.” (Interviewee 8)

Exposure to the lived experience and the viewpoints of the other side has been prevalent across the work of the Sri Lankan participants, in the form of formal conflict resolution/dialogue approaches, immersion/reconciliation tours to Sri Lanka, or more frequently in the regular meetings, seminars and community events convened by organisations such as People for Human Rights and Equality (PHRE), Bridging Lanka, Australian Advocacy for Good Governance in Sri Lanka (AAGGSL) and others.

Truth and (mis)information

For the Sri Lankan community, one of the barriers to understanding other perspectives, particularly during the conflict, was the information coming out of Sri Lanka, and the way it had been interpreted by the diaspora, many of whom had been in Australia for many years and not had recent lived experience of the conflict. Even after conflict ended, the messages coming from Sri Lanka to Australia and other countries was very polarised. To counteract this, Bridging Lanka consciously use their mobility between the two countries to bring current information and more nuanced thinking to those in the diaspora whose views were shaped by memories of wartime atrocities. Several other Sri Lankan organisations have also brought speakers to Australia for this purpose.

For the South Sudanese communities, misinformation both affects the diaspora and is created by it. According to a report commissioned by the Australian government, lack of reliable information from South Sudan, combined with a lack of trust in most media outlets, makes it difficult to even verify factual information. This has led to an environment favourable to those in the diaspora who have manipulated information and disseminated hate speech through social media, playing on tribal animosities and polarising views both in South Sudan and also in host countries around the world.¹⁸ A respondent in Queensland spoke of the need for “myth busting” and countering narratives of tribalism through a more nuanced discourse:

“We need to start framing our language, because our language matters within the community ... It is not about that tribe or this tribe, it’s about the complexity, the trauma we have been through, the history of South Sudan’s struggle.” (Interviewee 4)

Developing a discourse that takes in this complexity and is inclusive of the differing narratives and perspectives is complicated by the extremely divergent experiences of the diaspora and their patterns of displacement induced by the conflict. Among the diaspora in Australia are people who had stayed in South Sudan for a large part of the war for independence, ex combatants (including child soldiers), those who had fled to neighbouring countries, or the younger generations who had been born in refugee camps or in Australia. This has led, in the view of one participant, to differing interpretations not only of the conflict but also of culture and identity. He described a community beset by competing claims over who is “authentically” South Sudanese, or who has the legitimacy to represent or define culture, tribe or nationality. (Interviewee 5). Legitimacy is contested between tribes, within tribes and across generations, adding another layer of complexity to the dynamics within the diaspora.

These differing perspectives and identities led the South Sudanese Diaspora Network (SSDN) to try and build a shared understanding among the diaspora in NSW in 2013-15, because, “we haven’t got a common starting point - socially, culturally, historically, politically” (Interviewee 5). They convened a series of community workshops and meetings, and produced publications, aimed at building a common narrative of what was happening as a starting point for community harmony and potential collaboration on peacebuilding in South Sudan. Their focus was on drawing out and engaging with the differing views among the community. However, this attempt was viewed with such suspicion by some community leaders that it was eventually put on hold.

For both communities, clarifying the truth, understanding and accepting different perspectives, and challenging polarised narratives have been central to their work in building community harmony in Australia.

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These community harmony initiatives - whether they are pursued through restructuring community leadership, dialogue and forgiveness, exposure to “opposing” communities, or embarking on clarifying the truth - are all designed to influence the thinking of the diaspora. Participants consistently articulated the view that communities who want to contribute to peace in countries of origin must also change attitudes and mindsets in Australia as it enhances the ability of communities to collaborate and coordinate projects, puts a brake on the negative practices within the diaspora, and also affects their interactions with family, friends and colleagues in countries of origin and among the diaspora in other parts of the world.

Changing the attitudes and intentions of the diaspora can therefore have a significant impact on prospects for peace, which is why the peacebuilders in this study placed so much importance on community harmony in Australia.

However for many participants, building a unified community also served a more instrumental function: providing a platform to maximise their advocacy potential to government.

¹⁸ Barnes et al 2018.

3.2 ADVOCACY

Both communities expressed a desire to bring about peaceful change at a political level. This involved advocating to the Australian government to leverage its influence over leaders in South Sudan and Sri Lanka, and to influence the respective peace process and post-conflict transition. The imperative to influence political leadership was especially prevalent among the South Sudanese community, given the urgent need for a political resolution to end the conflict. This community in particular utilized a community harmony framework to enhance their advocacy efforts for its potential to increase their credibility, (particularly in the eyes of the Australian government), make their messages more consistent and maximise their voice.

3.2.1 South Sudanese advocacy

The South Sudanese community has been actively lobbying the Australian government for several years, urging Australia to use its middle power status and participation at UN bodies (particularly during Australia's term on the Security Council in 2013-14 and their current position on the Human Rights Council) to push South Sudanese political leaders to the negotiating table. They also see Australia as having power to influence political leaders who hold property and investments in Australia.

At the same time, they expressed frustration at what they regard as inadequate action from Australia. Participants in this study saw a need for unified messaging from the whole diaspora community for their claims to be given weight and for Australia to take a more proactive stance on South Sudan:

"If everybody goes to the Australian government from South Sudanese community and says the same thing, it's likely the Australian government will go, 'I know what this community wants, I can use my diplomatic means to try to influence the outcome in South Sudan'." (Interviewee 5).

Similarly, this unity would have knock on effects internationally:

"If we are one we can lobby the Australian government and the government will lobby the international community" (Interviewee 6)

Others saw unified messaging as providing a source of information to the government, reflecting a commonly expressed view that the Australian Government was either not sufficiently informed about the scale and severity of the conflict and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, or regarded South Sudan as outside Australia's sphere of priority, despite their advocacy efforts.¹⁹

The South Sudanese community's emphasis on presenting a united front also responds to calls from several Federal and State government departments as well as from NGOs that work with the South Sudanese diaspora.²⁰ While there have been numerous constructive government- or NGO-supported initiatives over the past decade that have fostered harmony and have been well received by the community, the diaspora has also heard on numerous occasions that divisions within the community have been an impediment to engagement because government and non-government agencies are unsure about who to engage with, or are nervous that support for one group will be regarded as partisan and exacerbate community tensions. Some have even expressed a desire to identify an interlocutor who speaks on behalf of everyone - a particularly hard call for a community whose divisions are due to an intractable conflict that has affected each of them personally.

Calls for a unified voice place a subtle pressure on the community, even though they may also aspire to it in principle. As one leader pointed out, the government's insistence on a unified voice, while desirable, "places an unrealistic expectation on the South Sudanese community here. I don't know any community on earth that agrees on everything, including the Australian community. That's why in Australia we have different political parties" (Interviewee 5). This expectation is also potentially problematic if it is intended or perceived as a prerequisite for effective advocacy to government.

Given the immediacy of the need to resolve the conflict in South Sudan, the diaspora has also actively sought to directly influence the political leadership in that country. Much of the direct work being done by the diaspora within South Sudan has been carried out by individuals who have returned temporarily at key moments or more

¹⁹ Most participants reported that they had insufficient information about what Australia was contributing in South Sudan other than humanitarian aid. This was despite the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Africa Branch's unusually proactive interest in engaging with the South Sudanese diaspora through convening or funding a number of projects in recent years, such as the Australian Government-funded project in 2011 that enabled around 500 members of the South Sudanese community to vote in the referendum for independence. More recently, DFAT has funded and actively participated in two peacebuilding projects with the South Sudanese community in 2017 and 2018, facilitated by Diaspora Action Australia.

