



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

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 building a society of rights-conscious citizens and a political solution to the ethnic conflict and equal opportunities for all.

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About NPC

The National Peace Council was established in 1995 by an inter religious group of civil society leaders during the height of Sri Lanka's internal war to promote a peaceful end to the conflict.

The mission of the organisation was, and remains, to engage in public education and advocacy so that solutions that are fair and just by all ethnic and religious communities may be found with people's participation.

Today NPC works in partnership with different groups including religious clergy, community leaders, government officials, women and youth and students to educate, mobilise and advocate for a peaceful and just political culture in which there will be equal opportunities for all.

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Honorary Programme Advisor

Ms. Sumadhu Weerawarne Perera

Staff Members

Dr. Jehan Perera	Executive Director
Ms. Chithrupa Vidanapathirana	Manager Administration
Mr. Rukshan De Zoysa	Manager Finance (Until May)
Mr. Robinson Thevasagayam	Accountant
Mr. Saman Seneviratne	Project Manager
Ms. Venuri De Silva	Project Manager
Mr. Nishantha Kumara	Project Manager
Mr. Vijayanthan Thusandra	Project Manager
Mr. Rangika Wickramage	Project Manager (Until April)
Ms. Rasika Seneviratne	Assistant Project Manager
Mr. Samsudeen Safi Nayaj	Project Coordinator
Mr. Nagaratnam Vijayakanthan	Project Coordinator
Mr. Lakshan Perera	Project Coordinator (Until November)
Mr. Shantha D. Pathirana	Senior Project Officer
Mr. Uwais Mohamed	Senior Project Officer
Ms. Saumya Amarasinghe	Senior Project Officer
Ms. Niroscha Anthony	Project Coordinator
Ms. Subhashini Navaratnam	Senior M & E Officer (Until September)
Mr. A. M. Razeen	M & E Officer (Until December)
Mr. Sanka Galagoda	M & E Officer
Ms. Gayathri Sebaratnam	Assistant M & E officer
Ms. W. A. D. T. Dilrukshi	Account Assistant
Mr. Maduranga Dias	Account Assistant
Ms. Gayathri Selvagumar	Account Assistant
Ms. Kaushalya Weerakoon	Senior Project Officer
Ms. Diana Joseph	Project Officer (Until June)
Ms. Kethma K. Wickramasinghe	Project Officer (Until April)
Ms. Yashoda Piyumali	Project Officer
Ms. A. M. Hemilda Mercy	Project Officer (Until Feb)
Mr. Anton Medosan Perera	Project Officer
Ms. Mugunthini Vishvalingam	Project Officer (Until July)
Mr. A. K. S. M. Yushri	Project Officer
Ms. Ayesha Jayawardhana	Project Officer
Mr. Kingsly Rajasingham	Project Officer (Until December)
Ms. S. N. Vidanapathirana	Project Officer (Until December)
Mr. K. Nanayakkara	Project Officer (Until August)
Ms. Salomi De Silva	Project Officer (Joined September)
Ms. S. V. P. Sepalika	Project Officer (Joined January)
Ms. L. W. N. Vishaka	M & E Officer (Joined April)
Mr. W. M. D. L. Fernando	Project Manager (Joined June)
Mr. G. Wotkinson	Senior Project Officer (Joined July)
Mr. A. N. Madushanka	Project Officer (Joined August)
Ms. D. G. I. Udulanayani	Project Officer (Joined August)
Ms. P. M. M. S. H. Pathiraja	Project Officer (Joined September)
Mr. Sumudu Jayasooriya	Administration Associate
Mr. S. Meril Karunajeewa	Administration Associate
Ms. M. G. Priyanthi	Office Aid (Until December)

Chairperson's Message

As the National Peace Council (NPC) is in the threshold of reaching quarter century of our existence, we have been guided by certain basic principles of peacebuilding and peace advocacy at grassroots and urban levels focusing on building peace by peaceful means. We also believed that real peace in Sri Lanka should mean more than the absence of open warfare and be guided by creating a social order governed by the ideals of participatory democracy, where decentralization of power and resources, upholding of human rights, satisfaction of basic human needs, nurturance of a healthy environment, and tolerance of cultural, religious, and linguistic differences be given pride of place.

However, since independence, the principal political platform has been, and continues to be, one that is framed on ethnic nationalism. Much of the prejudice and attendant hate and suspicion were often either sowed or fueled by Sri Lanka's brand of politics. The country is now in the grip of a new political configuration. Following the Presidential Elections, voices are being raised that focus more on the fear and mistrust of those of other communities. It is important that political leaders displaying their own colors and symbols should rise to meet this challenge.

Recognition of pluralities in the form plurality in leadership our country becomes important at this time in which diversity should be allowed to bloom in order for pluralism to prevail and take root in communities. In political science, the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities. Political leaders and State officials have a key role to play to build and foster the naturally plural society in which there is equal voice irrespective of numbers and in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the sphere of a common citizenship. Respect for Human Rights is of key importance in order to maintain such a plurality. It is important that the state acts with justice and equity at all times in serving the people.

NPC continues to work for the creation of a modern state that incorporates a reconciliation process in which equal citizenship and inclusive development leaves out no section or part of the country. We see an opportunity for a lasting solution to evolve through the proposed process of drafting a new constitution. It is our hope, and will be our endeavor, to ensure that pluralistic values are embedded in the new constitution that will have the support of all sections of ethnic and religious communities living in Sri Lanka. We hope that we will not end up as yet another lost opportunity for the country to make the transition to sustainable peace and development.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the National Peace Council for the year ended December 31, 2019. This highlights the work done by NPC's project teams and stories of change that have occurred in individuals and communities as they grappled with issues that have long divided the people of Sri Lanka.

We are grateful for the support given to us by our Executive Director and Staff, Board of Directors, Governing Council, Program Advisor, and Partner Organizations. We are also deeply grateful for our national and international donors whose support has sustained our activities highlighted in this report, which meet the needs of the time.

Joe William, PhD

General Secretary's Message

There were many setbacks to peaceful life in Sri Lanka in the course of 2019. Peace in the country was shattered by the dastardly bombing of Christian churches by religious extremists professing the Islamic faith and influenced by outside powers. The ongoing investigation into the Easter bombing in 2019 which created hundreds of victims and brought the country's economy to its knees, reveals more and more the failures and lack of responsibility on the part of the government authorities at that time. Unfortunately, those who should have been at the forefront of shaping public opinion on the transparency and accountability of the state failed to point out its shortcomings. Sections among civil society believing in the promises became part of the government apparatus and surrendered their responsibilities to society to the extent that they got co-opted to the corrupt system that was detrimental to the people's interests.

The presidential election of November 2019 led to a change of government in which the new leadership pledged to turn the country to the path of economic development, and ensure national security, and thereby lay the foundations of a society in which all can live without fear or suspicion. As a result, Sri Lanka is now able to join hands with the world who respect democracy, especially as it declares its commitment to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in line with the United Nations Development Process. Accordingly, taking steps to end rural poverty, coming out of the debt trap, underworld activities that includes drug trafficking, and threats to the sovereignty of the country as surrendering national assets such as harbours to foreign powers, as well as providing employment opportunities to graduates who were becoming insurgents due to unemployment seems to have paved the way for a new era in the country.

During this period of great change, the Board of Directors and the Governing Council of National Peace Council of Sri Lanka came together and made a tremendous contribution to peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Similarly, the staff faced all challenges and was fully committed to the betterment of the country and the people. The partner organisations and inter-religious committees at the district and divisional levels showed themselves to be agents of change who infused ideals of pluralism, social cohesion and national integration in the communities they worked together with. I pay tribute to all of them and to the foreign friendly countries and donors who have helped in many ways to make our projects a success.

