**OpenEdge Transforming Conflict**

OE is a new organisation busy applying for charitable status. Formally a not-for-profit under a different name, its core team is a collective of highly experienced scholar-practitioners with a strong track record working in the UK and internationally for 20+ years. OE therefore has collaborations and connections with many organisations and partners. Currently we are focusing mostly on the UK and Sri Lanka.

The issues we engage with in Sri Lanka

At a political and everyday level the people of Sri Lanka are still dealing with the aftermath of war. Communities in the north and east in particular are dealing issues of truth recovery and accountability, reconciliation, land disputes, marginalization and exclusion, sexual violence and violence against women, corruption in local governance, militarisation of state, lack of independent judiciary, and more. People still feel there is no solution to ethnic conflict, and ways of thinking and acting reproduce and reinforce division, mistrust and violence. At a political level there remains lack of accountability for past violations of international law, large-scale corruption and continued polarisation of ethnic and religious groups, and regional experiences.

OpenEdge and our partners believe that peace work (including post-conflict development and transitional justice) requires plural, multi-level engagement with short, intermediate and long-term foci. Based on experience, we help people build long-term relationships with others and encourage trust and consistency. We aim to address direct, structural and cultural violence as we believe all three are fundamental to peace and justice. We use participatory methods for applied un-learning and learning. We do not come with answers. Instead we use questions to encourage the co-creation of non-violent approaches for social/political change and ongoing peace processes. We work with government officers, military, media, INGO’s, NGO’s, CBO’s, civil society, young, old and all religious and ethnic groups.

***Why we are innovative, high risk and have much experience and evidence of working in this way***

***We focus on gaps in orthodox theories and practices,*** ***working in ways that are process rather than outcome based, with emphasis on relational changes rather than technical solutions to ‘problems’. We consciously question the existing paradigm of international peacebuilding, its actors, methods and ideology. We name and question ourselves and our own legitimacy and power, as well as traditional local and/or ‘international’ concepts such as: partnerships; ethnic, religious, gendered and cultural identities; experts, knowledge holding and sharing; rights; problem-solving; policy-making; donors, humanitarian intervention and dependency; binaries such as ‘theory and practice’, ‘internal and external’, ‘conflict and peace’, ‘international and local’ etc; and more…***

***With our strengths and weaknesses, failures and successes, our direct ‘beneficiaries’ often say our work changes lives. Conversely, those not directly affected by our work, those still expecting something more conventional, sometimes view our approach as questionable and lacking validity. We see this as a sign of meaningful impact at the ‘high risk’ end!***

In Sri Lanka the following NGOs have asked us to work with them: the National Peace Council (NPC); Peace and Community Action (PCA); Eastern Social Development Forum (ESDF); The Butterfly Peace Garden (BPG).

* NPC are well-connected thinkers, writers and networkers at a policy level in SL. They target different groups in a multi-track approach to create a ‘rights conscious’ political solution to the ethnic conflict. Their main activities include advocacy, research, training and dialogue, aimed at mobilising ‘the people’ towards conflict transformation.
* PCA are a community-based organisation specialising in processes of empathy in transforming conflict, particularly NonViolent Communication (NVC). They work mostly in Tracks 2, 4, 5, 7, 9.
* ESDF are a rights-based organisation, which works on democratic reform in government institutions, and addresses cases and cultures of violence against women/gender violence.
* SLPJC are a global movement based in the UK, which aims to achieve reconciliation in SL based on accountability for violations of international law. They also work to build respect for human rights and the rule of law, and do so by supporting efforts within Sri Lankan civil society.
* BPG brings together the most war-affected children of all ethnic and religious communities, for reconciliation and rehabilitation. Through “Earthwork, Art work, Heart-work and Healing” (play, theatre, music, and all forms of creative artwork), children have a chance to develop ways of leaving their trauma, and find safety and beauty in themselves, their situations, and with others.