²⁰ Personal correspondence

permanently to take up positions in government. In one instance, a member was asked by the UN to use his personal relationship with the Vice President to encourage him to return to the peace negotiations in 2013. There have also been instances of collective organising. In May 2018, a group of South Sudanese and Sudanese church leaders from around Australia met under the auspices of the National Council of Churches to discuss how they could promote the message of peace. The resulting joint statement was sent directly to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) via the Australian ambassador in Ethiopia and read out at the High Level Revitalization Forum, which has been leading the peace negotiations.²¹ The church leaders also undertook to return to their states and facilitate dialogue among the community: in Victoria this resulted in a three-day retreat attended by 50 church leaders in June, a national day of prayer and a conference of 80 community leaders in July.

The potential for direct diaspora participation in peace negotiations as a distinct constituency was raised by participants in this study. One saw the potential for a diaspora voice in the negotiations that leverages their economic power rather than (or in addition to) personal connections:

“If we come together and we contribute money we can actually find ways of representing our voice in Addis Ababa in the peace process. But this is the level that we do not reach. Not reach, because you know, our society to some extent don’t understand it, the power of the people.” (Interviewee 4)

The fact that the diaspora does not currently have a voice in the peace process was a frustration voiced by more than one participant, alongside the acknowledgement that this could only occur if the diaspora was able to advocate with a unified voice.

Another potential point of leverage was seen to be the diaspora’s personal connections to politicians. As a significant number of current members of the South Sudan cabinet had been living in Australia and/or have family still living here, there is a direct link between individuals in Australia and the government, which could be harnessed. According to one peacebuilder:

“The President has a family in Adelaide, the President of South Sudan. All these ministers you hear about in South Sudan have families in Australia. So everybody, personally, has some link, has some influence in South Sudan. That can be easily activated and used if there is a common understanding of what needs to be done.” (Interviewee 5, emphasis added)

3.2.2 Sri Lankan Advocacy

For the Sri Lankan participants, advocacy to the Australian government did not emerge as a strong factor in their peacebuilding work in the current post-conflict context. During the civil war however Tamil, Sinhalese and multi-ethnic groups had been significantly more active. PHRE’s advocacy at that time, for example, included a push for Australia to involve itself in bringing warring parties to the negotiating table. They expressed disappointment that the Australian government did not regard Sri Lanka as a priority even though there was potentially a contribution that could be made in terms of technical support and expertise in transitional justice mechanisms. Rather, Australia’s interest in Sri Lanka was seen as being focused on curbing the flow of asylum seekers.

Since the end of the war, members of the diaspora has become more engaged with political processes in Sri Lanka, especially as the government has been more welcoming of the diaspora in recent years. One participant described returning temporarily to campaign during the presidential elections in 2010, 2014 and 2016, in conjunction with colleagues in Sri Lankan community organisations and NGOs. Another saw the diaspora as playing a watchdog role in holding the government accountable to its commitments in the transitional justice process, which is “the best we can do” from a distance.

Among the participants in this study, a number were implementing peacebuilding initiatives in Sri Lanka and South Sudan, applying methodologies aimed at fostering unity and co-existence while utilising the resources available to them from their Australian base. Their initiatives involved influencing mindset change, building local capacities for peace and mobilising diasporas across international borders.

²¹ IGAD, an eight-country trade bloc in Africa, has been leading the mediation process in South Sudan. In December 2017 it launched the High Level Revitalization Forum in order to revive the stalled 2015 peace agreement.

3.3 PEACEBUILDING IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

3.3.1. Changing mindsets

Transmission of values – whether consciously or unconsciously – occurs through communication between members of the diaspora and their families on a range of issues. These values might be reflected in family discussions about how long a girl is kept in school, or whether or not a male cousin should participate in a conflict, and carry weight not only because of emotional bonds but also because of the economic contributions made by diasporas to family incomes. The conscious use of word-of-mouth messaging via personal contacts to promote peaceful co-existence is an extension of this dynamic and has been employed as a strategy by both the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan participants in this study.

MESSAGES OF UNITY

Union of Greater Upper Nile States

The Melbourne-based Union of Greater Upper Nile States (UGUNS) employs a deliberate strategy of promoting messages of peace and unity via its members to their contacts in South Sudan and other countries of settlement. As its members are drawn from all the ethnic groups in Greater Upper Nile State that reside in Victoria (including Chollo, Morley, Anyuak, Dinka and Nuer) their communications to family, friends, colleagues, community leaders, chiefs and county government officials are targeted at a diverse range of communities.

The messages themselves centre on the need for nationalism based on diversity and unity. In their conversations they reflect on direct lived experiences, such as the frequent disputes over cattle-rustling or access to water and land, or inter-ethnic conflicts. They discuss the negative effects of maintaining division and conflict, and strategies for overcoming these collective challenges through focusing on common interests. Resource-sharing is a recurrent theme.

Several channels of communication are employed. From Australia, they rely on phones and the increasing accessibility of social media. Members take advantage of visits to family in South Sudan and in neighbouring countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya to discuss visions of a peaceful future and the means through which this can be achieved, while members of their recently-opened office in Addis Ababa travel regularly to Greater Upper Nile. They also work through chiefs and the churches as they are respected by local communities. UGUNS also publishes opinion pieces and press releases on South Sudanese online news platforms such as South Sudan news Agency and Gurtong.

The ethnic diversity of UGUNS in Australia also models the concept of unity as members encourage their communities to collaborate with each other.

A significant limitation to UGUNS's work is lack of resources. Their plans to set up a community radio station in Greater Upper Nile to communicate messages of peace are in hold until sufficient funding can be sourced.

<https://www.uguns.net/>

<http://southsudannewsagency.org/index.php/2018/02/09/union-of-greater-upper-nile-states-calls-for-genuine-peace-in-south-sudan/>

<http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/17181/Sign-For-PeaceThe-Union-of-Greater-Upper-Nile-States-UGUNS-Inc.aspx>

The Melbourne-based Union of Greater Upper Nile States (UGUNS), has taken this approach by mobilising its Australian-based members to actively communicate messages of peaceful coexistence and national unity through family networks in South Sudan. Their desire to influence values is partly based on their analysis that unity within Greater Upper Nile has the potential to model inter-tribal tolerance for the rest of the country, due to its historical track record of relatively harmonious coexistence. UGUNS's strategy is to pursue political ideology as well as social engagement: they see a return to the pre-independence geographical division of southern Sudan (consisting of the three regions of Greater Bahr El Ghazal, Greater Equatoria and Greater Upper Nile) as offering a solution to South Sudan's quest for the construction of statehood since independence. Their messages of unity stress a broader narrative of nationhood over tribalism as well as the individual behaviour change at a grassroots level required to achieve this.

Heart and mindset change also lie at the heart of Bridging Lanka's overall strategy and is woven into all their projects. They approach reconciliation through a "dialogue of action" rather than a dialogue of words because through working together on an initiative that all parties value, a foundation of trust is built upon which more difficult questions can be raised and conversations had.

Slowly and unexpectedly, participants come to appreciate the human-ness of the other beyond negative and debilitating stereotypes and discover a surprising commonality. This was described as their ultimate goal:

“All our projects are merely facades for a much deeper intent. Whether it’s environmental projects or livelihood initiatives or urban planning or animal welfare or whatever it is, these are facades. Not that they’re false, [because] they also produce their own benefits, but the primary reason why we’re doing this is to coax heart and mindset change because it’s only with heart and mindset change that you can move towards a road of reconciliation and peace... So these become trojans, not facades - they’re Trojan horses.” (Interviewee 9)

This approach, like others described by respondents from both communities, is based on the premise that increased familiarity and understanding “the other” underpin sustainable peacebuilding. It involves not only dismantling stereotypes but also ultimately challenging the fixed dichotomies of right/wrong, and victim/perpetrator. Recognising the suffering of the other side entails, by definition, an openness to accept that suffering was caused by one’s own ethnic/tribal/religious or political grouping.