G. V. D. Tilakasiri

Directors' Report

The year under review was one of transition to government policies that re-emphasised national security issues. The Easter bombing of April 2019 undermined public confidence in the government and its commitment to values of power sharing and checks and balances. It also led to an immediate sundering of relations between the ethnic and religious communities. NPC was able to mobilise its inter religious committees to reduce the polarization that was taking place in society. The government's Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms made a request to NPC to link its committees to local police and government agencies in a bid to contain the growth of mistrust and violence. The proximity to national elections that were due at the end of the year contributed to the politicization of this issue with political parties actively seeking to fan fears and increase ethnic and religious polarization to capture bloc votes, which added to the urgency and importance of NPC's work. The presidential election that followed in November provided another opportunity for NPC to engage in community education on values that needed to be included in the governance structures. The importance of values of human rights, transitional justice, separation of powers and checks and balances and the need to strengthen the rule of law and the ability of state institutions to function independently of political interference were canvassed during activities organised by NPC.

NPC's work during the year took place through a multiplicity of projects led by project managers and implemented by project teams. The Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation (COMPACT) project supported by Misereor and CAFOD was developed to open the space for civil society groups to work on peace and reconciliation. Through this project, NPC has worked with many sectors to build support for a credible transition process, in order to sustain inter-ethnic and inter-religious platforms for co-existence at local level, continuing to give a central place to the District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs). During this period 17 cohesion activities were organised in 16 districts where a large number of people, which specially included large number of youth and school children, from different communities got the chance to interact with each other in various solidarity building activities, team building games and events. After the Easter Sunday attack several DIRCs visited prominent religious leaders of the area and enlisted their help to maintain the peace of the local communities. They visited the local neighborhoods where Muslims and Christians lived and ensured their security by talking to them and enlisting the help of the local police as well. A Civil Society Platform was formed by several civic organisations including NPC. The Civil Society Forum where the CSP was founded, was attended representatives of 112 NGOs and CSOs. The forum hopes to develop a common mandate that all CSOs could follow in order to strengthen their role in the country's peace and reconciliation process.

The main instruments of the Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom (CERF) project supported by the US State Department are the Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRCs) which are established 12 divisions and consists of religious leaders of all faiths, Police Officers, Grama Niladhari officers, State Officers and Civil Society members who were selected through interviews and referrals of the Divisional Secretaries in their respective localities. The LIRCs act as broad-based platforms that represents all main cross-sections of the society to and engage in collective efforts for dispute resolution and prevention and to conduct public engagement initiatives. The LIRCs have been successful in obtaining the participation of 110 religious leaders as committee members who were able to reach a further 440 clergy. Among other key achievements were to train 900 state officials at sub national (divisional) level in thematic areas including rule of law, religious freedom and pluralism. Through community engagement and advocacy including peace marches, poster campaigns and leaflet campaigns, CERF managed to reach more than 4000 community members across the 8 locations which were selected for the first phase of the project

bolstering and broadening the national discourse on rule of law, religious freedom and pluralism.

The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a project supported by AGIAMONDO, a German non-governmental organisation and funded by the German government that focuses on organisational development, knowledge management, and results monitoring with the direct participation of an expatriate expert. The Administration and Financial Management Manual was revised and updated to reflect NPC and donor requirements. These changes have been vetted by NPC staff in a participatory process. The code of conduct has been updated and a safeguarding policy has been created. The complaint policy was drafted and is pending comments by the management, vetting by staff and approval by the Board.

The Accountability through Community Engagement and Initiatives for Transition (ACE-IT) project supported by the EU works through 11-district based Human Rights First Aid Centres (HRFACs) to support rights protection and utilise new laws and institutions available through the government's reconciliation framework. The intervention is building linkages between civil society, victims and government established reconciliation mechanisms to address human rights violations, provide redress to victims and orient state institutions to advocate for change. In the reporting period 441 victims and survivors were supported and referred to relevant institutions, with 129 victim cases forwarded to the Human Rights Commission, 179 cases filed under the Office on Missing Persons and 133 cases filed under the Right to Information Act. In addition, 169 policemen and 301 state officials were trained on these topics. Further training sessions on basic trauma counselling, befriending and self-care was given to 517 human rights activists including HRFAC Volunteers and CSO members to enable them better address the needs of victim who seek support through the HRFACS.

The objective of the Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka project supported by the US State Department and which NPC implements in partnership with Legal Action Worldwide is to contribute to an effective conflict management process through the provision of tailored technical assistance and capacity building to key institutions and actors using a beneficiary-led approach. A crucial component of this capacity improvement effort has been to train 30 Master Trainers from ten districts across the country with an idea to improve community level understanding on conflict management. The graduation ceremony of the Master Trainers took place at Bandaranayake Memorial International Conference Hall with the participation of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Speaker of Parliament, Karu Jayasuriya, Minister Mahinda Amaraweera and more than 300 community leaders. A book of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on issues of transitional justice was published following a survey of 120 individuals from 10 districts consisting of civil society leaders, military, youth, women and government officers. In the next step of this knowledge transfer process the trained Master Trainers conducted awareness raising activities among 200 other community leaders.

The Religions to Reconcile (R2R) project funded by USAID commenced as a collaborative working partnership between the NPC and Jordanian based Generations for Peace (GFP), an international training organisation to strengthen people-to-people engagement for conflict transformation. Due to the extension of the project in 2018, NPC introduced a set of key new activities in which the participants worked with communities to promote a pluralistic national identity in the country. The project produced a Charter for a Pluralistic Sri Lankan Society with ideas drawn from members of DIRCs and Sub Groups set up under the R2R intervention in 8 districts. The Charter contained 27 recommendations for building a pluralistic Sri Lanka and was presented to Alaina Teplitz, the American Ambassador in Sri Lanka and the Minister of National Integration, Official

Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs Mano Ganesan. The project also carried out 8 training programmes for 426 DIRC members and Peace Delegates and for 564 Sub Group members in the area of preparedness to deal better with violent conflict at community level, should the need arise. This need was especially brought into focus with the Easter Sunday attacks and subsequent events in Sri Lanka that saw local level conflagration based on religious and ethnic hate. In addition, 8 Mitigatory Interventions were carried out including a visit by members of the Mannar DIRC to seven mosques in Karisal, Puthukkudiyiruppu, Erukkalampity, Tharapuram, Moor Street, Uppukulam, and Pettah and the Hindu Temple at Mannar and the Shanthipuram Buddhist Temple as an act of solidarity post Easter Sunday attacks. Galle DIRC members visited the Negombo Katuwapitiya Church which was damaged in the Easter Sunday Attack. DIRC members on their own collected funds and donated it to the church towards victim's welfare.

The Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project received funding support from the UN Peace Building Fund under its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) to promote gender-responsive and inclusive peacebuilding in Sri Lanka by enhancing the positive role that youth can play in the country's post-war peacebuilding. This initiative was designed along with Legal Action Worldwide to mobilise the energies and idealism of youth in 12 universities in favor of a cause that aims to vindicate the rights of victims of the country's protracted ethnic conflict, to bring justice and closure to them, and to lay the foundations for a peaceful and reconciled Sri Lanka. A survey conducted amongst 1100 youth in 21 districts. The survey also captured the views of 400 adults in order to obtain a comparative understanding of the youth's views on reconciliation and peace building. Interviews were conducted in the language of the respondent using a structured questionnaire, and interviews were administered by a group of trained field researchers under the supervision of Dr. Pradeep Peiris and his team. The research aimed to understand the extent to which youth know about transitional justice, issues, concerns, misconceptions and questions related to it. A Youth Peace Champions Event was conducted in which over 200 youth leaders representing universities and districts participated and showcased their creative initiatives on necessity and importance of transitional justice to Sri Lanka.

