

**N
P
C**

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

#12/14, Purana Vihara Road, Colombo 06
Tel: 2818344, 2854127, 2809348, Fax: 2819064,
E-mail :info@peace-srilanka.org
Web: www.peace-srilanka.org

**National Peace Council
of Sri Lanka**

**Annual Report
2015**



Vision

A peaceful and just country
in which freedom, human and democratic rights
of all people are assured.

Mission

To work in partnership with different target groups to
educate, mobilise and advocate to build a society of
rights-conscious citizens and a political culture
that enables a political solution to the
ethnic conflict and equal
opportunities for all.



Contents

About NPC	3
Board of Directors	4
Governing Council	4
Staff	5
Chairman's Message	6
General Secretary's Message	7
Director's Report	8
Programmes and Projects	9
Finance	26
Way Forward	29
Map of Working Districts	30



About NPC

The National Peace Council (NPC) was established as an independent and non-partisan national non-government organisation on February 2, 1995. The formation of NPC was the culmination of a process that began with a campaign against election violence in July 1994, launched by an inter religious group of individuals and organisations. The interventions made by this group during the 1994 Presidential election campaign specifically, and for a peaceful and permanent resolution to the protracted conflict generally, led to the organisation of the first National Peace Conference the same year. The vision and mandate of NPC were formulated at this conference, leading to the establishment of NPC the following year.

In order to achieve its overall goal - that of the establishment of a long term, viable solution to the ethnic conflict - NPC is committed to the creation of a culture of peace that upholds the values of non-violence, respect for human rights and the free expression of ideas.



Members of the Board of Directors

Dr. Joe William (Chairperson)
Mr. G.V.D. Tilakasiri (General Secretary)
Dr. Jehan Perera (Executive Director)
Dr. T. Jayasingam (Treasurer)
Dr. Anita Nesiah (Director)
Prof. S. H. Hasbullah (Director)
Ven. Budiayagama Chandrarathana Thero (Director)
Prof. M. S. Mookiah (Director)
Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa (Director from June 2015)

Members of the Governing Council

Mr. John V. Thamber (Until April 2015)
Sr. Mary Barbara
Mr. Raja M.B. Senanayake
Mr. Javid Yusuf
Rev. A. Iyadurai
Ms. Saroja Sivachandran
Mr. M. H. M. Niyas
Ven. Kalupahana Piyarathana Thero
Rev. Fr. Joseph Mary
Fr. T. L. Rohan Dominic
Mr. A. W. Hilmy Ahamed
Mr. Suresh Dayantha de Mel
Ms. Christobel Saverimuttu (Company Secretary)



Staff Members

Dr. Jehan Perera	Executive Director
Ms. Rupika Chandani	Manager Finance
Mr. Thushara Ranasinghe	Manager Programmes
Ms. Chithrupa Vidanapathirana	Manager Administration
Mr. Saman Seneviratne	Project Coordinator
Ms. Venuri de Silva	Project Coordinator (Joined May 2015)
Ms. Lakmini Jayathilake	Project Coordinator
Ms. Pushpa Ranjani	Project Co-Coordinator (Until May 2015)
Ms. Rasika Seneviratne	Senior Project Officer
Mr. Shantha Pathirana	Project Officer
Mr. S.A. Abdul Amman	Project Officer (Until November 2015)
Ms. Mehala Sabeswaran	Project Officer (Until July 2015)
Ms. Mactalin Soosainathar	Project Officer (Joined July 2015)
Mr. Bennet A. Samantha	IT Coordinator
Mr. Rohitha Wickramarachchi	Graphic Designer/Administration Coordinator
Mr. Fazeen Mohamed	Assistant Accountant (Until May 2015)
Mr. Robinson Thevasagayam	Assistant Accountant (Joined June 2015)
Ms. Harshani P. Adikari	Accounts Assistant (Joined February 2015)
Mr. Sarath Karunaratne	Driver
Mr. H. K. Sugath	Driver
Mr. P. Nawaneetharan	Office Aide
Mr. A. Francis	Driver (Temporary)



Chairman's Message

The most salient feature of 2015 was the opening up of space for political freedoms and civil society activism. The election of a new president in January followed by the election of a new parliament in August turned the country to a new direction in comparison to the past decade.

The new government provided the space for debate on political and related governance issues. NPC grasped this space to expand its civil society activism by promoting a Transitional Justice (TJ) framework when the country slowly moves from its violent past to a peaceful future. In this positive political environment, NPC placed itself by becoming an ally in creating awareness and consensus building to contribute to the TJ process becoming acceptable to the larger public. NPC commenced working at Track 2 and 3 levels aimed at creating awareness and building consensus on a transitional mechanism for conflict healing - a TJ process as proposed by the government.

In this respect, NPC sees itself as being a partner with the government. This partnership entails fostering a process of building trust in setting priorities for a peaceful Sri Lanka by using the opportunity to find solutions to unaddressed issues of the past decades. From over 20 years of experience, we at NPC believe that peace can be built between and within our communities in Sri Lanka.

Peace building is also about bringing together the different actors that are engaged in the rebuilding of a country. Peace building needs to enhance trust between individuals and between groups in a society, and also restore the legitimacy of state institutions. History shows us that peace is possible. There are solutions to be found even in the most difficult conflicts.

On behalf of my fellow Directors and Governing Council, I extend my appreciation to our several donors who have helped us to sustain our work. I thank them for the trust they have placed in us. My thanks are also due to our Executive Director and his team of committed staff who reach out to communities far and wide in our blessed island.