This type of transformation was expressed by members of the Sri Lankan diaspora who took part in a reconciliation bus tour of Sri Lanka in 2016.

JOURNEY FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Uniting Church

The Uniting Journey for Peace and Reconciliation took members of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Australia on a 16-day bus tour of Sri Lanka in 2016. Working from the premise that Sri Lanka is a multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-lingual country, the tour was conducted in English, Tamil and Sinhalese and consisted of four men and four women drawn from the main faiths in Sri Lanka – Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity.

Peace and reconciliation were explored through three main dimensions:

- **Interfaith:** By visiting mosques, churches, temples and shrines, as well as places that were personally sacred or significant, participants shared their faiths with others and were exposed to the history of these sites within the context of the civil war.
- **Journey:** Not only a physical journey, participants explored the complex relationship of the diaspora to “home” through memory, community and identity.
- **Storytelling:** Participants were encouraged to share their own stories, which were also the stories of their communities. These brought issues to the fore, fostered mutual recognition, and created opportunities for openness, dialogue and insight.

Reconciliation was explored through a deliberately personal perspective rather than through a political or policy-centred approach, focusing on the transformation of the individual that would enable participants to become effective peacebuilders within their communities.

The tour was led by a member of the Sri Lankan Burgher diaspora, organised through the Uniting Church Commission for Mission.

Organised through the Uniting Church, it involved a group of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians visiting churches, temples and mosques, as well as sites of personal significance to the participants. Several had not been back to Sri Lanka for decades and were returning to family homes and other remembered places for the first time. One of the organisers described the effects of a visit to a mosque that had been the site of a massacre during the war:

“There were people who actually could not believe what they were seeing and had to cry and had to apologise to the next Muslim man they saw, saying: ‘I didn’t know this, I didn’t know this was the level of hatred and violence that my people committed’. So that was a really defining moment and it opened up the discussion about what sort of peacebuilding do we need to do in the hearts of people to actually try and reconstruct Sri Lanka.” (Interviewee 8)

Realisations such as this had a profound effect on the participants, transforming their relationships with other members of the tour as well as their interactions with the Sri Lankan residents they met. It changed both the way they understood their history and how they understood their role as members of the diaspora. It also had a mobilising effect, with several participants of the tour subsequently returning to Sri Lanka on a temporary or permanent basis to continue their peacebuilding work.

The importance of personal transformation of the peacebuilders themselves was stressed by participants from both the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan communities. As they are all affected in some way by the conflicts, confronting one's own pain or residual antagonism, and examining the source of attitudes they hold, was part of their process of development that enabled them to share it with others.

3.3.2. Building capacity for peace

Both the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan diasporas build capacity for peacebuilding among community leaders and influencers in-country, harnessing their resources and networks in Australia. The following three examples demonstrate different approaches to capacity building for peace and reconciliation.

Training peacebuilders

In 2013, 200 people from around South Sudan were brought together for intensive training based on personal reconciliation and skills building that would enable them to promote peace in their regions and conduct consultations for a national conversation about reconciliation. Organised by the international peacebuilding organisation Initiatives of Change (IofC) and delivered in conjunction with members of the Australian South Sudanese diaspora, the program was conducted under the auspices of the South Sudan Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR), an independent body appointed by President Salva Kiir. Subsequent trainings were held in different parts of the country in 2014, 2015 and 2018.

Alongside their involvement in the training, the diaspora organisers were also working on trust-building within their communities in Australia, and travelled to Addis Ababa where they met with government and opposition leaders involved in the peace negotiations.

The partnership between IofC and the diaspora trainers combined the specialised expertise and resources of IofC - who had been invited by the South Sudanese government to assist with national healing - with the cultural access and political connections of the members of diaspora. It also built on many years of IofC's work in South Sudan and in Australia with the South Sudanese diaspora.

MOBILISING GRASSROOTS PEACEBUILDERS

Initiatives of Change

Between 2013-18, a series of intensive peace mobiliser trainings were conducted by international peacebuilding organisation Initiatives of Change (IofC), in conjunction with members of the Australian-based diaspora, under the auspices of the South Sudan Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation (CNHPR). IofC had been invited by the government of South Sudan to assist with the process of national healing and reconciliation.

The program emphasised personal and relational transformation and also included skills-based training that the peace mobilisers would then use in their own regions to implement peace and reconciliation initiatives. Five trainings have been held to date:

- 2013: 200 peace and reconciliation mobilisers - including village youth, politicians and a General drawn from all 10 states - completed a four-week training in Juba.
- 2014: pilot training of 70 facilitators in Yei, Yei River State.
- 2015: 55 peace mobilisers completed a two-week training program in Kuajok, Warrap State. Later that year the program was repeated with another 55 people in Torit, Imatong State,
- 2018: a reunion of 50 of the peace mobilisers from previous trainings enabled them to share stories of their projects and discuss challenges. Plans are underway for further sessions with the remaining peace mobilisers to be held later in 2018 in the historical regions of Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatoria, Greater Bahr el Ghazal.

The peace mobilisers have engaged with the nation-wide consultation process for reconciliation at two levels. Firstly, through the National Dialogue Committee (established by President Kiir to replace the CNHPR in 2015), which has consulted the peace mobilisers on culturally appropriate approaches to dialogue within different communities. Secondly, they acted as facilitators and trainers for the independent national grassroots Community Conversation process organised by the South Sudan Council of Churches. Furthermore, these conversations utilise the methodology of the peace mobiliser training.

Initiatives of Change <https://au.iofc.org/> South Sudan Council of Churches <https://www.sscchurches.com/>

Sports for Peace

A similar train-the-trainer strategy, with a more local focus, has been used by Peace Palette to promote reconciliation and build conflict resolution skills.

In South Sudan's Twic county in Warrap state, where Peace Palette operates, cattle raiding and ongoing conflicts over grazing land and water sources have spilled across the borders to the neighbouring states of Tonj, Gogrial and Ruweng. As these conflicts particularly affect the under-employed young people, Peace Palette organised a basketball tournament in 2018 that brought together 48 youth from the four states.²² Part of the process involved training in peacebuilding and reconciliation, a commitment from participants to not involve themselves in conflicts, and an agreement that they would deliver the training in their home states. The three-day tournament attracted 3000 spectators. A second planned event planned has received interest from 10 other states.

The "diaspora factor" in this project is significant: It was held in Turalei, the home town of Peace Palette's co-founder and the centre of the organisation's projects. As a result, it benefited from the local knowledge and understanding of context, combined with the resources generated from their Australian base. These resources include not just the international funding they sourced, but also the expertise of staff and volunteers who include non-diaspora Australians.

BASKETBALL AS A TOOL FOR PEACE

Peace Palette

Organised by Peace Palette, the Sport for Peace Project was a three-day event between December 27-29, 2017, that took place in Turalei, South Sudan. It consisted of a two-part program in which peace building workshops were held, followed by the Peace and Reconciliation Basketball League. A total of 48 players from neighbouring states throughout South Sudan were unified in a common goal to promote peace through sports.

The building of relationships and trust between participants was the first step in developing "emotional reconciliation" and a leap towards peaceful coexistence. Topics covered throughout the training included the meaning of peace and reconciliation, causes of conflict, theory of change and effective communication. As a part of the peacebuilding training, all players, four referees and two representatives agreed to engage in sports and not to be lured into wars, in effect creating 52 role models for others to follow. Their impact did not go unnoticed, as 3,000 spectators arrived to watch the competition and interest was expressed from ten states to join a second event in the future.