This annual report sets out the work done by each of the project teams and stories of change that have occurred in individuals and communities as they grappled with issues that have long divided the people of Sri Lanka. We are grateful for the support given to us by our staff, programme advisor, Board of Directors, Governing Council, partner organisations and donors and are happy to note that our collaboration continues through support given to other newer projects that meet the needs of the time. As a peacebuilding organisation that is now in its 25th year we continue to work for the creation of a modern state that incorporates a reconciliation process in which equal citizenship and inclusive development leaves out no section or part of the country. We see an opportunity for a lasting solution to evolve through the process of drafting a new constitution for which the newly elected government has called for public representations. It is our hope, and will be our endeavor, to ensure that pluralistic values are embedded in the new constitution that will have the support of all sections of ethnic and religious communities living in Sri Lanka rather than end up as yet another lost opportunity for the country to make the transition to sustainable peace and development.

Jehan Perera

Executive Director



Projects



Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation (COMPACT)



Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation (COMPACT) project is an ongoing intervention of the National Peace Council aimed at maintaining the space for civil society groups to work on peace and reconciliation and contribute to conflict transformation efforts supported by Misereor and CAFOD. It aims to preserve the political space and continue dialogue on the need for a political solution to the ethnic conflict, that has broad-based acceptance of multi ethnic and multi religious groups and political parties in the country. This is a follow to the three-year project 'Initiating Multi-level Partnership Action for Conflict Transformation (IMPACT)' funded by Misereor and CAFOD.

Through this project, NPC worked with a multitude of sectors to build support for a credible transition process, in order to sustain inter-ethnic/inter-religious platforms for co-existence at the local level, through its network of District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs). The DIRCs expanded their reach through Town Hall-type meetings, cohesion and mitigatory activities and engaging in messaging and counter-messaging campaigns to build a pluralistic society in the country. The project also focused on working with beneficiaries in Tracks 2 and 3 (youth parliamentarians, members of CSOs, religious clergy, women's groups, provincial journalists, government officials, mediation board members, local level professionals, university students and youth), to raise awareness of and build consensus on transitional mechanisms for conflict healing. The project covers 16 districts.

Project Highlights

- ❑ Conducted 45 bi-monthly meetings to discuss current political situation and role of DIRCs in contributing to protect democracy and promote peace and reconciliation . Several discussions were also held on the importance of the 19th Amendment to the constitution. In addition, during these meetings, following discussions were also carried out,
 - Awareness sessions for DIRC members on different religions to increase their understanding of other's religious values and help them strengthen their engagement with different communities and transfer this knowledge to their own communities.
 - DIRC members in Badulla, Monaragala, Rathnapura, Galle, Batticaloa and Kandy visited prominent local religious leaders to seek their help to maintain peace in local communities after the Easter Sunday attacks. DIRC members visited local neighborhoods where Muslims and Christians lived to reassure them and enlisted help of local police to ensure security of all communities.

- Supported several Muslim teachers of St. Anthony's Girls School in Katugastota who were being harassed over their dress -the Abaya- which was considered a threat to students by some parents and members of the public, right after the Easter Sunday attacks. Prior to the attacks, these teachers had worn the Abaya for years without incident. The Kandy DIRC worked with the relevant authorities and also used social media platforms as Facebook to highlight the issue to create awareness on incidents taking place in the country and the need to respect differences that exist in society in order to maintain sustainable peace in the country.
- ❑ NPC together with 112 NGOs and CSOs set up the 'Civil Society Platform' during a meeting of the Civil Society Forum in Colombo. Topics discussed during the forum included civil society and global trends, women's role in the civil society, issues faced by the plantation communities, and the role of media. An executive committee was set up with representatives from different districts. The forum hopes to develop common mandate that all CSOs could follow in order to strengthen their role in the country's peace and reconciliation process.
- ❑ Carried out 2 workshops on applied Non-Violent Communication for selected DIRC members from all 16 districts. The objective of the workshop was to familiarise DIRC members on the basic concepts and tools of NVC to enhance their knowledge and skills for effective engagement with different communities and partners to build co-existence and reconciliation in society. As a result, capacitated DIRC members were able to share this knowledge with their local communities and other associated groups/ organisations they were part of.
- ❑ Representatives from 16 DIRCs including 13 religious leaders and 14 representatives of CBOs participated in a four-day exchange visit to the Eastern province from 3rd to 6th October, 2019. A variety of activities including discussions with religious leaders, media personnel, war victims, farming and fishing communities allowed participants to experience many diverse facets of the Eastern Province and its people. The visitors from the south were able to take home a message that people of the east did not support extremist ideologies and were willing to live in peace as people of one country.
- ❑ An Inter Religious Peace Conference was held on 6th October, 2019 in Kattankudy following the exchange visit to the Eastern Province, with the participation of 122 people. It was the first Inter-Religious Peace Conference was held in Kattankudy. The conference was organised by NPC in collaboration with the Batticaloa DIRC and Kattankudy Jamiyyathul Ulama. Eleven (11) Buddhist monks, 1 Buddhist nun, 4 Hindu Kurukkals, 10 Christian religious leaders and 9 Moulavies from different parts of the country attended representing 16 DIRCs. The total group of 98 religious' leaders at the event included 58 Moulavis from Batticaloa and nearby areas, who attended the conference representing the Kattankudy Jamiyyathul Ulama. A group of 24 members of CBOs representing DIRCs and other organisations from all over the country also attended. Religious leaders discussed about the values in their respective religions that promoted peace and harmony while exchanging experiences on different DIRC best practices from each district. This was the first time that a large number of Buddhist monks had visited Kattankudy and the first time that the Moulavis from the East got the opportunity to interact with other religious leaders. The participants said they were pleased to attend such a conference that promoted peace and harmony among all citizens of Sri Lanka.
- ❑ A progress review meeting was held to discuss the prevailing situation in each district following the Easter Sunday attacks and steps taken by DIRCs across the country to diffuse ethnic tension and prevent a backlash against the Muslim community. After the meeting, a

press conference was held where religious leaders of all faiths urged the presidential candidates to conduct their campaign free of fake news, hate speech and violence. They also urged the public to vote sensibly in order to choose a leader who will be able to lead the country into social and economic prosperity while building on existing peace and reconciliation processes in the country.

- 17 cohesion activities were organised in 16 districts where a large group, including a large number of youth and school children, from different communities got the chance to interact with each other in various solidarity building activities, team building games and events. These cohesion activities provided a platform for different communities to come together and spend time with each other and engage in interactive activities as cooking, cricket, taking part in art competitions, celebrating different religious festivals as Thai Pongal and visiting religious sites including mosques. These cohesion activities included a musical segment by renowned musician and activist Jayathilaka Bandara who showcased that ideas of peace and reconciliation can be projected to an audience through music. The songs helped to change how different communities saw each other.
 - As part of their cohesion activity, the Monaragala DIRC held an event at Mahawelamulla where both Sinhala and Muslim communities have lived for generations. Peaceful relations among these two communities had slowly started to erode overtime and the younger generations no longer seemed to interact with each other. The Easter Sunday attacks resulted in furthering this gap, and the cohesion activity at Mahawelamulla was organised to address this rift. During this activity the Sinhala community got an opportunity to visit the households of their Muslim neighbours and had lunch at their homes. This was significant since after the Easter Sunday attack, Sinhalese avoided eating from Muslim eateries and homes. However, during this activity, religious leaders had their alms at Muslim households and the people followed suit and this helped diminish the mistrust they had against Muslims and re-establish bonds between the two communities.
 - When organising these cohesion activities, local community based organisations and other community groups came together to fund certain expenses in order to make it a success. This showcased the enthusiasm of these groups to engage in an opportunity provided to interact with other communities to understand their different cultural and religious values. This resulted in strengthened bonds and relations.