Joe William PhD



General Secretary's Message

A historic democratic change occurred in 2015. The change came in two waves. It came first through the Presidential election in January and second through the Parliamentary election in August. The formation of a national government is not familiar to the Sri Lankan people. But this is what happened through the partnership of President Maithripala Sirisena who heads the SLFP and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who heads the UNP. They came together to form a government of national unity.

After 35 years, the major political parties in the north and south got together to negotiate for peace, reconciliation and development of the country. This experiment of national government politics has given much hope to people in Sri Lanka and internationally that a long lasting peaceful political solution to bring an end to the ethnic problem is within sight. It is our conviction that all sections of the polity in the north and south should get together to achieve a peaceful solution that safeguards the unity of the people in Sri Lanka.

From 2011 to 2014, the international community passed resolutions against Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that put the government on the defensive socially, politically and economically. However, the new foreign policy of accommodation and openness to international concerns, and to meeting international standards, has led to winning back the confidence of the international community. That was reflected in the 2015 UNHRC resolution, which the government of Sri Lanka co-sponsored. Some objections came from nationalist sections that could lead to a re-gathering of opposition forces unless there is effective education of the general population on the principles of transitional justice and reconciliation, which NPC is undertaking.

I wish to thank the members of the Board of Directors, Governing Council, staff, District Inter Religious Committee members and our foreign friends and donors who give material and non-material resources to enable us to fulfill our difficult tasks in this period of change and great opportunity. I believe that as a vibrant civil society organisation, NPC is playing a leading role in building up a Sri Lankan nation on the basis of equal rights, justice, dignity, protection of all and the devolution of power to the people.

G. V. D. Tilakasiri



Executive Director's Report

In all its work, the key message that NPC imparts is the need to address the roots of the conflict that gave rise to three decades of war through the Transitional Justice (TJ) process. The concept of TJ was introduced to NPC through its programme on healing victims of torture and ensuring accountability.

By training and creating a network of community leaders in selected locations who are key members and influencers of their community, NPC intends to give impetus to the wider participation of members of targeted communities in the TJ process. At the community level expanded, functionally improved and capacitated District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) in nine districts with over 500 members continue to provide enhanced services, including conflict mitigation activities, with an estimated 30,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries.

Through its inter religious programme of work, NPC has created an empowered and capacitated group of faith based leaders who are taking the message of TJ in a holistic sense to the general population. The key impact is that NPC is engaging trusted messengers to convey the idea of necessary political change. It directly engages with community leaders whose support is needed to achieve popular support for constitutional change and a political solution.

During the general election campaign, these DIRCs were able to mobilise large numbers of participants for the workshops on good governance. NPC aired a series of radio dialogues on national radio in parallel with the general election campaign on requests by members of DIRCs. NPC also carried out a newspaper advertising campaign in Sinhala, Tamil and English, which reached an estimated million voters, urging them to vote for non-racist candidates who were willing to support a transition process for reconciliation and those who uphold women's rights.

NPC has also shown it is possible to build political support from women for a larger TJ process. It started by awareness building, which created empathy among women belonging to divided ethnic communities that generates support for a larger process of healing. This process began in 2014, even before the government started to accept TJ as the framework for transition. In addition NPC engaged with youth through its Write to Reconcile project, which generated creative and thought provoking stories of conflict healing and reconciliation.

All this work was made possible by the dedication and initiative shown by the members of NPC, both staff and Governing Council, and NPC partners in the field. We also recognise the importance of our international partners who provide the financial resources to sustain those who have committed themselves to the public good and strengthen their voice and reach.

Jehan Perera



Programmes and Projects





Creating a Harmonious and United Society

With the change in government came a new freedom for people to speak out openly. Government officials as well as politicians were held more accountable for their actions and for their work practices. As a result, NPC's District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) were able to function more effectively and negotiate without fear with government officials and institutions. People felt able to express their frustrations and make demands through demonstrations and picketing, which would not have been possible under the previous government.



People also spoke up more freely at DIRC meetings, so pressing problems were brought to light and addressed. The multi ethnic and multi religious membership of the DIRCs developed a degree of trust and commitment that helped to address polarisation between communities experienced since the end of the war. Through various capacity building training programmes and interactive activities, DIRCs improved their knowledge and skills enough to respect other religions and ethnicities. They worked together to pass on this change of attitude to the society they lived in.

Under Phase II of the Reconciling Inter Religious and Inter Ethnic Differences (RIID), Matara DIRC was re-established and the Jaffna, Mannar, Puttalam, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Galle, Ampara and Batticaloa DIRCs were further capacitated and strengthened to address different issues that could threaten inter religious and inter ethnic harmony in their districts, building on lessons learned during Phase I.

When Phase II was designed, there were a number of inter religious issues that were continuing to cause division in society. Hard line Buddhist groups appeared to be gathering support and momentum among the rural middle classes who seemed to blame the minority communities for their lack of financial independence and opportunities.

The DIRCs used their networks to address issues at the community level that could have escalated by using their influence with the relevant parties, and organised follow up activities to rebuild inter community relations.