Peace Palette website: <http://www.peacepalette.org>

Capacity building for conflict prevention

In Sri Lanka, a project implemented by Bridging Lanka is attempting to address emerging and deep-seated communal conflict through leadership training of a group of Moulavis (Imams) in District of Mannar District. Escalating tensions between Sinhalese and Muslim communities in recent years has led to attacks against Muslims, increasing unease and mistrust, and concerns that an emerging conflict might become internationalised through involvement of extremist Islamic influence from overseas. Signs of a growing social conservatism among some Muslim communities and attributed to the Saudi Wahabi/Salafi influence, are being exploited by extremist Buddhist monks to shape Sinhala thinking to recast Muslims as the new enemy.

In response and since 2017, Bridging Lanka has been working with the Moulavis to assist them to recognise the role they might be playing to raise tensions and to encourage a more globalised and contemporary mindset. In addition to an IT, English and leadership program, the strategy also involves inter-faith dialogue between Moulavis and Buddhist monks and their communities, to help break down pre-conceived stereotypes and build relationships between the two religious groups.²³ Bridging Lanka's identity as a multi-ethnic and multi-faith diaspora-led organisation has played a part in how they are perceived by the Moulavis and the wider Mannar community, and their capacity to build relationships of trust. Staff and volunteers within Bridging Lanka are consciously recruited to ensure ethnic and religious diversity, both in Australia and in Sri Lanka.

²² Approximately 72% of South Sudan's population is under the age of 30 (South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics). Unemployment and underemployment is high. According to a Mercy Corps 2013 report, only 35% of young people surveyed in Warrap and Unity States were earning an income. See Mercy Corps. 2013. *Youth at the crossroads: pursuing a positive path in South Sudan*. <[https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan,%20Through%20Youth's%20Eyes%20-%20Youth%20Assessment%20%20\(2014\).pdf](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/South%20Sudan,%20Through%20Youth's%20Eyes%20-%20Youth%20Assessment%20%20(2014).pdf)>

²³ The interfaith dialogue also involves youth and the local community affected by the Muslim/Sinhalese riots in 2018. Bridging Lanka have been working with both communities to support each other should another ethnically/politically motivated incident take place.

This was received with initial suspicion by the Mannar community, and even resulted in friction within the organisation itself, however they are becoming accepted within the community and provide a model for diversity and co-existence.

One of the Australian-based members who has travelled to Mannar to work on the Moulavi project reported that her presence as a Sri Lankan Muslim woman in a leadership role was highly unusual, however she says that “Because I am diaspora I’m viewed differently” (Interviewee 11). As an “outsider” she is given a little more leeway by the Muslim community in her mode of dress (headscarf and pants) and in the roles she is able to play: she believes that if she were to live there permanently she would likely be expected to dress more conservatively. However, balanced against these differences is her shared religion, language, culture and upbringing in Sri Lanka. In her identity as both insider and outsider, she has created space to push boundaries and gently challenge social norms.

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These three capacity-building initiatives all rely on the diasporas’ ability to travel freely between countries and to utilise their Australian resources, relationships and networks in support of their projects overseas. Partnerships with non-diaspora organisations and volunteers have also been significant factors in the successful implementation of these projects. As people who were born and raised in Sri Lanka and South Sudan, they have intimate connections with people and communities, and understandings of local context that inform their work and help build relationships of trust. As Australians they introduce new people and ideas, and model organisational structures that reflect the values of multiculturalism and pluralism that lie at the heart of the capacity building for peace that they are committed to.

The in-country work carried out by Australian-based diasporas through influencing mindset change, building capacity for peace and mobilising the global diaspora for collective action, all draw on the skills, networks, knowledge, identities, mobility and financial resources that the diasporas peacebuilders have gained from both their countries of origin and from Australia. For the South Sudanese participants who had spent significant time in refugee camps in the region, experiences and networks from these third countries have also framed the way they design initiatives in South Sudan now.

TRAINING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO PREVENT CONFLICT

Bridging Lanka

In response to growing anti-Muslim sentiment and incidents of violence against Muslims, Bridging Lanka began working with a group of young Moulavis (Imams) in 2017 to build their capacity to respond to these challenges and foster inter-faith tolerance. This was instigated because of a lack of a government response to serious anti-Muslim attacks, the growing influence of ultra-conservative Muslim groups, the ISIS phenomenon and efforts by the West to confuse ‘Muslim extremism’ with mainstream Islam. Discussions with both the Moulavis and hardline Sinhala communities indicated that these rising tensions could, in part, be countered through the education of non-Muslims and by increasing the communications and leadership capacity of the Moulavis themselves so they are more able to offer effective guidance to their communities.

This is part of a larger initiative to address a growing number of incidents of communal violence across the country, most recently encountered in Kandy District in 2018 where the homes, businesses and places of worship of Muslims were targeted during a rampage with substantial social and economic consequence. The following components represent ‘trials’ and ‘probes’ which seek to understand and more effectively respond to this latest round of civil collapse:

- Understanding challenges faced by the Moulavis: a pilot workshop held in Mannar with a group of 30 Moulavis identified key issues such as the tensions inherent in reconciling modernity with tradition, as well as the need for practical skills building and formal education.
- Understanding anti-Muslim sentiment among hardline Sinhala Buddhists: ‘deep listening’ exercises, interviews with youth, conversations with Sinhala residents in conflict hotspots (such as the Kandy area) and with Buddhist monks are being undertaken to understand their views and seek to identify elements common to different geographical areas. From this data Bridging Lanka will try to predict future hotspots and identify the legitimate concerns that Muslim communities can address.
- Capacity building: a pilot initiative in which 12 Moulavis (20-35 years of age) increase basic English and computer competency and develop a more globalised and contemporary mindset that will enable them to respond to the local and global challenges affecting their communities.
- Connections and dialogue between Buddhists, Muslims and Tamils are fostered to promote inter-faith understanding, respect and unity.

<http://bridginglanka.org/>

3.4 EMBODYING AND MODELLING CHANGE

Of all the peacebuilding tools available to diasporas, the most powerful is arguably the individuals themselves. Their own perspectives, motivations and influences profoundly affect their approaches to peacebuilding and enable them to model inter-ethnic harmony and collaboration through their own behaviour and through the structure of their organisations

Personal transformation and motivation

Participants in this study came to their work through a process of ongoing personal transformation that had involved consciously examining their long-held views and challenging any residual antagonism. For many, this has meant working through experiences of grief and trauma, towards forgiveness and reconciliation. This was particularly the case for the South Sudanese community, where a significant number of peacebuilders and community leaders had been ex-combatants and Lost Boys of Sudan, many of whom were child soldiers.

