The end of Sri Lanka's devastating 26-year armed conflict now leaves the difficult task of rebuilding the nation's physical and social infrastructure, including the shattered trust in and between its many groups. Reconciliation must address decades of political violence and civil war that left hundreds of thousands on all sides dead, injured or displaced; institutions of governance, rule of law, and social cohesion in shambles; and deep rifts of fear and misunderstanding between ethnic and religious communities. This vitiated history is exacerbated by more recent developments between many in the Buddhist and Muslim communities, where, for example, violent conflict has taken place in the South Western City of Beruwela.

Communities Without Boundaries International, Inc. (CWBI), together with its partners the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, and the National Peace Council-Sri Lanka, proposes to conduct a program that aims to reduce and manage conflict that leads to violence by improving relationships among different ethnic groups and religious communities through training and technical assistance in nonviolence philosophy and methodology, intergroup dialogue, and sustainable strategies for inter-group collaborative community building and development. Such an initiative requires careful consideration of the facts as they are understood by the protagonists as well as other interested parties. To this end, in mid July, CWBI will host a webinar and symposium with expert practitioners and scholars whose work is focused on these issues. In anticipation of this event, on Monday, 30 June, CWBI hosted a high-level conference call via Skype to discuss how Sri Lankans across sectors—civil society, business, and government—should be engaged. The following questions guided the discussion:

- What is the current situation in communities affected by recent inter-group violent conflict?
- What challenges and opportunities does the current situation present CWBI and its planned intervention with respect to each target sector?
- What should the international response be with regards to the current situation in Sri Lanka?
- What question should the conference call address that is not presented in this concept note?
The call was, moderated by Dr. Maneshka Eliatamby, Vice President of CWBI, and included civil society members in Sri Lanka and in the United States, academics/scholars, and US Government Officials. They included The National Peace Council, Association of War Affected Women, Sarvodaya, The United States Institute of Peace, United States Department of State, The Salam Institute, and Communities Without Boundaries International staff and advisory board members.

The participants took both micro and macro views of the issues that they see as currently plaguing Sri Lanka, leading to the most recent events in Aluthgama and Dehiwala.

**In summary, the discussion identified the following as major issues facing the country:**

1. International and government attention has been limited to ethnic and religious violence that has been brewing in Sri Lanka since the end of the civil war in 2009
2. Lack of a comprehensive understanding of the current situation “on the ground,” which is depictive of the complexities of Sri Lanka, including its historical, religious, and economic contexts
3. Lack of economic and job opportunities for a significant number of youth in Sri Lanka and their relationships to the current racial and ethnic violence
4. Lack of understanding of the Bodu Bala Sena, including who, where and why their support they are being supported
5. Lack of societal integration between the various ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka and, thereby, a lack of respect for each others identities
6. Lack of opportunity for youth empowerment and their participation in civil society
7. Lack of opportunity for Sri Lankan people to voice their grievances and issues and to be heard by governance structures
8. Lack of accountability of government and non-state actors alike to civil society
9. Consistently slow government response to the foregoing issues, especially the latest round of violence

**Recommendations & Next Steps:**

1. The GoSL and international community must recognize that the recent violence against the Muslim community is the latest manifestation of the long-brewing ethnic and religious tension in the country
2. The GoSL should work earnestly to establish robust educational, economic and employment opportunities youth
3. All parties must recognize the role of youth in achieving peace and sustainable development, and their responsibility to establish structures that enable youth participation and voice in civic activity at local and federal levels
4. Establish structures that enable the people of Sri Lanka to voice their concerns and needs to civil society and government
5. Establish viable educational and economic empowerment opportunities for girls and women, especially in the country’s north and northeast
6. Sri Lankans must build a diverse and robust civil society responsive to the whole population and that is supported by international organizations
7. Empower civil society to hold government and non-state actors accountable
8. The GoSL must respond faster and more effectively to social, political and economic issues, including various forms of violence, including poverty.
9. Sri Lankans must move from a traditional security paradigm to a human security paradigm and create a culture that values life.

CWBI’s peacebuilding and sustainable development program in Sri Lanka includes:

CWBI has worked in Sri Lanka since 2009. Its work began with the United States Department of State (US DOS) invitation to carry out a series of nonviolence trainings. These trainings were conducted in collaboration with the National Peace Council and held in Colombo, Ampara, Anuradhapura, Bandaragama, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kelaniya, Matara, Olluvil, and Peradeniya in 2010 and 2011. The US DOS estimated that these sessions reached more than thirteen thousand university students and civil society members. Religious leader dialogues were also conducted in each of these locations. In addition, CWBI conducted an advanced nonviolence and peacebuilding training and dialogue for youth from May 26-30, 2011, with approximately 140 youth from across the island. The workshop included training in peacebuilding and nonviolence philosophy and practice, and dialogue for youth from the Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim ethnic and diverse religious communities. At the conclusion of the workshop, CWBI launched its flagship youth program *Youth Without Boundaries* (YWB) in Sri Lanka with the vision of fostering youth leadership through nonviolence, peace and development. Today, YWB members throughout the island are employing what they learned carrying out a number of peacebuilding and community development projects. CWBI provides them continuing resource and technical assistance.

CWBI’s current program strategy is a similar intervention. Together with its partners, the team will carry out a violence prevention program to reduce and manage conflict that leads to violence by improving relationships among different ethnic groups and religious communities through training in nonviolence philosophy and methodology, inter-group dialogue, and sustainable strategies for inter-group collaborative community building and development projects. The program has three major objectives:

Objective 1: Build local capacities on principles and methodologies of nonviolence, community building, and development.

Objective 2: Facilitate dialogue among groups of youth, religious, and community leaders to develop and enhance coalitions that work collectively for monitoring and preventing disputes from escalating to violence, while deescalating incidents of conflict.

Objective 3: Organize conflict mapping and community building and development programs utilizing the youth and community leadership corps in selected target communities.

The program will be undertaken in all 9 provinces of the island. It will focus on youth, community, and religious leaders, and will be implemented through universities, and local community and religious centers. The target communities selected are some of the most ethnically mixed parts of the country, hosting Sinhalese, Muslim, and Tamils, along with other...
minority groups. Some of these communities have already witnessed recent episodes of violence. Long-term outcomes will foster mutual respect and trust, promote positive attitudinal change, and cultivate collaborative efforts among disparate groups. The program will employ CWBI’s nonviolence theory of change, which fosters peace through development. The program’s theory of change (TOC) illustrates the connection between the project objectives, activities, and outcomes: Nonviolence education, training and technical assistance will prepare a broad coalition of participants to (1) carry out inter-group dialogue that can reduce and manage forms of conflict that lead to violence and (2) work collaboratively on community building and development strategies that foster positive peace.

Communities Without Boundaries International, Inc. is an international, non-governmental nonprofit organization with offices in Washington, DC and Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Its mission is to build community by fostering peace through development and the empowerment of communities using the philosophy and principles of nonviolent social change. CWBI carries out its mission through research, education and training, and technical assistance in underprivileged, conflict, and post-conflict communities globally. CWBI carries out its work through a global network of youth leaders, who are a part of our Youth Without Boundaries (YWB) program, and with our civil society partners on the ground who are part of our Global Networks Program. CWBI educates and trains its YWBs in the philosophy and principles of nonviolence, peace and development. They then go on to design and implement sustainable development and peacebuilding projects that address their community needs. For more information about Communities Without Boundaries International, Inc.’s work in Nigeria and upcoming programs, please contact Dr. Maneshka Eliatamby at meliatamby@cwbi.org or 001.404.610.3787