Story of Impact

One of the main highlights of 2019 was the Exposure Visit organised to the east, that brought together a group of inter-religious leaders and community-based leaders who are also active DIRC members from others parts of Sri Lanka. The visit included a number of activities and discussions that allowed participants to experience real life in the Eastern Province. Discussions with religious leaders, media personnel, war victims, farming and fishing communities allowed participants to experience many diverse facets of the Eastern Province and its people.

An 'Inter Religious Peace Conference' was organised in collaboration with the Kattankudy Jamiyyathul Ulama on the last day of the visit and nearly 60 Moulavis in the Kattankudy area attended. The objective of the conference was to provide a platform for religious leaders and community leaders from all over the country to come together and share their experiences and knowledge to address growing hostility towards people of the east from the rest of the country as a result of the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks. Muslims from the Eastern Province were viewed with contempt as the mastermind behind the terror attacks lived and preached there.

One of the main parts of the conference was a musical session by musician and activist Jayathilaka Bandara, known for projecting the message of peace and harmony through his music. However, some Islamic religious leaders objected to music being played at the conference as it was against their religion and threatened to walk out of the conference if it continued. The musician refused to sing his songs without accompany music. The COMPACT team faced a real dilemma as the musical session was crucial to the success of the conference. If Islamic religious leaders walked out of the conference, the main objective of wanting to create a platform where different groups from all over the country got an opportunity to interact with each other, exchange ideas and experiences to strengthen their understanding of the other fails. The chance for the rest of the community to learn about Muslims living in the east would also fail.



The Kattankudy Jamiyyathul Ulama succeeded in handling this situation and Moulavi Abdul Aleem, member of the Puttalam DIRC, acted as a mediator between the protestors and the organisers to settle the dispute without causing further disagreements between the two parties in a manner that helped ease tension. His work and experience with the DIRC and engagement with other inter religious leaders and communities were instrumental in how he handled the situation. The organisers explained that this musical session was based on the important message on how multi ethnic/ multi religious communities should live in one country despite their differences. They were asked to pay attention to meaning and messages in the songs rather than finding fault with the accompanying music. Members of the Jammaiyathul Ulama, with support from Moulavi Aleem, were able to convince the protesting Islamic religious leaders to stay on.

The musical session turned out to be a success, with all participants, regardless of their differences, enjoying the songs and taking into heart the messages of living in peace and harmony.

The participants from rest of the country were not aware that such a critical situation was taking place in the middle of the conference. When they got to know of the incident the following day, they were amazed at how well the situation was managed and how the Muslim Moulavis' were willing to change their rigid attitudes to be open to new experiences that enabled them to interact with other communities from the country.



The visitors realised that people from the east did not necessarily support extremist ideologies which prompted the Easter Sunday attack, but that they too wanted to live in peace and harmony with other communities and exchange cultural and religious values with others. The participants from the north, south and west took this knowledge back with them to their own communities.

Religions to Reconcile (R2R)

The Religions to Reconcile project funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began in 2016 as a collaborative working partnership between the NPC and Jordanian based Generations for Peace (GFP), an international training organisation specialising in conflict transformation. The engagement with GFP ended in December 2018 with the setting up of the cadre of peace delegates who were specifically trained in conflict transformation through sport and art. The project was extended for an additional 15-month period during which NPC was able to complete some of the activities which were delayed due to acts of political instability that took place in Sri Lanka in late 2018. In addition, a set of key new activities were included into the project keeping within its original intervention target of strengthening community networks mentored by religious leaders and engaging them in building consensus for a Transitional Justice (TJ) process and helping communities evolve a pluralistic national identity in the country.

NPC delivered the new activities together with their partner local civil society organisations, DIRCs, Peace Delegates and Sub Groups, who were all part of the original 26-month first phase.

The people-to-people programme, envisages that community networks mentored by religious leaders are better engaged to build consensus for TJ and a pluralistic identity in the country. The approach is concentrated in its rigorous capacity building of key people across religious (and therefore ethnic) divides, through whom it broadly and sustainably engages other key people as well as more people towards achieving project priorities. Religious leaders have the social legitimacy and moral influence to engage key influencers and grass-roots constituencies to lead social change, while the faiths they practice can promote tolerance and acceptance of pluralistic identities that connect groups through shared values and aspirations across other conflict divides.



NPC identified important activities that needed to be included into the work programmes for DIRCs and Sub Groups in the extension period. These include Preparedness Training which deals with how groups address conflagrations of violence when it has already reached a point of no return. Unlike in the previous intervention where we dealt with addressing issues of violence before they reached the boiling point through Mitigatory Interventions, the incidents in Digana in May 2018 showed that the DIRCs as key influencers in their communities also need to be able to address actual incidents of violence in their localities. It must be noted that all DIRCs established by NPC in 21 districts acted together to address these anti-Muslim riots with one voice.

The activities carried out centered on mitigation, both in the long and short-term, and inclusion of marginalised groups within the ethos of pluralism. The 3 broad areas of continuous engagement were preparedness-training for DIRC and sub-group members and cadre of Peace Delegates for responsive mitigatory action when violence erupts and included a session on messaging to counter divisive misinformation campaigns and rumours giving rise to conflict between religious and ethnic groups, continued intervention to resolve inter-ethnic/ inter religious conflict and to address more long term chronic problems and inclusion for marginalised groups, particularly PWDs. The activity of inclusion for PWDs was carried out in the Puttalam District. The activity enabled their inclusion within the pluralistic framework by providing better access for them. In the Anamaduwa area alone, over 400 differently abled persons are registered through the disability association at the Department Social Services.



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Project Highlights

- ❑ Consulted, researched, collated and produced a Charter for a Pluralistic Sri Lankan Society with ideas drawn from members of DIRCs and Sub Groups set up under the R2R intervention in 8 districts. The Charter contained 27 recommendations for building a pluralistic Sri Lanka and was presented to Her Excellency Alaina Teplitz, the American Ambassador in Sri Lanka and the Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs Hon Mano Ganesan.
- ❑ Carried out the National Inter Religious Symposium of the R2R project in January at the BMICH over 240 religious leaders, community leaders, members of the diplomatic community, USAID Mission staff, GFP representatives, CSO leaders, CSO/CBO partners, media members participating. The group was made of 139 males and 101 female participants.
- ❑ Produced and presented a 20 - minute video documentary titled 'Pluralism in Practice' capturing the essence of the project with messages from multi religious leaders, community leaders, Sub Group members and other key persons on their ideas of pluralism.
- ❑ Carried out 8 training programmes for 426 DIRC members and Peace Delegates (including 244 males and 182 females) and for 564 Sub Group members (including 334 males and 230 females) in the area of preparedness to deal better with violent conflict at community level, should the need arise. This need was especially brought into focus with the Easter Sunday attacks and subsequent events in Sri Lanka that saw local level conflagration based on religious/ ethnic hate.
- ❑ Carried out district-based 2-day trainings on Non-Violent Communication for 278 selected members of DIRCs, Peace Delegates & Sub Groups to enhance their NVC consciousness, communication ability and empathetic engagement. The trained group included 151 male members and 127 female members.
- ❑ Carried out TJ actualization events in the districts and included trainings on TJ for trainee teachers at the College of Education in Nuwara Eliya, for school prefects and teachers in selected schools in Mannar with representation of all ethnic/ religious groups, for students and teachers in Galle and Ampara and a street drama on TJ in Mullaitivu.