Across both communities, peacebuilders were motivated by a strong sense of responsibility to help families and communities, combined with a broader moral obligation to contribute to peace, which was summed up one participant: "It's something I need to do. I have no choice.... If I don't, who will do it?" (Interviewee 5)

Their experiences of war gave them an intimate understanding of suffering, and a desire to promote peace and reconciliation for the sake of future generations. One participant who had been a child soldier said:

"I often look back to when I was a child in the war and some of the things that we did as children in the war or we were made to do. When I look back at that I always say there is no way we can allow any of that, there's no way I can allow any other child to go through the same thing again and that is my motivation. When I look at it then I ask myself, 'How can I solve that?' and one way of solving it is to work hard to bring peace in South Sudan" (Interviewee 1)

Moral obligation also stemmed from the need to use their position of relative economic privilege in Australia and freedom to speak out. For many South Sudanese, formal education gained in Australia was an important offering to a country that has had an interrupted and inadequate education system, and many feel an obligation to take their skills back to South Sudan. In addition to skills and knowledge, formal education also hones abilities of critical thinking and capacity for activism:

"I've seen the suffering, I grew up through the suffering ... and I thought, being someone who have read and been to university, I can use my intellectual capacity and understanding to mobilise people around myself. And to tell the fact, yes, to tell the fact as it is: I know the war will not bring peace in South Sudan." (Interviewee 4)

Some participants also expressed a sense of responsibility to counteract the negative influences of the diaspora:

"The war [in Sri Lanka] could not have continued without the help of the diaspora. The diaspora was an enormous problem ... So the building of peace, the language of peace, the lobbying for peace, we think should come from these people, from us." (Interviewee 8)

Living in Australia has also given diasporas experience of a peaceful society that has been denied to entire generations in South Sudan and Sri Lanka, giving them both a point of comparison and a model that can be applied to their peacebuilding work:

"If we're going to talk peace and reconciliation we can't leave it to shady politicians after the war. It has to come from those of us who have experienced peace and live with it, and live with multiculturalism, and live with multi faith, and we talk it and we experience it ... back home it should be just like it is in Australia at its best." (Interviewee 8)

Australia's multicultural society particularly offers an example of how peaceful co-existence can be applied in contexts struggling with ethnic, religious or tribal tensions.

Perspective

The perspectives and world views diasporas bring to their work are of critical significance to the contributions they are able to make. Participants reported how these were formed by experiences in Australia and in countries of origin, transit experiences and countries of settlement. They can see the home country through the eyes of an Australian and simultaneously see Australia through the eyes of a migrant. For one participant, this double sight provides a level of objectivity:

“One of the things I realised after some years of coming to Australia is that I could separate myself from Sri Lanka and see Sri Lanka more clearly ... I think that is really, really valuable and that perspective comes with a whole different set of values and principles and experiences gained from the host country. So I’ve gained a huge amount from Australia that I can then take back and utilise in my interactions with who and what is there.” (Interviewee 9)

This view sits in contrast with generalisations of diasporas holding ossified views of their countries of origin, for maintaining values and political opinions that belong to a remembered past that no longer exists. While this is certainly the case for many, particularly these who have not returned to countries of origin, it is arguably becoming less aligned with the real experiences of diaspora communities today whose increasing mobility between countries and near-universal access to communications technologies, speeds up the cross-fertilisation of ideas and values.

Modelling inter-ethnic harmony

Diaspora organisations that participated in this research have promoted reconciliation and peacebuilding by practicing what they preach. Their organisations are consciously multi-ethnic or multi-tribal, and a part of their work involves shifting the mindsets of their own members. For a Tamil member of AAGGSL, working with Sinhalese colleagues has been a process of building trust so that robust discussion can occur:

“I am learning from them, I am able to understand their views, their struggles, their limitations, and their fears. And at the same time, I am able to tell them ... from a Tamil perspective ... that you guys can do better” (Interviewee 10).

Working within multi-ethnic organisations is enriching for the members but is not necessarily easy, even once inter-personal trust is established. Most organisations faced challenges to recruiting members from particular tribes or ethnic groups as their organisations were perceived to be dominated by one group or aligned to a political position, often according to the backgrounds of the founders or leaders. However one respondent found reassurance in the fact that they were accused of sympathising with everyone:

“The Sinhalese and the pro-government people didn’t like us because they called us Tamil Tiger lovers and didn’t want to have anything to do with us. And then the more strident Tamil groups said, “Oh you know you’re just Sinhalese chauvinists and we don’t want to have anything to do with you.” In one way we kind of felt comfortable in that space because neither of the groups on either side of that continuum - the more extreme elements - were in support of us. So we felt more comfortable to be in the middle because we felt that that was where we could work more independently, in this ‘wriggle room’.” (Interviewee 9)

The people who have sought to promote inter-ethnic harmony have generally paid a price however. One Sri Lankan respondent talked about being shunned by their community:

“We were all labelled as traitors by the majority of the community because we were promoting a political solution to the problem - because they wanted to defeat it militarily.” (Participant, Focus Group 2).

A South Sudanese participant said his organisation faced “accusations that we were selling [out] the nation. I as Dinka, was selling the Dinka because we were engaging with the Equatorians, and so Facebook went into action and terrible things were said” (Interviewee 5).

Sanctioning also occurs within families. One South Sudanese participant described an incident in which young Nuer people defied their parents' bans on attending a multi-ethnic event in a location considered predominantly Dinka. She noted that while both men and women attended the event, the consequences they would face were gendered:

“The young men that were there who were making the speech were saying ‘we have come today against our elders’ wishes and against our parents’ wishes, and when we go back to our homes tomorrow or later tonight we won’t get in trouble but our sisters will get in trouble’”. (Interviewee 3)

The young women's willingness to accept the consequences of their convictions enabled them, in this instance, to advocate for reconciliation across generational lines. One of the young men who attended made a speech about the youth becoming “prisoners of the elders’ perceived perceptions and bitterness”, which was heard by the elders in the community with some effect: “Grandmothers were crying because they can see that, they are aware of it”. (Interviewee 3)

The commitment of peacebuilders to promoting inter-ethnic/tribal tolerance enabled others in the community to see that collaboration is possible. Given the momentous scale of their task, and the vilification they endure, their actions are nothing short of heroic.

Section 4. Discussion of Findings

Despite significant differences in history, culture, migration patterns and stages of conflict, the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan peacebuilders shared a deep conviction in the value of inter-ethnic or inter-tribal harmony to frame their work in the construction of long-term peace. From examination of their strategies and activities discussed in the previous section, and their own analyses of how they contribute to peace, the following observations can be made.

4.1 PEACE IS BUILT ON MINDSET CHANGE

Underlying the various approaches to building harmony and reconciliation was the belief that change occurs through shifting mindsets and values away from polarised positions vis a vis the conflict and entrenched beliefs about “the other”, and towards increased tolerance of different perspectives, pluralism and values such as multiculturalism, diversity and co-existence. This reflects a conceptualisation of sustainable peace as a long-term process that rests with individuals rather than, or in addition to, formal political or military solutions. Many were disillusioned with political leaders’ handling of peace negotiations or post-conflict reconciliation, or frustrated by top-down approaches that did not involve affected communities. Their work sought to fill these gaps or to bring the grassroots into a national level dialogue.

4.2 COMMUNITY HARMONY IN AUSTRALIA CONTRIBUTES TO PEACE IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

A striking finding of this study was the connection identified between community harmony in Australia and possibilities to influence peace in countries of origin, reflecting a theory of change that was surprisingly consistent across both communities.

The rationale that working towards peace, unity and reconciliation in Australia contributes to prospects for peace overseas was based on several factors. Firstly, strong antagonism and divisions in Australia that mirror the dynamics of conflicts overseas create a favourable environment for negative behaviours that fuel the conflicts, therefore bridging these differences will make the diaspora less likely to incite violence, fund warring parties or return to fight in overseas conflicts. Secondly, a more tolerant and united community in Australia is better able to work together to influence peace in countries of origin – high levels of intra-community tension and mistrust have made collaboration on peacebuilding work extremely difficult and have sabotaged several projects for both communities. Thirdly, a more unified diaspora is better able to speak with a consistent message to influence decision makers both in Australia and abroad. Finally, if diaspora communities were able to live out the values of tolerance and non-violent resolution of conflict here, then those values will be transmitted to families, friends and colleagues in South Sudan and Sri Lanka and to their counterparts in the diaspora around the world.