NPC used the National Inter Religious Symposium held in November with the participation of representatives from nine DIRCs, as a platform to highlight the importance of addressing polarisation on religious and ethnic lines. The methods used by the DIRCs to address the identified issues were shared by district inter religious leaders who presented their views on coexistence, peace and harmony and condemned the acts of violence against other religions and ethnicities. National



religious leaders and the Speaker of Parliament pointed out the need for collaboration between religious leaders to build a country where all people could live in peace and harmony. The National Inter Religious Committee (NIRC) was strengthened by appointing religious leaders from the four main religions representing each district to address and direct issues identified at the district level, which remain unresolved, to the attention of authorities in future.



A statement setting out 15 demands regarding problems faced by people in plantations and surrounding areas was ratified by the Nuwara Eliya DIRC together with 120 people including members of civil society, district level religious leaders from all faiths and those who were affected by the problems. This statement was submitted to the media and relevant authorities.

In addition DIRCs, recognising their role and the need for advocating democracy and good governance at the 2015 general election, held 10 meetings to mobilise community leaders and educate them to guide their constituencies to vote for parties and candidates who advocated and reflected values of good governance. The meetings were held in Jaffna, Batticaloa, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Mannar, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Galle and Matara during a period of two weeks. A total of 609 people participated.

DIRCs extended their engagement through other social outreach activities including distributing wristbands with slogans promoting candidates committed to Transitional Justice, human rights, ethnic and religious rights and peace and by carrying out a poster campaign at the local level with messaging developed by DIRC members.

NPC also broadcast 12 dialogues on inter religious and inter ethnic harmony through good governance over national radio, coinciding with the general election. Eleven inter religious leaders and four civil society leaders and DIRC members attended the programme, along with recognised national level resource persons.

Total membership of DIRCs stood at 513 of which 168 members were female and 345 were male. People who benefitted indirectly from Phase II included religious leaders representing all faiths, members of community based organisations, non-governmental organisations operating at district and national level, staff of relevant government institutions, and youth and community members living in areas where acts of tension were identified and where respective DIRCs took steps to carry out activities to mitigate tense situations.

At the end of the project, the most significant changes observed among the beneficiary group were the level of trust developed between members of DIRCs and a significant improvement in their



Project statistics

Number of DIRCS	9
Direct Beneficiaries	513
Indirect Beneficiaries	5,570
Monthly meetings	54
Issues identified and prioritised	22
Issues addressed completely/partly	9
Capacity Building Workshop	1
Voter Education Programmes	10
Participants	609
Posters	7,000
Hand bills	9,000
Wristbands	12,500

New Houses of Their Own

After a battle lasting almost 30 years to retain the roofs over their heads, the people of New Tispane have finally been promised new houses on land they would own. They were helped to victory by the untiring efforts of Nuwara Eliya DIRC members who gave advice, organised a demonstration and arranged meetings with government officials until their pleas were answered.

The problem of the community in Tispane dates back to 1987 when the Kotmale reservoir was being built under the Mahaweli Development Project, when many families had to give up their homes and land. Some people were given compensation and were resettled but 34 families received no compensation or alternative land, and ended up living in dilapidated line houses that were cold and leaking.



They were sent from pillar to post at various government departments in their quest for justice until one man, S. Marimutthu, approached the Nuwara Eliya DIRC for help. “DIRC members discussed, debated and presented different ideas to address the situation. At that moment, I had a glimmer of hope that our problems would finally be addressed,” Mr. Marimutthu said.

DIRC members told Mr. Marimutthu of ways to get the attention of authorities. As a first step, he wrote to the Human Rights Commission and then organised a demonstration, which received some media coverage. The story of their plight reached the public and they received support from



several civil society organisations. A statement of demands signed by 120 people was submitted to the President and the Prime Minister.

The DIRC, in collaboration with NPC, arranged for Mr. Marimutthu to meet officials of the Ministry of Upcountry New Villages, Infrastructure Facilities and Community Development including Minister Palani Digambaram and Coordinating Secretary P. Vijeyakumar, who finally informed him that the Ministry would build 32 houses in Kotmale for the families once land was acquired.

Getting Back Their Land

A long standing land issue involving the villagers of Sammandurai and the military was resolved due to the intervention of the Ampara DIRC.

During the Deyata Kirula military exhibition in 2012, the military had taken over 46 acres of paddy and grazing land belonging to the villagers in Sammandurai for a temporary car park, promising to return it once the exhibition was over. However, that did not happen and the people were becoming increasingly angry. Appeals to the military and relevant government authorities went unheeded.

The matter was brought to the attention of the Ampara DIRC, whose members had several discussions with the military, the District Secretary, the Divisional Secretary and the Eastern Province Land Commissioner until they were able to convince the military to return the land to its owners.

“The DIRC brought the case to the District Secretary to make sure the people were able to get back their livelihoods. The success was due to the special attention given by the government officers and DIRC’s continued pressure,” said Mr. I. L. Thowfee, Project Director, DS Office, Ampara.

Additional District Secretary M. I. Ameer thanked the DIRC for bringing the matter to his notice and said he would be glad to work with the DIRC in future. “We have been discussing this land issue and taking action from January this year. It is a big achievement for the DIRC,” he said.



Strengthening and Supporting Torture Survivors

Despite the end of the civil war in 2009 and the change of government in 2015, torture is still prevalent around the country. However, in the freer environment that exists now, people are more likely to speak out and protest when their human rights are being violated. State agents, too, know they will be held accountable and are less likely to rely on the previous culture of impunity.



NPC started its project, Promoting Accountability and Preventing Torture by Strengthening Survivors in Asia, in February 2014 when torture was recurrent and widespread. The project, which aimed to address the effects of mass torture in countries that have a history of human rights abuses, was implemented in Indonesia, Myanmar, Timor Leste and Sri Lanka by the Indonesia-based Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). Funding comes from the European Union. NPC is the local implementing partner in Sri Lanka.