- ❑ Carried out meetings with Police Advisory Councils and other community leaders to settle fears of our membership and communities post Easter Sunday attacks. The meetings were successful as Police in some of the districts were already engaged with the NPC through a US State Department funded grant working with Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRCs). Advisory Council members invited the DIRCs to liaise with them in the future regarding project activities. A total of 8 meetings were held with 279 persons including 156 males and 123 females participating.
- ❑ Carried out 8 Mitigatory Interventions and included several danselas or the free distribution of food in the Ampara District, in Gonagolla (Irakkamam Division), Nuwara Eliya and Mullaitivu. In Mullaitivu, the activity was held in front of the General Hospital targeting the public visiting their loved ones and in Nuwara Eliya at the Sri Durga Mahal Hall in Borolanda, targeting devotees attending the Kovil. Members of the Mannar DIRC made solidarity visits to seven mosques in Karisal, Puthukkudiyiruppu, Erukkalampity, Tharapuram, Moor Street, Uppukulam, and Pettah and the Hindu Temple at Mannar and the Shanthipuram Buddhist Temple as an act of solidarity post Easter Sunday attacks. In Kilinochchi, a street drama on the pros and cons of TJ was showcased to a large audience on the Poonakari beach by members of the Mullaitivu DIRC. In Matara, the DIRC carried out a memorialisation event to remember the victims of the Ester Sunday attacks. Galle DIRC members visited the Negombo Katuwapitiya Church which was damaged in the Easter Sunday attack. DIRC members on their own collected funds and donated it to the church towards victim's welfare.

Defining Pluralism

On January 28th, 2019 NPC launched the Charter for a Pluralistic Sri Lankan Society at the National Inter Religious Symposium of the Religions to Reconcile project held at the BMICH. The Charter was handed over to Hon. Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs and US Ambassador Her Excellency Alaina Teplitz by Dr. Jehan Perera, the Executive Director of NPC.

The Charter was the result of consultations carried out from October 2016 to December 2018 with multiple groups in eight districts countrywide. These groups were religious leaders, community leaders including local politicians, media, women, youth and persons with disabilities.

The geographic focus was Galle, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Ampara. The consultations were carried out through a two-tier process – local and national. The contributors, approximately 800 were representative of diverse ethnic, religious, age and interest groups. The consultation was carried out on two themes – factors debilitating meaningful pluralistic coexistence and changes necessary to promote, uphold and nurture pluralism.



The following recommendations were put forward as a result of consultations:

1. Political leaders and State officials have a key role to play in building a pluralistic society in which there is equal voice irrespective of number and in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the sphere of a common citizenship.
2. It is important that the state acts with justice and equity at all times in serving the people.
3. Religious leaders have a key role to play in embedding the concept of pluralism in the larger community. They necessarily need to be trained in the idea of pluralism so that they in turn can share their learning through the lens of social cohesion and religious coexistence.
4. Review existing laws and introduce necessary amendments in alignment with pluralistic values.
5. Minimise regressive provisions in traditional laws, aligning them with accepted fundamental principles, international standards and provisions in the Constitution.
6. All provisions in the Constitution for power sharing should be implemented in full without favour to any particular religion/ community or region.
7. Ensuring equity in the distribution of resources and equality in delivering services – all State services including police, health, education etc.
8. Strengthening Independent Commissions established through the 19th Amendment to the Constitution to ensure that the public sector acts without fear or favour.
9. The State should create sufficient awareness concerning the powers and functions of the Independent Commissions among State officials, the private sector and members of the public to maximise their effectiveness and create the environment necessary for them to function freely.
10. The State should create sufficient awareness on laws and policies that relate to the protection of ethnic identities, diversity and the administration of justice, among State officials, the private sector and members of the public to ensure that fundamental freedoms are upheld.
11. Ensuring there are adequate legal frameworks at district and provincial level to enable the sharing of marine resources, drinking water, and land equitably across populations.
12. All ethnicities should enjoy freedom of expression equally. It is especially important that equal space is ensured in mainstream discourse.
13. Sufficient laws should be introduced to bar hate speech or expression inciting violence against a particular group or community. Article 14(1) (a) of Chapter 3 of the Constitution guarantees the right to free speech and expression. However, if it is to be enjoyed in the intended spirit of the provision, it is necessary for the State to ensure safe space.
14. Punish all politicians, religious leaders or any other groups or individuals inciting religious and/ or ethnic hate, without exception.
15. Legal action against hate speech should be swift and adequate. Social media has become a principal source of information for the public. There is both positive and negative aspects to the role of social media as a primary news and information platform.
16. The State should ensure that all media hold to principles of objectivity in disseminating news and information. The public should also be made aware to consider news and information with sufficient critical evaluation.
17. The State should adopt an effective process to identify and proscribe political parties or organisations that promote divisions along religion or race.

18. Early warning mechanisms should be a necessary element of government and administration to pre-empt possible conflict and to proactively deal with problems. The existing practice of the Sri Lankan State is reactive where action is taken once the problem has grown to the point of tension or conflict. The State leadership, policymakers and State institutions should be trained in the use of the early warning tool.
19. Including pluralism in the school curriculum. It is necessary for Sri Lankans to understand the values that underpin pluralism if it is to consciously take root as an effective response to ethnic divisions.
20. The State should abandon the practice of setting up education institutions on the basis of ethnicity or religion, which vitiates efforts to create a more engaged, cohesive and reconciled society.
21. The State should necessarily educate the public on the values and cultural practices of all communities and the need to respect diversity.
22. Elevating the Police service to be more sensitised and effective in the performance of its duties. The Police force should have sufficient awareness of the cultural practices and sensitivities of the communities that it serves and also the ability to communicate in Sinhala or Tamil, as necessary. The police force should be sufficiently diverse, in its ethnic composition to serve all populations equally.
23. The State should make it compulsory for all Sri Lankan citizens to learn Sinhala and Tamil. It should be ensured that the language skill is of sufficient functionality to serve meaningfully, in the search for pluralistic reconciliation.
24. Recruiting trilingual – Sinhala, Tamil and English, officers to the health sector to ensure an effective service. This falls within the broader category of deficiencies in the implementation of the Official Languages Policy. Part of the action to remedy this would be the recruitment of doctor/ patient-interpreters locally.
25. Adopting special mechanisms to include youth in the country's development process. Youth were the primary victims of the insurgencies of 1971-72, 1987-1990 and the ethnic war from 1980-2009. There is a need to include youth through an equitable process that takes into account education and skills.
26. Affirmative action should be taken in terms of Article 12(4) of Chapter 3 of the Constitution to empower those with special needs. There should be adequate provisions to include matters particular to them in development plans at sub national level – provincial and district.
27. Adequate resources should be provided to enable persons with special needs to fulfill their basic needs. Institutions should be established at district/ provincial level to strengthen education, health and welfare services to these sectors. A special cadre of trained officers should be introduced to support this community.

Establish a Pluralism Commission on the lines of the Independent Commissions, whose members would be appointed by the Constitutional Council, and whose mandate would be aligned to the observations and recommendations sketched out above.