Changes in values and mindsets within the diaspora affect the dynamics of the conflicts because they are part of the society affected by the conflict and they participate in it, either directly or indirectly, constructively or destructively.

4.3 DIASPORAS WIELD SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Implicit in this theory of change is the recognition that diasporas are influential. Their influence derives from their family ties, bonds of kinship, and community networks. This social leverage is reinforced by remittances, which can contribute to peace or conflict, depending on the intention of the sender. The Tamil diaspora’s funding of the LTTE during the civil war and the South Sudanese diaspora’s funding to warring parties is significant. However this same money can also be withheld from conflict financing or be used as leverage to influence behaviours of family members who might participate in the conflict. According to one South Sudanese respondent:

“We send so much money that one day if we stop sending that money and we tell everybody “this is what we want, if they don’t do it, we are not sending the money”, I’m sure they’d behave!” (Interviewee 5)

Their access to funding sources and donors in Australia, which contributes to their projects overseas, also gives them influence at a community level.

The question of their level of political influence is interesting. In relation to advocacy to the Australian government, South Sudanese participants generally focussed on calls to advance the peace process and bring warring parties to the negotiating table, while for the Sri Lankans, development and post-conflict transition were highlighted. They commonly expressed frustration that their voices were not being heard or were not translating into the desired involvement by the Australian government. This was not entirely a reflection on their advocacy though, as they saw Australia as having conflicting priorities: for the South Sudanese, Australia's foreign policy objectives are firmly located in the Asia Pacific rather than Africa, and while this would make a case for interest in Sri Lanka, participants saw Australia's engagement as being overshadowed by its border control agenda that has focussed on stemming the flow of Tamil asylum seekers. These perceptions echo research into the influence of the Afghan and Iraqi diasporas on the Canadian government, which suggests that the diasporas were able to influence host country engagement only to the extent that their advocacy was consistent with existing foreign policy.²⁴

Sitting in contrast with this somewhat gloomy outlook is the unusually proactive role taken by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Africa Branch in recent years in fostering dialogue among the South Sudanese community in Australia and the use of its diplomatic offices to bring diaspora voices to the attention of intergovernmental actors that have influence over the peace process, such as IGAD and UN representatives. It must be recognised however that this activity has entailed support of diaspora initiatives rather than the direct Australian involvement in the peace process that the diaspora has been advocating.

Diasporas also exert influence over political decision makers in countries of origin. Here, their influence is clearly stronger, however it is controversial. The wider South Sudanese and Sri Lankan communities are involved in home country politics as members and funders of political parties or by campaigning (and, where eligible, voting) in elections. The peacebuilders themselves, while mostly remaining in the margins of party politics, were however active in holding governments to account for their human rights records or commitments to peace processes, or using their personal connections to political figures to advocate for dialogue and reconciliation.

The connections of the South Sudanese diaspora to the members of the current South Sudanese government appear to be significant but, as it remains undocumented, the extent of their influence is speculative. Participants in this study alluded to the closeness of these connections, based on family ties or collegial relationships, but few examples were provided about how these networks might have been leveraged for political influence. The potential clearly exists however.

Diaspora members returning to take up roles in home country governments is one of the more controversial aspects of the political influence of the diaspora and has been commented upon by several researchers.²⁵ While this did not emerge as part of the experience of the peacebuilders themselves, it is relevant to how their attempts to influence political actors are viewed. This is particularly pertinent to South Sudan where the rights of the diaspora to engage politically is becoming increasingly contested, with reports of residents expressing resentment of diaspora returnees taking government jobs while also being out of touch with new realities. In this case, the influence of the diaspora is clearly felt, however its legitimacy is questioned, and while it is not immediately related to peacebuilding influences of the diasporas it may very well interfere with their work if it translates into mistrust of diaspora engagement in the political sphere.

It may be helpful to differentiate between partisan political influence that involves itself in party politics and the contestation of formal power, and the "small p" political interventions that relate to changing political behaviours and discourses. The latter are domains in which the peacebuilders predominantly operate and are aimed at building bridges between warring parties and finding common ground for collaboration.

4.4 DIASPORAS ARE TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

All the peacebuilding work discussed in this report relied to differing degrees on the relationships between diaspora communities in Australia and their families, communities and colleagues in South Sudan, Sri Lanka and other countries of settlement.

²⁴ Mandy Turner. 2008. "Three discourses on diasporas and peacebuilding". In *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding*, edited by Pugh et al, 173-190. Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁵ Barnes et al 2018; Turner 2018.

The fact that diasporas are part of such networks, through which they share information and resources, coordinate campaigns and projects, provide humanitarian assistance and even operate governments in exile, is a defining feature of diaspora activity. They have been described as transnational actors whose networks and modes of operation extend across multiple countries. More recently, the concept of translocality has been preferred by some scholars as it enables a deeper understanding of how diasporas maintain a sense of belonging and membership to a community across different geographical locations, without insisting on the concept of international boundaries based on the nation state which the diasporas themselves might not recognise.²⁶ Regardless of the conceptual framework utilised, the relevant point here is that these networks have a global reach, are based on intimate ties, and are a resource that diasporas apply to peacebuilding work.

In this research, diaspora communities have emerged as participants in the construction of peace. This applies not only to the peacebuilders who do this work deliberately, but also to their wider communities who transmit values to families and communities – consciously or unconsciously – that foster peace or exacerbate conflict. As diasporas are, by definition, transnational (or translocal), it would therefore imply that the task of peacebuilding should be more widely recognised as occurring not only in the country in conflict or in the countries that assist in the peace processes, but rather that it needs to be multi-sited to include countries of diaspora settlement. To date, very little work has been done by international actors and home country governments to involve diasporas in peace processes.²⁷

4.5 IDENTITY AND PERSPECTIVE MATTER

As diaspora peacebuilders are influential members of societies affected by conflict, their own attitudes and perspectives are of critical significance. When they model values of inter-ethnic acceptance, cooperation, gender equality, or cultural diversity through the structure of their organisations and the implementation of their projects, they are providing a lived example than can be emulated. As they have an intimate understanding of culture and context that has been part of their upbringing, and lived experience of the conflict, the communities they work with know they are (at least in part) “one of them”, which gives them credibility. They have the advantage of the insider influence.

However they are also Australians. Diasporas commonly identify as members of two or more communities, and express a sense of being in two places at once, with their bodies in one country and their hearts in another. Relatives and communities in countries of origin also regard them as both part of that society and also as “foreigners”. Participants in this study discussed the effect that their experiences in Australia have had on their world views, broadening their perspectives, providing a comparison with the countries of their birth and (when at its best) providing a lived example of multiculturalism and pluralism. In this regard, their Australianness gives them an “outsider” perspective to their work.

The emphasis that peacebuilders in this study have placed on their own personal transformations situates them as personally invested agents of change, not merely people whose skills and knowledge are applied to a job at hand. It also reflects the extent to which they both act on their countries of origin and are influenced by it. The impacts of their work flow both ways as they are as much affected by their work as are the people they seek to assist.

Diasporas are neither wholly insiders nor outsiders, but a rich hybrid mix, whose perspectives are informed by the interaction of multiple cultures. While this may at times be an uncomfortable space, it is also arguably their greatest strength as peacebuilders.

4.6 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As has been discussed in this report, one of the most significant factors affecting the diasporas’ capacity to influence peace in countries of origin is their level of intra-community harmony in Australia. Other factors include the financial and intellectual resources available to them, as well as their own perspectives and approaches. However, external enabling conditions, over which they have less control, also play a significant part.