Much of the activities centred on working with partner organisations to provide healing and legal support to victims of torture and psychosocial trauma suffered due to the war. At the national level, the project gave impetus to the Transitional Justice (TJ) initiative by organising a well-attended training on TJ.

NPC collaborated with several partners to implement activities in five districts. In Colombo and Gampaha, NPC worked with the Citizens Committee Gampaha District (CCGD) to share information on police torture and address its adverse effects on victims and their families. In Trincomalee, NPC worked with the Centre for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (CPPHR) to highlight issues of victims and their families affected by the war. In Vavuniya, NPC worked with the Child Development Initiative (CDI) to document stories of victims and their families affected by the war. In Kandy, the Human Rights Office (HRO) was NPC's partner to document stories of victims affected by police torture and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Another work partner was the Committee for the Investigation Disappearances (CID), which continues to keep the issues of war disappeared in the limelight.

Project activities included an information dissemination workshop in Ja-Ela on the Victim and Witness Protection Act, a campaign in Trincomalee to highlight the plight of those who disappeared or were extra judicially killed during the war and to share stories of victims' families, and an event to bring together victims' families for a commemoration event on International Human Rights Day. NPC also produced a 25 minute photo documentary telling the stories of torture victims.

These victims included three police torture victims and four war victims, as well as family members of those who have disappeared.

A two day training workshop was held in Colombo as part of sharing information on the TJ process. A group of 52 members from Civil Society Organisations, the donor community, government institutions, armed forces and police attended the training and have since entered into a working relationship with the NPC to promote TJ mechanisms. They continue to be part of other related training carried out by NPC to promote and support TJ initiatives.



A country briefing paper that highlighted the current status in relation to torture, the legal framework, cases and examples was produced along with a set of recommendations. The paper will be amalgamated into a four-country policy paper by AJAR to be submitted to the relevant authorities.

NPC continued to support two legal cases relating to police torture and helped to sustain three ongoing legal cases filed by the CPPHR in relation to victims incarcerated under the provisions of the PTA.

To support the sustainability of its partners and upgrade the services they provide, NPC used SEED funding to provide equipment and furniture to two of its existing partners. The partners, the CPPHR in Trincomalee and CCGD in Gampaha, will be able to ensure better services to victims and families who visit these offices for psychosocial and legal support.

CPPHR was provided with equipment to upgrade its new counselling centre. The centre will support torture victims and their families with counselling and provide a safe space for them to come for assistance when needed.

In the South, CCGD provides advisory services, legal support and continues information dissemination on available mechanisms to address incidents of police torture. These services are provided free of charge. According to Executive Secretary U. L. A. Joseph, at least 50 victims and family members visit the CCGD every month. He said, “Support given by NPC through the AJAR project will help us deliver better services to victims and their families. For instance we can now record statements by video as we were given a good video camera. The camera we were using was over five years old and kept breaking down.”

Father V. Yogeswaran, the Director of CPPHR said, “This project helped us share information about disappeared persons through information dissemination, media campaigns and through digital narratives. Equipment and furniture provided through the project will help us sustain better counselling services to the victims and family members in the years to come.”



Survivors' Tales of Torture

Through a series of interviews with torture survivors, NPC produced a photo documentary entitled “The Wronged Right” that captures the harrowing tales of brutality and the force of human resilience to withstand pain and loss. From the haunting tale of Parmeshwari whose three sons are missing to that of Valentina who is waiting for a mother who may never come back, the stories told in their own voices capture the essence of pain and loss.

“The Wronged Right” is not only about the stories of victims who have been wronged but is also about the resilience of the human spirit and how people persevere and carry on. The victims and their families have braved attempts of coercion, bribes and threats during the course of looking for justice for their loved ones or for themselves.

The cases of police brutality reveal lapses in judicial processes and the inability of the law to protect citizens resulting in not just broken bones but also broken spirits. It shows how laws are blatantly violated and at the same time used to punish innocents who have nothing to do with the crimes they are accused of. Often victims are not given a chance to show their innocence and the police act in absolute disregard of the convention on torture, which Sri Lanka is a party to.

NPC reached over 20 victims of police torture and war related torture directly. Indirectly, over 500 victims and family members were supported. Stories of three police torture victims from the western province and four war victims from the Northern and Eastern Provinces were documented. The stories capture their traumatic experiences, the fight for justice, the effects the experiences have had on their families and the continuation of their lives.

Project statistics

Females	558
Males	606
Sinhalese	694
Tamils	287
Muslims	49
Total numbers trained/supported/participated	
Public events	1485
Trainings	125
Counselling	78
Protests	560
Legal support	5
Advocacy	
1500 copies of poster (in Sinhala and English)	
140 t-shirts	
Video documentary	
Country briefing paper	
Torture Guidelines	



A Voice For Women War Survivors

Women are the major casualties of war, being forced to bear the brunt of hardship and suffering. They are left vulnerable and defenseless as their men fight on the battlefields. Often unable to flee they remain trapped in horrific conditions where they have to protect and provide for their children. They become targets of sexual violence.



The aftermath of Sri Lanka’s decades of civil conflict have left women with loss of loved ones, loss of property, injuries, displacement, disruption of children’s education, loss of livelihood, loss of the family breadwinner, and conflict related trauma.