National Inter Religious Symposium promotes Pluralism

Over 200 religious leaders, Community leaders, persons with disabilities, local politicians, women, youth and journalists attended a National Inter Religious Symposium in Colombo under NPC's project, Religions to Reconcile. The symposium was the culmination of a major initiative that saw the launch of a Pluralism Charter embodying the distillation of three years of consultations with multi religious and multi ethnic communities mobilized through work at the ground level.



The Charter called for the establishment of a Pluralism Commission on the lines of other independent state commissions whose members would be appointed by the Constitutional Council, and whose mandate would be aligned to the observations and recommendations contained in the Charter. The Religions to Reconcile project is being implemented in the eight districts of Galle, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Puttalam, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Ampara to reach a wide and diverse audience keeping in line with the people-to-people approach. The project is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is the U.S. Government's development agency, and implemented in partnership with Generations for Peace (GFP), an international peace building organisation based in Amman, Jordan.

The overall goal of the intervention was to strengthen community networks mentored by religious leaders and engage them in building consensus for Transitional Justice and a pluralistic identity. US Ambassador Alaina Teplitz said NPC's efforts to bring together multi religious and multi ethnic communities were vital for building understanding and tolerance and to achieving a peaceful and prosperous future. "As role models for others, I believe your successes encourage people to reflect on their own beliefs and their own actions and their own values, and that this will hopefully lead to an even more peaceful and inclusive Sri Lanka in the future and help stand as a global model for reconciliation," Ms Teplitz said. Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs, Mano Ganesan, stressed that in order for Sri Lanka to prosper, the pluralistic nature of the country must be recognised. While everyone had his or her own identity that should be preserved, a Sri Lankan identity was also necessary, he added. "When extremists from the north and the south speak out, they score marks. They are trying to break the country, we will have to mend it," Mr. Ganesan said. NPC's executive Director Dr Jehan Perera said the project had reached a large number of people who received the message that Sri Lanka was a pluralistic and multi religious country. "However, this does not mean that we have lost our identity. We all have our own religion and culture to be practiced within the rule of law and universally recognised human rights," Dr. Perera said. Sarvodaya Founder Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne advocated a change in the system to build a new nation under a new leadership where everyone had equal rights. "We have to find an alternative economic, political and social system, otherwise we have no future," he asserted. During the symposium representatives from the eight districts covered by the project described how interventions and activities by DIRCs had helped to ease religious and ethnic conflicts in their areas and prevented them from escalating into violence.

Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom (CERF)



The Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom project focuses on promoting ethnic and religious coexistence in selected multi ethnic and multi religious localities. Launched in 2017, with support the US State Department, the initiative is currently in its second phase. The overall goal of the initiative is to improve the general environment for inter-faith and inter-ethnic coexistence in the selected sub-national divisions.

The project is currently implemented across fourteen selected multi ethnic and multi religious Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions in ten districts, namely; Ampara, Batticaloa, Kandy, Kalutara, Kurunegala, Mannar, Matara, Rathnapura, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. These locations were identified as prone to religious violence through an independent research and through other secondary data sources. Through the evidence, it was discovered that communities in these sub-national divisions/ localities have fallen victim to incidents of sporadic communal violence with racist and religious extremist undertones.

The main instruments of this initiative are the Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRCs) which were established in each selected division and is made up of multi religious leaders, Police officers, Grama Niladhari officers, state officers and civil society members selected through interviews and referrals of Divisional Secretaries in their respective localities. The LIRCs act as broad-based platforms that represent all main cross-sections of society. This inclusivity and broad representation are beneficial for committees to device and instigate collective efforts for dispute resolution and prevention and to conduct public engagement initiatives. Each of these committees have thirty-five members. They were capacitated on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding through six thematic two-day training programmes during the initiation period. These trainings were aimed at providing committee members the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to resolve and prevent localised conflicts and to improve inter faith interaction through improving the general environment for religious coexistence in the area. The LIRCs also operate closely with the divisional Community Policing units. Thus, the LIRCs both capacitate and work collaboratively with such units to ensure collective engagement towards improving the local environment for religious coexistence.

The initiative is being carried out under the purview and support of the Local Government Authorities (LGA) and law enforcement bodies of the selected divisions. Thus, providing LIRCs the authority to ensure swift mobilisation and response. This also legitimises the existence of the committees allowing them to operate in an official capacity within the selected sub-national divisions.

Project Highlights

- ❑ 900 state officials at sub national (divisional) level trained in thematic areas including rule of law, religious freedom and pluralism. It is a significant achievement for the NPC in terms of extending the scope of its awareness and training to state officials who deliver on government policy.
- ❑ Through community engagement and advocacy interventions of the LIRCs which includes peace marches, poster campaigns and leaflet campaigns, CERF managed to reach over 4000 community members across the 8 locations selected for the first phase of the project, both bolstering and broadening the national discourse on rule of law, religious freedom and pluralism.
- ❑ More than 500 members of Community Policing Committees were trained in rule of law and religious freedom through project-led training programmes. These Committees are a homegrown mechanism to resolve local level issues and serve as collectives to impart the value of upholding rule of law and as such bear the responsibility of creating a conducive environment for rule of law within their localities.
- ❑ A group of 110 religious leaders are part of the LIRCs as committee members. By bringing them to a common platform, the LIRCs have been successful in furthering the discourse on religious freedom and fostering trust and harmony among them.
- ❑ LIRCs reached 440 multi religious leaders and encouraged them contribute to project efforts - propel the discourse and process of religious freedom and coexistence, especially in times of calamity and turmoil caused by extreme religious factions. Through them, the LIRCs also managed to educate members of their respective constituencies on the importance of coexistence.
- ❑ The LIRC membership is sufficiently broad based to have wide reach. There is an aggregate of 75 representatives of community based organisations and civil society organisations on LIRC platforms across ten districts.



- ❑ 14 meetings enabling engagement with more than 50 national/ sub-national political and religious leaders were conducted in 2019 to create a link between the committees and local level actors in charge of policy development which resulted in committees gaining influential power to persuade such actors to promote religious freedom and rule of law through policies. The meetings were beneficial in bringing together leaders with diverse political views to hold a unified stance on the need for and the value of religious freedom.
- ❑ Eight (8) news items capturing LIRC activities received wide media coverage, both in print and electronic media and helped reach a broader audience. Such publicity was also helpful in establishing the LIRCs as impactful entities in their respective localities which will encourage broader engagement of the public. Such activities were reassuring to the Muslims as it showed that anti Muslim sentiment did not encompass the entire population as sections of the media were portraying.

Story of Impact

As entities established and capacitated to mitigate community level interfaith issues, LIRCs have been proactive in intervening during instances where mediatory initiatives are needed. The Addalachenai LIRC in particular has actively committed in this regard where they carried out mediation sessions to mitigate community level issues on multiple occasions. The Varipattanchenai sign board issue is one such instance where their efforts in conflict mitigation were highlighted.