²⁶ See for example Oliff’s (2018) discussion of translocality in relation to diaspora humanitarianism and also Halolovich’s 2012 study of translocality in the Bosnian diaspora in Australia in Halilovich, Hariz. 2012. “Trans-local communities in the age of transnationalism: Bosnians in diaspora”. *International Migration*. 50 (1).

²⁷ Some notable exceptions have included the Colombian government’s consultation of the diaspora on the implementation of the current peace process. See <https://www.c-r.org/where-we-work/latin-america/truth-memory-and-reconciliation-commission-colombian-women-diaspora>

These have been described as a “transnational opportunity structure”, which includes political opportunities in home and host countries, favourable multiculturalism policies, and successful settlement.²⁸

4.6.1 In countries of origin

Working across two or more countries poses a multitude of challenges. In contexts of active conflict, security risks or the continuous destruction of infrastructure make it near impossible for projects to be implemented. There may also be increased personal risk factors for people who had been forced to flee in the first place due to political activity or other factors. Post-conflict contexts provide greater opportunities for two-way mobility and project implementation.

Attitudes of home country governments also influence diaspora activity. The Sri Lankan government had long been hostile to the diaspora, which it equated with LTTE supporters, to the extent that the word itself had negative connotations – Bridging Lanka had originally been named Diaspora Lanka but changed it in 2014 because the name itself was obstructing their work. In recent years the Sri Lankan government has softened its approach and has begun courting the diaspora as a development resource. The South Sudanese government has had a similar favourable approach, and at one point had a diaspora desk to facilitate relationships.

4.6.2 In Australia

Conditions in Australia also have a significant impact on diaspora peacebuilding. Aside from Australia’s foreign policy priorities as discussed above, and the extent to which the Australian government is open to engaging with the diaspora, the following issues can be identified.

Expectations of unity

For the South Sudanese peacebuilders in particular, expectations by government and non-government institutions that they will speak with a unified voice that represents the majority of the community has been internalised by many leaders and peacebuilders. This is not to say that they do not seek unity themselves - the peacebuilders in this study have clearly demonstrated the importance they place on fostering collaboration and inter-ethnic harmony – however external pressures to form a politically unified grouping that can act as an interlocutor with government is problematic. It is interesting that the Sri Lankan peacebuilders did not raise this as a significant issue, which might be due to the post-conflict context.

Homogeneity of political opinion is not required of most other groups in a democratic society, yet it is frequently expected of diaspora communities. Peace researcher Cindy Horst has critiqued the expectations of host governments and NGOs that diasporas be “impartial, neutral and unified” as being not only unrealistic but also ultimately disempowering for communities. She argues that differences of political opinion stem from the actual context of contested power relations in countries experiencing conflict, and therefore “the fact that authorities and NGOs in Europe and the Horn of Africa, as well as diasporas themselves, contribute to a discourse that seeks to deny the political nature of refugee diasporas is problematic.”²⁹ Her proposal that diaspora engagement be seen as a form of civic participation in both countries of origin and settlement offers a way out of the quagmire of risk aversion that has impeded more substantial engagement between diasporas, government and NGOs in Australia.

Multiculturalism

Australia’s comparatively robust multiculturalism policies have fostered an environment in which diasporas have been able to form a wide range of associations and organisations through which they are able to mobilise support and funding for their work on countries of origin, and freedom to speak out about human rights issues without fear of retribution.

This also means that intra-community politics have free reign, and has provided a platform for radicalizing influences, which causes nervousness among political and NGO institutions, ultimately impeding engagement. Recent rises in xenophobia, Islamophobia, and fear mongering by federal politicians are all setting back the

²⁸ M Vanore, N Ragab & M Siegel. 2015. *Roundtable summary - Diaspora and Peace: What Role for Development Cooperation?*. Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht University. <<https://www.giz.de/expertise/downloads/giz2015-en-roundtable-diaspora-and-peace-summary.pdf>>

²⁹ Cindy Horst. 2013. “The Depoliticisation of Diasporas from the Horn of Africa: From Refugees to Transnational Aid Workers”. *African Studies* 72(2): 228-245.

hard-won gains of multiculturalism. The African gangs debate³⁰ in particular, has not only made South Sudanese community members victims of deliberate attacks and casual racism on the street (for example, a shop in Melbourne's western suburbs displayed the sign "Africans not welcome") but has also made community leaders particularly nervous about any shows of disharmony within the community that may tarnish their reputation even further. One can speculate that this might impact on the communities' willingness to seek public support or draw attention to community harmony work. A further concern is the impact that this social marginalisation might have on young people who are at risk of radicalisation.

Partnerships

A significant opportunity leveraged by the peacebuilders in this study has been their partnerships with non-diaspora organisations such as Diaspora Action Australia, Initiatives of Change and the Uniting Church to implement their initiatives, or government departments such as the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. These have been most effective when the diaspora organisations have led the initiatives.

4.6.3 Resourcing: Funding and Size

Australian diaspora-led organisations, like their counterparts around the world, are predominantly small in size, heavily reliant on volunteers and funded through community donations.³¹ While this gives them advantages of flexibility and community ownership, they also struggle to fund their projects and keep their organisations afloat. This constant state of income starvation threatens the survival of their organisations and results in many missed opportunities for effective programs. It is a vicious cycle: lack of core funding means they do not have the capacity to invest in areas such as governance, policy development or monitoring and evaluation, which would make their organisations more sustainable and more attractive to donors and institutional funding.

One of the problems is the structure of institutional funding in Australia. Federal government funding for international development is aimed at large international NGOs that are able to implement large-scale multi-million-dollar projects and who have the capacity for rigorous compliance regimes. Small diaspora organisations do not stand a chance in this system. They do have some federal funding schemes available to them but these tend to be single-year only. The Sri Lankan peacebuilders in particular expressed significant frustration at their lack of access to ongoing funding sources.

State government and philanthropic funding on the other hand are aimed at improving the lives of communities in Australia and generally preclude any projects that seek to have impact overseas. Community harmony grant schemes are very valuable for Australian-focused work, and state government multicultural institutions around the country are generally supportive of this type of diaspora activity, however more flexibility that allows communities to explicitly work for peace in countries of origin through community harmony initiatives would be beneficial.

As diaspora-led peacebuilding is both domestic and international at the same time, they fall between the cracks of the state/federal funding architecture. The single biggest boost to diaspora peacebuilding work would be increased coordination between federal and state government departments that would enable them to understand the value of this work to Australian domestic and foreign policy interests, and fund it accordingly.

4.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES

As the initiatives discussed in this study have shown, diaspora-led peacebuilding and reconciliation is profoundly different to the approaches of other actors, such as communities or governments in-countries of origin or external actors such as international NGOs, UN bodies, or other third-party mediators.

Some differences are self-evident: the financial resources at their disposal and consequently the scale of their operations, cannot be compared with those of international actors.³² For better or worse, they often do not have the specialised technical skills or operate within the frameworks of peacebuilding orthodoxy. They are more likely to design strategies that are based on a specific cultural and political context, which

³⁰ In Victoria in 2018 there has been much sensationalised debate in the media and by federal politicians of "African gangs" committing a series of criminal offences, some of which were ruled out by Victoria Police. These statements were denounced by the race discrimination commissioner, Tim Soutphommasane as "fear-mongering and racial hysteria". See John Buderick. 2018. "Why the media are to blame for racialising Melbourne's 'African gang' problem". *The Conversation* August 1, 2018. <<https://theconversation.com/why-the-media-are-to-blame-for-racialising-melbournes-african-gang-problem-100761>>

³¹ Diaspora Action Australia 2014

³² Although remittances have enormous reach and impact, they are unregulated and not specifically targeted at collective initiatives.

develop organically through trial and error, and often engage with traditional, culturally specific models of conflict resolution. Because of this, they are far less likely than external actors to attempt to apply models in a one-size-fits-all approach.