There are 89,000 war widows and some 40,000 women headed households in the country, based on a 2010 government estimate. These women have either lost their husbands or do not know their whereabouts. In some cases, their husbands have been kept in detention camps for long and unspecified periods. Despite such trauma, women are expected to support their families. Many of them have young children and ageing parents.

While women in the north and east as well as widows and wives of the military are the most recent to be affected by war, women in the south still bear the scars of two old insurgencies that left thousands of men and women dead or missing, many of them young people.

After the war ended, women were left out of the peace building process and had no platform to raise their concerns. The miniscule number of women in politics at all levels of government means that their voices are rarely heard despite the fact that they have been the main victims of the war.

In order to bring about some healing for war affected women and also to provide a way for them to participate in the post-conflict peace building process, NPC launched its project “Post-Conflict Healing: A Women’s Manifesto” with funding from FOKUS Women. FOKUS consists of 74 women's organisations from Norway that share a vision of women united to change the world.

Through capacity building, the project aims to increase female participation in decision making at the local and grass root level. There are healing activities as well as a platform for the voice of woman to be heard. The manifesto will articulate women’s perspectives of transition from post conflict to peace and translate them into action through advocacy to policy makers and authorities.



Participants are trained in transitional justice, women's rights, role of women in post conflict society, reconciliation, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and its recommendations and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that deals with women and security.



The NPC has an island wide outreach and has worked in every province in the country, gaining understanding of the issues that affect minority communities and women. The work

is being carried out in the Vavuniya, Mannar, Trincomalee, Ampara, Galle, Hambantota Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Puttalam districts. Vavuniya, Mannar, Ampara and Trincomalee were directly affected by the war while Galle and Hambantota have a high number of military widows. Kandy and Nuwara Eliya are home to the minority Tamil estate community while Puttalam plays host to many Internally Displaced Persons from Tamil and Muslim communities.

Now in its second year, the project conducted eight core group meetings, eight healing activities and two exchange visits. The core groups were formulated to organise healing activities and implement them at ground level with partner organisations.

Two exchange visits were held. For the first one 65 women from Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Mannar and Vavuniya came to Vavuniya to share experiences and create networks. During the second exchange visit 50 women from Trincomalee, Ampara, Nuwara Eliya and Kandy came to Kandy.

The exchange visits created a platform for women to openly discuss issues and explore reconciliation from the ground up. Women from different ethnicities and districts who would not have met each other were able to come to one place and share their experiences. Women were mobilised to get together and work together. They keep in touch with each other. It was a way for them to realise that their problems were similar even though they came from different districts.

During healing activities, women actively took a role in creating change at the community and district level.

Different districts have different problems. The groups identified the most significant issue and came up with solutions. In Puttalam and Kandy, they spoke of the lack of implementation of the language policy. In the north missing persons were the most pressing concern while in Mannar, women advocated for a mechanism similar to a truth commission for finding out what had happened to their loved ones. In Vavuniya, a peace rally marched across town and gave a letter to the Divisional Secretary asking him to address concerns of the families of the disappeared. In Galle, women said they were not aware of their rights so there was a need to create awareness among women's groups about their rights.



From Victim To Advocate

“After the war ended in 2009, I had to leave my home in Mannar and move to the Menik Farm IDP camp. In the upheaval among the huge crowds as we were moving into the military area, I was separated from my two daughters who were 24 and 20 years old. My remaining family – husband, two sons and another daughter – and I went to Menik Farm IDP camp. We lived there for a year, after which we returned home. I could not find my daughters although I searched for them high and low. In 2011, my husband died and I was left to look for them by myself. I am very tired from searching for my daughters and worrying about how they are and what they are doing. When there is a protest, I am always the first person out on the streets.

“I am so disturbed that I could not fully pay attention to the training but I was able to learn new things about the LLRC and its recommendation and about transitional justice, which I did not know earlier. Before the workshop, I thought only about my daughters but now I realise many women, even those from other ethnic communities, have the same problems. I listened to their stories and felt their pain. Now I am running here and there to be the voice for other relatives. I participated in core group meetings and in the training. This helped to ease my worries about my missing daughters. The war has affected me deeply and directly. I live in poverty. I hope my future will be better.”

Mrs. M. Rita (52)

“I am from Hambantota. My husband was a soldier who died 16 years ago during a battle in Mullaitivu. My son was one year old at the time and I had to look after him by myself with many difficulties. When I came to these workshops, I knew nothing about the general situation in the country or about my own rights. I gained a lot of knowledge during the two days. I met many people and built relationships that I am sure will last for a long time. Although I had heard about the LLRC report on the news, I never knew what it was, but with the training I managed to understand what it was all about.

“I had a wrong perception about Tamil people but after getting to know them at the workshop, I realise that it wasn't just the Sinhalese who suffered but that the Tamil people faced many injustices as well. I would like these workshops to continue so that people from all ethnicities can share knowledge, stories and build relationships.”

P.G. Sandhaya Samanmali (40)

Project statistics

Females	695
Males	76
Sinhalese	216
Tamils	326
Muslims	150

Total numbers trained/supported/participated

Nine core group meetings with 62 participants

Two exchange visits with 101 participants

One protest with 170 participants

Nine healing activities with 532 participants

Advocacy

140 satchels printed with awareness messages in Tamil, Sinhala and English



Voter Education

Although Sri Lanka has a long history of high voter turnout, recent elections had been conducted in a climate of fear and intimidation that did not encourage people to exercise their franchise. In the north and east, voters had been forbidden to vote by the LTTE in the 2005 Presidential election. This affected the outcome and alienated the Tamil people from the electoral process,



contributing to the shrinking of democracy in the country. To ensure maximum participation, a voter education campaign was undertaken by NPC to make sure people went to the polls at the Presidential election in January and the general election in August.