The issue came to light during a village level development committee meeting in Varipattanchenai. Two committee members (of the Muslim community) suggested the removal of two sign boards located at the Varipattanchenai junction giving directions to pilgrims who travel to Dheegavapi to visit the two main Buddhist temples which hold high historical and religious value to Buddhists. The suggestion led to a heated argument between Sinhala and Muslim participants. Having heard about what happened during the committee meeting, members of the Addalachenai LIRC suggested the need to conduct a mediation session between Sinhala and Muslim community members during their 10th bi-monthly LIRC meeting. As suggested, a mediation session was organised on 17th July 2019 with the participation of Muslim and Sinhala residents of Varipattanchenai. Police officers of the Damana police division and former Officer In Charge of the Damana police station also attended the event. The session was mediated by Mr. Hashim, Chairman of the Dheegavapi mediation board and prominent member of the LIRC. The session was successful in bringing forth insightful details about the issue. After explaining the issue, Muslim participants stated that the objection made should be looked at as personal views of the two committee members who raised the issue and not as an issue brought forward by all Muslims in the Varipattanchenai area. Many stated that the objection is merely a misunderstanding and that they are in favour of keeping the sign boards at the junction. A lengthy discussion took place on evolving relations between Muslims and Sinhalese in the area. Participants from both communities weighed in with examples of instances where the two communities have cooperated and helped each other. The session concluded with Muslim participants led by the moulavi of the village mosque voluntarily agreed to conduct a refreshment stall for the Buddhist pilgrims who visit the temple during the upcoming holiday season.

The event demonstrated the capacity of LIRC members to conduct meaningful interventions for the public. It also showed the committee's ability to bring together two conflicting parties to a common platform and facilitate dialogue. This activity highlighted the impact of collaborative local engagement in creating a society that upholds pluralistic values.

Accountability through Community Engagement and Initiatives for Transition (ACE-IT)

The ACE-IT project works through 11-district based Human Rights First Aid Centres (HRFACs) to support rights protection and utilise new laws and institutions available through the TJ framework. The intervention is building linkages between civil society, victims and government established TJ mechanisms to address human rights violations, provide redress to victims and orient state institutions to advocate for change. It is a 30-month intervention which commenced in February 2018, being implemented in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Mannar, Gampaha, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Badulla and Moneragala. The intervention is carried out in partnership with the Right to Life Human Rights Centre (R2L), an NGO working to protect and promote human rights in Sri Lanka. The project is supported by the European Union under its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights - Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS).

The ACE-IT project has three primary objectives: to mobilise civil society to utilise available mechanisms, new and existing, to hold the state accountable and vindicate the victim rights; to have orient targeted state institutions and actors in ethos for change; and to advocate for continued state action on accountability.



Project activities include working with policewomen attached to Women & Children's Desks at police stations to sensitise them towards victims and self-care methods, educating government sector officers including law enforcement officers on available mechanisms to support human rights, providing legal support for victims seeking right to information and setting up a cadre of befrienders knowledgeable on victim rights and who can support these victims through basic counseling methods.

In addition, NPC carried out three public campaigns with over 1000 participants to commemorate International Day in Support of Victims of Torture in Jaffna and Galle in June and International Human Rights Day in Batticaloa in December. All three events were held with support of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and their associated regional offices. These public events showcased the importance of keeping the public discussion on rights and associated mechanisms alive and ongoing, even during difficult times.

Project Highlights

- ❑ Setting up and/ or maintaining 11 HRFACs to support human rights protection in the districts through a group of 376 HRFAC volunteers, of whom 196 or 52 % are female.
- ❑ Supporting victims/ survivors find redress through the Office on Missing Persons (OMP)/ Right To Information commission etc. In the reporting period 441 victims/ survivors were supported/ referred to relevant institutions, with 129 victim cases forwarded to HRC, 179 cases filed under the OMP, 133 cases filed under the RTI.
- ❑ Carried out 11 trainings/ information sessions on TJ mechanisms, human rights, independent institutions etc. to a varied group including higher level police officers and

state sector officials. A group of 470 members including 169 policemen and 301 state officials trained, and of this group 89 or 19% were female.

- ❑ Carried out a series of district based 3-day training sessions on basic trauma counselling/ befriending and self-care for 517 human rights activists (of whom 293 or 57 % are female) including HRFAC volunteers and CSO members to enable them better address the needs of victim who seek support through the HRFACS.
- ❑ Provided basic training on victim support and self-care methods for 281 policewomen attached to Women & Children's Desks in the 11 project districts enabling them empathise with victims through enhanced skills on active listening etc. This group included 27 Officers In Charge (OIC) of Women and Children's Desks, 15 Sub Inspectors (SI) and 239 Women Police Constables (WPC).
- ❑ Carried out district-based information sessions on leadership building, skills development, process for applying for state benefits (disability benefits) for marginalised community members including Persons with Disabilities. A total 417 marginalised community members, including 343 or 82% women were supported through these sessions.
- ❑ Engaged with 467 key community leaders, of whom 221 or 47% were women, to identify issues related to TJ processes in their districts. The consulted group included multi religious leaders, CBO/ CSO leaders in the districts, and local level politicians.
- ❑ Carried out 2 public campaigns with over 800 participants to commemorate International Day in Support of Victims of Torture in Jaffna and Galle on June 26-27 with the support of the Human Rights Commission (HRC). The commemoration in Jaffna drew nearly 600 participants during two-days of events targeting Jaffna University students, victims/ survivors, human rights activists and community members. Events included a panel discussion with retired High Court Judge Hon. Vignaraja, Mayor of Jaffna Hon. Emmanuel Arnold, T. Kanagaraj - Regional Coordinator of the HRC and OIC of the Jaffna Police Women and Children's Desk Mrs. Sinthubamani. In Galle, nearly 270 human rights defenders and community members attended.
- ❑ International Human Rights Day 2019 was commemorated in Batticaloa on 16 December 2019 with support from the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRC). Over 250 participants took part in a walk for human rights and a session where speakers discussed how rights of all must be protected even during the darkest of times. Speakers included the Bishop of Batticaloa Rt. Rev. Dr. Ponniah Joseph, Batticaloa Regional Coordinator of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, Mr. A. C. S. Azeez, NPC Board Director and former Vice Chancellor of the Eastern University Dr. T. Jayasingham and Honorary Programme Advisor of NPC, Ms. Sumadhu Weerawarne Perera.

Open Society Foundation (OSF) gives supplementary funding to the ACE-IT project to support some of the activities. In the year under consideration, OSF funding enabled the successful implementation of 11 information sessions for government officers including higher level police officers where 470 members including 169 policemen and 301 state officials were capacitated on TJ mechanisms, human rights, independent institutions etc. OSF support also enabled the basic trauma counselling and self-care training for women police officers attached to Women & Children's Desks in Police Stations in the 11 project districts where 281 policewomen received skills as active listening, basic counselling etc. In addition, OSF enabled activities to help victims seek redress through state mechanisms including filing requests before the Right to Information commission and the Office on Missing Persons. OSF support also enabled NPC file 2 legal cases to support human rights protection in Sri Lanka.

Story of Impact

As part of the engagement to orient targeted state institutions and actors in ethos for change, the ACE-IT project provided training on victim support/ basic trauma counselling and self-care for a group of 281 women police officers attached to Women & Children's Desks in Police Stations in the 11 project districts. The full day training was carried out by senior counsellor Sr. Mary Canice Fernando, the Sister Provincial of the Holy Family Congregation and the former Principal of the Holy Family Convent and assisted by a group of assistant counsellors.

The members of these desks are the first responders when female victims come to the police station for help. The trained group included 27 Officers In Charge (OIC) of Women and Children's Desks, 15 Sub Inspectors (SI) and 239 Women Constables (WPC).

The Women and Children's Desks, the unit formerly known as the Children & Women Bureau was established in 1979 to address the need to establish separate victim support units for women and children. Even at present, not every police station in the country has a Women and Children's Desk and where there are Desks, there are many practical issues that affect their ability to function effectively. During the discussion sessions, it was noted that these desks are severely understaffed and after 5.00 pm the desk is managed by any available male officer, most of whom, know little or nothing about victim support. Participants frequented that this training should also be available to senior male and female officers in the force to sensitise them, first towards victims and then towards officers at the desks, because not many understood the need or importance for self-care.

