

## ABSTRACT

Panel 2: Strategic Adaptation of Charities to the Local Environment

### **Sri Lanka Unites? Transnational Reconciliation in Post-War Sri Lanka**

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This paper examines the work of transnational civil society groups and networks engaged in reconciliation work in post-war Sri Lanka. The political space for civil society to support peacebuilding and reconciliation in Sri Lanka following the end of the war in 2009 has been very limited. Groups working in Sri Lanka on human rights and peacebuilding issues have been regularly criticised by government ministers and in the media, with several key figures facing death threats, harassment and intimidation. The paper focuses on the case of 'Sri Lanka Unites' (SLU), a network of young professionals that promotes reconciliation in schools and amongst community leaders. The network is based in Sri Lanka but has used social media to mobilise a significant level of support from the Sri Lankan diaspora. The group is unusual in at least two key respects. First, it does not rely on donor funding to support its activities. Second, it has demonstrated an ability to mobilise support from the diaspora across ethnic lines. The paper examines SLU's contribution to reconciliation in the post-war environment, contrasting its approach with the work of more established NGOs and focusing in particular on the extent to which it has proved capable of reconciling liberal cosmopolitan and nationalist models of political engagement.