Under an advocacy campaign funded by the British High Commission, NPC's partners in the field distributed 50,000 pocket calendars before the Presidential election in January, urging people to exercise their vote.

The message printed in Sinhala and Tamil on the calendars said, "The vote is the sovereign right of the citizen. Don't waste it. Decide on your country's future. Be a part of it!"

The key election issues identified in the pocket calendars were people's sovereignty, a united people, a stable country, power sharing and just governance and that the vote is the sovereign right of the citizen.

NPC distributed 80,000 calendars before the general elections later in the year throughout 12 districts. The new calendars urged voters not to support candidates who were racist, violent and corrupt, and to unite to support those who stood for good governance and Rule of Law, were for a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict and did not consider ethnic, religious and gender differences.

The campaign was carried out via a series of meetings, voter education messages in newspapers, targeted programmes on national radio, and through the distribution of wristbands, posters and leaflets.

Voter education pocket meetings were held in Jaffna, Batticaloa, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Mannar, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Galle and Matara with the participation of District Inter Religious Committee (DIRC) members, members of local Civil Society Organisations and government officials.

Nine radio panel discussions in Sinhala and three in Tamil were aired on the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation commercial channel. The programmes centred on topics such as

good governance practices and their relevance to the country, rights of voters, the role played by civil society to protect democracy and good governance, the participation of Muslim women in good governance, rights of fishing communities and other issues. The resource persons included members of DIRCs and representatives from civil society organisations.



The voter education campaign targeting the larger community included the publication of 52 voter education messages in Sinhala, English and Tamil. The messages were carried in newspapers with a large readership especially in the rural areas. They were aimed at promoting candidates who upheld women's rights and those who advocated reconciliation in the country.

The wristbands, posters and leaflets carried similar messages that endorsed good governance practices and enlightened citizens on their rights and responsibilities.



Write to Reconcile

The Write to Reconcile project completed its second successful year with the launch of a new anthology.

The project was facilitated by NPC in conjunction with internationally renowned Sri Lankan author Shyam Selvadurai.

Write to Reconcile is a creative writing project sponsored by the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the American Center. It brought together 24 Sri Lankan writers who were interested in writing creative pieces (fiction, memoir or poetry) on the issues of conflict, peace, reconciliation, trauma and memory.

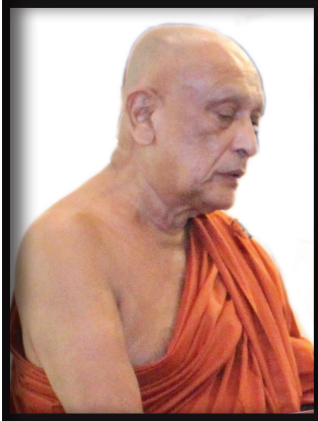


The project consisted of two eight day creative writing workshops that were held in Kandy and Batticaloa, as well as two creative writing online forums.

The second anthology included stories on a Muslim family struggling with the abduction of their son by armed men they suspect might be LTTE; a Sinhala soldier and a young Tamil woman in Jaffna falling in love and trying to make a life for themselves against great odds; a teacher recalling the death of her brother, an ace pilot for the Sri Lankan Air Force; a young Tamil immigrant in London remembering his Muslim boyhood friend and their endeavour to maintain a friendship despite the escalating inter-communal conflict in Batticaloa and other poignant and inspiring stories and poems that give readers a vivid portrait of Sri Lanka's history in the past 30 years.



Citizens Peace Award



NPC's 2015 Citizens Peace Award was awarded posthumously to Ven. Maduluwawe Sobitha who died in November.

At a time when the space for political dissent had shrunk, and the government increasingly authoritarian, ethno-nationalist and corrupt, the Ven. Sobitha took the challenge to speak out, stand up and give leadership to the general population. He transcended the love of his community to embrace all ethnic and religious communities with the universal spirit of Buddhist religious teachings. He provided leadership to civil society in its quest for good governance and ethnic harmony.

Members of all ethnic and religious communities mourned his death and appreciated his tireless work towards a reconciled Sri Lanka.

His loss was felt even by the prisoners taken in under the Prevention of Terrorism Act who sent a condolence message, showing the work that he had done and as an individual voice for their release. The government of national unity that combined the two main political parties that have hitherto been rivals is due in no small part to his moral leadership.

Prior to his demise NPC decided to award Ven. Sobitha its Citizens Peace Award, to which he gave his consent. This prize is awarded to those who have demonstrated public commitment and taken risks to uphold values of human rights, good governance and ethnic and religious harmony.

“A spirituality that helped him to stay faithful within these thrusts was his disregard, almost contempt, for status and position. By rising above these enticements that obsess and destroy so many, he exposed the fallacy that political office is the pinnacle of life. He taught instead that losing one's self for the good of others is the most noble option available to humans. This is why his life was a source of encouragement to the countless unsung Sri Lankans, content to live with dignity and integrity wherever they are placed.”

Bishop Duleep de Chickera



Media and Advocacy

During the year, NPC disseminated political commentaries, newsletters and press releases that were published in the mass media in three languages. The material was uploaded on NPC's website. Dr. Jehan Perera contributed a regular column to a national newspaper that drew on NPC's work.