As they predominantly operate through family, kinship or community connections, they have access to groups and individuals that are often invisible to external actors, and are more likely to operate in areas with no international presence because they have identified a gap to be filled. Furthermore, their conception of a reasonable timeframe for peacebuilding is quite different to that of the international community: Bridging Lanka, for example, was initially conceived as a pilot initiative with a 20-year time span. For many, it is their life's work, and they accept that change might not even happen in their lifetimes. This gives them a deep reserve of patience, and a willingness to do the painstaking grassroots work that is able to change hearts and minds. This sits in sharp contrast to most international NGO programs and UN missions that are bound by fixed terms of several years at most, and a need to deliver tangible, verifiable results that often speak primarily to the needs of donors. Diasporas are in it for the long haul.

However, while it is clear that they are not just smaller versions of international agencies, neither can they be considered truly "local", grassroots actors: they have not had a continuous lived experience of the conflict, and the influences of their lives in Australia are at least as important as their understanding of local norms and context. Unlike many of the residents in their countries of origin, they can leave when they choose. This mobility can cause resentment if they are perceived to be disrupting local leadership structures or becoming involved in political issues without risk of consequences. Similarly, returning diasporas might be seen as competitors for employment who have gained overseas qualifications in safety while residents have borne the full brunt of the conflict. This is particularly pertinent to the South Sudanese context where the discrepancies in levels of education and wealth between the diaspora and people in-country can be significant. These tensions however are balanced by the very real need for the skills and resources of the diaspora.

For international bodies and home country governments engaged in peace processes, transitional justice and post conflict reconstruction, diasporas should be recognised as a constituency in the process. They are key stakeholders with a unique contribution to make. However there is also a cautionary factor: diasporas can also have a negative influence if they are seen as taking leadership roles from the people who remained or if they are regarded as being inserted by foreign governments to further "western" agendas.³³ Either way, they are a force not to be ignored.

Diaspora peacebuilders are doing something no-one else can do. As neither wholly international nor wholly local actors they operate between, and within, both contexts, utilizing their unique perspectives, resources, skills, and lived experiences. This hybrid nature of diaspora intervention is arguably the most valuable tool they possess for influencing peace.

³³ Turner (2008) has critiqued countries in the global north promoting diasporas into government positions in conflict-affected countries in order to sidestep local frictions, resulting in those governments becoming dominated by people sympathetic to the western liberal peace agenda.

Section 5. Recommendations

TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

1. Recognise diasporas as stakeholders in peace processes and encourage their engagement on relevant foreign policy issues.
2. As diaspora initiatives promote peace in Australia and overseas at the same time, their work is relevant to both foreign policy and state level settlement or multicultural programs. Coordination and communication between state and federal government departments is needed in order to:
 - a. Understand the foreign policy implications of diaspora community harmony work in Australia, and the effect that diaspora peacebuilding in countries of origin has on community wellbeing in Australia.
 - b. Engage more effectively with diasporas for enhanced foreign policy and domestic settlement outcomes.
 - c. Appropriately resource this work.
3. Federal and state government departments should facilitate links between diaspora communities and other stakeholders. Following DFAT Africa Branch's example, this might include acting as a bridge between diasporas and UN agencies, intergovernmental bodies involved in peace processes and other international fora, as well as linking them with Australian embassies in countries of origin. Domestically, relevant linkages can be made with multicultural bodies, church leaders and others in the wider Australian community with an interest in community harmony and peacebuilding.
4. At both state and national levels, facilitate opportunities for diaspora communities to come together in a "neutral" space. This requires an understanding community dynamics and leadership structures, identification of effective peacebuilders and should build on existing community-led initiatives.
5. Accept diversity of views and do not insist on diasporas presenting a unified front to government.
6. Flexible, multi-year funding that is accessible to diaspora organisations for their peacebuilding work in countries of origin is urgently needed.

TO INTERNATIONAL NGOS

7. Support diaspora communities to make their voices heard, by helping them establish links with individuals within government departments, UN agencies, NGOs and journalists.
8. In all interactions with diaspora communities, recognise their agency and respect their independence. Collaboration works best when they lead projects or are equal partners, rather than acting as participants in projects or as the public face for NGO campaigns and fundraising. As diaspora organisations are largely volunteer run and under-resourced they must focus their energies strategically on peacebuilding and do not have the time and resources to help you with your work.
9. Resourcing: direct funding is good, but so is in-kind support such as office space, technical support or mentoring in areas such communications, advocacy, strategic planning, fundraising or governance. Assist them to document and evaluate their projects.
10. Employ members of diaspora communities and/or provide internships: this both increases an NGO's cultural diversity and provides first-hand knowledge of issues and context in countries of origin.

TO DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

11. Support the women and young people in your communities to take on leadership roles and promote community harmony.
12. Educate government and NGOs about how to engage with your community in Australia. There is an inadequate understanding of leadership structures, who they can engage with and also where intra-community sensitivities lie.
13. Educate your members about the responsibilities and jurisdictions of different state and federal government departments. There is no point in advocating to a particular minister or government department if they do not have the relevant authority. Advocacy messages needs to be tailored specifically to those who can deliver on them.

TO THE WIDER PEACEBUILDING COMMUNITY, AND RESEARCHERS

14. Explore and facilitate diaspora engagement in peace processes in countries of origin.
15. Support diaspora women's participation in peacebuilding projects, either through a Women, Peace and Security framework or through local or state multicultural or community development programs.
16. Research is needed into how diaspora women engage in peacebuilding, both in Australia and in relation to peace processes or post-conflict transitions in countries of origin.
17. Encourage and assist diaspora communities to generate their own research into peacebuilding.

Annex 1: List of organisations and groups represented by participants

SRI LANKA

Australian Advocacy for Good Governance in Sri Lanka
Australian Tamil Congress
Bridging Lanka
People for Human Rights and Equality
United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia
Uniting Church, Commission for Mission

SOUTH SUDAN

Peace Palette
South Sudan Diaspora Network
South Sudan Peace Alliance
South Sudan Unification Committee
South Sudan Voices of Salvation
Union of Greater Upper Nile States

Annex 2: Peacebuilding activities described by participants

ACTIVITY	SRI LANKAN	SOUTH SUDANESE
In Countries of origin (CoO)		
Reconciliation tours and visits from Australia to countries of origin	✓	
Election campaigning	✓	✓
Dissemination/publication of information about human rights issues	✓	
Advocacy to politicians in countries of origin	✓	✓
Building capacity for peacebuilding in CoO	✓	✓
Direct participation in peace negotiations		✓
Supporting civil society organisations in CoO	✓	✓
Implementing peacebuilding projects in CoO	✓	✓
Implementing development projects in CoO	✓	✓
In Australia		
Disseminating messages of peaceful coexistence among diaspora	✓	✓
Hosting events featuring guests from countries of origin who promote peaceful dialogue	✓	
Raising awareness among the diaspora in Australia through talks and radio	✓	
Meeting with “home”-country politicians and dignitaries visiting Australia	✓	✓
Hosting events aimed at bringing together members of diaspora from different ethnic/tribal groups	✓	✓
Advocacy to Australian Government	✓	✓
Internationally		
Advocacy to UN	✓	✓
Sharing information among the global diaspora	✓	✓
Collaboration on peacebuilding initiatives		✓

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