Excerpts from media releases:

Going Beyond Election Promises To Strengthen National Reconciliation

The government is being criticized for its slow pace in implementing the 100 day plan of the president's election manifesto. However, the government is also going beyond the promises of its election manifesto to strengthen the confidence of the Tamil people in its good faith. President Maithripala Sirisena's decision to permit the national anthem to be sung in the Tamil language taken at a meeting of the National Executive Council, which is composed of political party heads in the government coalition, is a courageous action. The National Peace Council commends the President for his statesmanlike decision. We see it as yet another reconciliatory action of the government that will make the Tamil-speaking people feel a greater sense of belonging to the Sri Lankan polity when they sing the national anthem in a language they understand.

March 23

From Black July 1983 To Manifestos For Peace

The rampant violence that engulfed the Tamil people 23 July 1983 and days that followed discredited Sri Lanka internationally and signalled the braindrain among the Tamils that would impact the future economic and political trajectory of the country. It also led to a costly and brutal war that lasted until May 2009, tore up the fabric of society and undermined the national economy. Underlying both the anti-Tamil pogrom and the protracted war stemmed grievances of the Tamil people and the failure of their attempt to draw attention to them in a peaceful and non-violent manner. However, 32 years later, conditions in Sri Lanka have changed so that a political solution has become a viable prospect. The experience gathered in the work done by the National Peace Council for over two decades convinces us that our fellow citizens are now more willing to accept, and commit themselves to, a political solution that ensures justice and security to all.

July 22

Priority Issues For New Government

The victory of the coalition of parties led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at the General Elections on August 17 will ensure that the changes brought about at the presidential election can be sustained. The majority of Sri Lankan voters reaffirmed the choice they had made in January when they voted in President Maithripala Sirisena and rejected the call of narrow ethnic-based nationalism. The National Peace Council welcomes the formation of the National Unity Government with the UNP and SLFP which have been traditional rivals, joining together in it to share governmental responsibilities including the allocation of ministries. Political bipartisanship was demonstrated in the unanimous vote of Parliament to appoint the Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.

September 6



People Must Become Beneficiaries of Geneva Process

On October 1 the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva passed a resolution on Sri Lanka titled Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka. The resolution was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and passed unanimously which was in contrast to the four previous resolutions of the UNHRC on Sri Lanka since 2009. The focus of the resolution is on taking forward the accountability process with regard to human rights violations during the course of the war. Accordingly it will be necessary for the government to initiate the process of accountability without delay. The government needs to set up the envisaged judicial mechanism which will hold formal trials into complaints of human rights violations with international participation.

October 14

Factional Infighting Can Undermine Political Solution

The government has declared its intention of prioritizing constitutional reform in the New Year. Parliament is to be converted into a Constituent Assembly (parliamentary committee) that will deliberate on issues pertaining to a new constitution. The government has also appointed a 24 member committee drawn from political and civil society leaders to obtain the views of the people and feed them back to the parliamentary committee. The promise to amend the constitution was made by government leaders at both the last presidential and general elections that took place in January and August of this year. Their main pledge was to abolish the executive presidency and to change the electoral system from one based on proportional representation to a mixed system of proportional representation and first-past-the-post voting in which parliamentary seats would be apportioned in proportion to the total number of votes obtained by each of the political parties. There is a general consensus in society about the need to reduce the power of individuals elected to power and to ensure their accountability.

December 31



FINANCE

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Ltd changed its auditors in 2015 from Price waterhouseCoopers to Ernst & Young in keeping with the recommended practise "Auditors should change periodically".

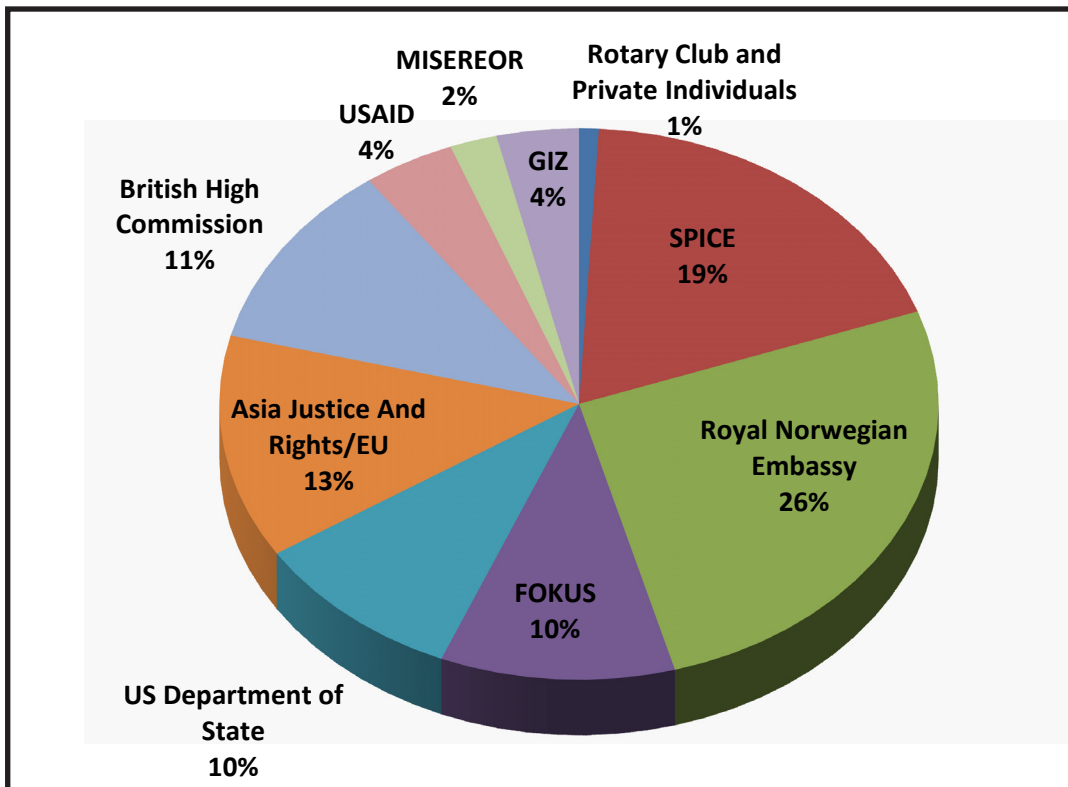
A Revaluation Reserve of Rs 42.9 million has been created during the year as NPC revalued its land and building.

Total grants/donations received during the year equals Rs. 46,918,335.

Donor Agency	Amount (LKR)	%
Rotary Club and Private Individuals	413,550.00	0.88
SPICE	8,760,055.00	18.67
Royal Norwegian Embassy	12,269,050.00	26.15
FOKUS	4,947,380.00	10.54
US Department of State	4,517,683.00	9.63
EU/Asia Justice And Rights	6,152,664.00	13.11
British High Commission	5,194,173.00	11.07
USAID	1,932,468.00	4.12
MISEREOR	997,912.00	2.13
GIZ	1,733,400.00	3.69
	46,918,335.00	100



Funding Portfolio





Total amount spent during the year equals Rs. 52,359,682.70

Project	Funded by	Amount (LKR)	%
Reconcile Through Culture	Royal Norwegian Embassy/ US Dept of State	3,241,042.36	6.19
Scholarships for University Students	Rotary Club/ S. Thevarokian/ Mr & Mrs Burton	369,100.00	0.70
Reconciling Inter Religious and Inter Ethnic Differences	SPICE	8,572,140.44	16.37
Core Funding/Institutional Support	Royal Norwegian Embassy/ Unrestricted Fund	18,924,900.51	36.14
Post Conflict Healing: A Women's Manifesto	FOKUS	5,249,701.16	10.03
Promoting Accountability and Preventing Torture	Asia Justice And Rights/EU	8,200,533.83	15.66
Urgent advocacy campaign to urge all to vote	British High Commission	877,828.50	1.68
Advocacy campaign to educate voters on good governance	British High Commission	4,316,343.83	8.24
International Conference on Religious Tolerance and Harmony	US Department of State	95,023.50	0.18
Advocacy campaign to vote out racism and vote in reconciliation	USAID	1,932,468.00	3.69
Initiating Multi Level Partnership Action for Conflict Transformation	MISEREOR	580,600.57	1.11
		52,359,682.70	100



Way Forward

In the past year the key message that NPC imparted was the need to address the roots of the conflict that gave rise to three decades of war through the Transitional Justice (TJ) process. We presented a multi ethnic and multi religious problem solving perspective that is non partisan and strengthens moderate opinion in the country. NPC received feedback from policy makers, senior military personnel and diplomats. The messages and analyses helped to bridge the north-south divide.

With TJ taking a central place in the government's commitment to the Sri Lankan people and to the international community, there will be a long term need for work in this area by non partisan civil society actors. TJ ideals will have few, if any, champions from within the political parties. Politicians are ever mindful of their voters, and do not wish to be seen as being champions of controversial causes. This gives rise to the need for civil society to fill the void in terms of public education.

The core support given by the Norwegian embassy in Sri Lanka has been of critical importance to NPC in sustaining its overall programme of work.

The success and effectiveness of the Sri Lankan TJ process will be contingent on increasing the general public's awareness, interest and participation both to promote and widen support for the process. It is their constructive support and contribution that is essential to sustain this challenging process of conflict transformation over time. Accordingly, NPC has designed its future programmatic thrust with a focus on TJ, which evolved out of its project on Promoting Accountability and Preventing Torture project in partnership with Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) Indonesia, funded by EU.

NPC is currently engaged in three major projects that deal with issues of TJ. They are the FOKUS Women supported project leading to a Women's Healing Manifesto that prioritises the concerns of women; the USAID/SPICE supported Reconciling Inter Religious Differences project that engages in local level conflict mitigation in nine districts, which will now include preparing local communities to access the transitional justice mechanisms that the government will be setting up; and the Misereor/CAFOD supported Initiating Multi-level Partnership Action for Conflict Transformation (IMPACT) project that extends this work to a further seven districts and will target new groups including media, universities and local politicians.

In addition, NPC was successful in obtaining the support of the USAID/Conflict Management Mitigation fund, which has a focus on people-to-people exchange, in collaboration with the Jordan-based Generations For Peace (GFP), which has specialised in using sports, arts and culture in its peace building work. NPC's partnership with GFP will bring an international perspective and new approach that will supplement NPC's own tried and tested peace building methodologies over the past 21 years of its existence. The key impact is that NPC is engaging trusted messengers to convey the idea of necessary political change by directly engaging with community leaders whose support is needed to achieve popular support for transitional justice, constitutional change and a political solution.



NPC Working Districts