The training covered topics as victim support including speaking to victims with empathy and listening actively, basic trauma counselling to help more complex cases and basic self-care to enable self-help. The National Police Academy coordinated this activity and ensured that the trainings were well attended. As the project could only accommodate 220 trainees or 20 women police officers per district, the Police Academy limited the number to a few police divisions. It must be noted here that each district has several police divisions and not all could be covered because of the limitation in numbers available for trainings.

During the post training discussion and subsequent post training evaluation conducted 6 months after the training to assess the level of use/efficacy of the training, almost all respondent police women requested for additional follow-on trainings. This request was communicated to our donor and we have been instructed to include follow on trainings for police women in the extension request that NPC will submit to extend the project to complete some of the delayed activities.



Quotes from participants:

This training was extremely useful and relevant to our work. However, because of time constraints we could not carry out discussions on all the topics we wanted to address. We are requesting you to extend the time of the training and give additional time for discussions and breakout sessions. A two-day residential training would be ideal for this type of training. - Woman Police Constable B. M. S. K Harankahadeniya, Badulla Police Station

A similar training is essential for all levels of staff who deal with complaints including women members attached to the Women and Children's Desks. Even a 1-2-week training is welcome. Women Police officers have little or no training on psycho social counselling. Graduates with qualifications in psychotherapy/ counselling should be recruited into the police service to assist us. - Inspector H. G. B. Gamage, Officer In Charge, Women and Children's Desk, Wellawaya Police Station (Moneragala District)

This is the best training that I received in my entire career. Language was not an issue at all since it was carried out in both Sinhala and Tamil. A two to three-day residential training especially for new intake of officers would be very welcome. - Woman Police Constable N. Krishnakumari, Batticaloa Police Station

We have learned to listen and empathise better with victims while also maintaining a balance in our own lives. As police officers attached to the desk, we have to guard the identities and protect both women and children victims while providing them with guidance. As a result, the work we do remain hidden and many senior officers and society at large do not see the service we give. - Waruni Bogahawatta, Officer In Charge, Women and Children's Desk, Matara Police Station

As junior police officers, this training was extremely useful and timely. We would really appreciate if you can arrange this training for all new recruits joining the force every year. - Woman Police Constable S. M. Sagarika Kumari, Nuwara Eliya Police Station

We face many challenges when working with victims. A key to being professional during difficult discussions or people is to be calm and maintain your composure. The training helped us polish some of these skills and become more attuned to victim's needs, support them with probable solutions while also maintaining our sanity. - Woman Police Constable J. M. Renuka, Hali Ela Police Station (Badulla District)

We are often under great pressure at work due to staff constraints etc. However, as a result of this training, we will be able to manage our caseload better, approach issues that come our way differently and generally approach our job in a more relaxed way. - Woman Police Constable A. Subashini, Walasmulla Police Station (Hambathota District)

An extremely important training that should be followed up by additional trainings. A two to three days residential training would be ideal to learn this subject. This training should necessarily be given to higher level women police officers in the various police stations. - Woman Police Constable S. Anansiya, Batticaloa Police Station (Batticaloa District)

Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka



Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka is a unique effort led by the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka to create space for young men and women to understand and support the process of transition that Sri Lanka needs. The NPC received funding support from the UN Peace Building Fund under its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) to promote gender-responsive and inclusive peacebuilding in Sri Lanka by enhancing the positive role that youth can play in the country's post-war peacebuilding effort. This initiative designed to mobilise the energies and idealism of youth in favour of a cause that aims to vindicate the rights of victims of the country's protracted ethnic conflict, to bring justice and closure to them, and to lay the foundations for a peaceful and reconciled Sri Lanka. Project was implemented in collaboration with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) in engagement with Harvard International Human Rights Clinic, state universities and grassroots level partners from 21 districts. The project worked in close collaboration with the Secretariat for Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM) under the Prime Minister's office and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to connect with students of the 12 participating universities and policy makers who are leading transitional justice and reconciliation related institutions and initiatives.

A key focus of the project was to improve youth engagement in the transition process, and their evolution as internal mediators within their communities. The project established links between youth and policy makers leading the national Transitional Justice process enabling them to be involved in the discussion on issues related to justice and reconciliation. The project also encouraged young men and women to take ownership of post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Their creativity was harnessed to bring in the different perspectives on transitional justice cutting across ethnic divides. This helped reduce the susceptibility of youth to one-sided nationalist propaganda and activities that continue to impede the country's post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

Over a period of 18 months, the project provided a range of training and mentoring opportunities to over 540 students from 12 universities and another 400 grassroots level youth activists and leaders in 21 districts. The youth were provided with capacity and confidence building to engage in dialogue processes and to connect and consult with their peers and also with policy makers and become internal mediators.

Overall, 1780 youth, including 893 females and 178 victims from war affected families, from across the country are applying their enhanced knowledge and improved capacities to address critical human rights violations and other past abuses, utilising non-violent and effective mechanisms and platforms.

After taking part in project supported knowledge and capacity enhancement workshops, the students conceptualised and conducted follow-up activities in 21 districts, broadening the discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation among their peers. A drama developed by the student group of the Eastern University was staged during a recent freshers' induction program involving over 700 students who came from across Sri Lanka. Another major follow-up activity was the Jaffna University's debate competition, "Do we see the possibility of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka to generate unity among ethnicities?" which was attended by over 2000 students who took part in the university's art week programme. Production of a short film by South Eastern University, an opinion survey video made by University of Kelaniya students, and organisation of a Transitional Justice Day by the University of Ruhuna and one day Transitional Justice campaign by Sabaragamuwa University were among follow-up activities carried out by the participating university students.

Project Highlights

- ❑ Transitional Justice Campaign by Sabaragamuwa University – 45 trained students organised a Transitional Justice Campaign to raise awareness among peers on the importance of Transitional Justice in post conflict peace building. A leaflet distribution campaign and series of pocket discussions on Transitional Justice were hosted in the university premises and were later followed by an evening gathering with fellow students and academics. This gathering in the main university auditorium included a stage play on the importance of institutional reform in reconciliation, quiz competition, art competition and a technical session on Transitional Justice. The campaign reached over 700 students and over 500 students took part in the final event in the evening.
- ❑ Transitional Justice Day by University of Ruhuna – Students who benefitted from the training, hosted a Transitional Justice Day to educate their freshers on the role of university students in building a reconciled Sri Lanka. Over 600 newcomers to the university participated in this event which included a film screening followed by a discussion, stage play on transitional justice and how finding the truth would ensure a positive outcome in the reconciliation process. Also, this event included a technical session on Transitional Justice conducted by a trained student. In the experience and knowledge sharing session, both Sinhala and Tamil speaking students shared their harsh personal experiences of the war. In the feedback session, a majority of students emphasized the need for a continuing Transitional Justice process and the responsibility of academics and students in reconciling Sri Lanka.
- ❑ Youth Peace Champions Event – Selected beneficiaries from universities and districts were invited to Colombo to participate in the closing event of the project. This event was carried out on three days and the first two days included an advanced capacity building session and the third day was for a 'Youth Peace Champions Event' which showed the successes of the project. Over 200 youth leaders representing universities and districts participated in this event and showcased the creative initiatives that they took to raise awareness among youth in the country on the necessity and importance of Transitional Justice. This event was attended by members of civil society organisations, INGOs, ambassadors, activists and academics.
- ❑ Project Survey – The overall purpose of the final evaluation was to assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project, as well as to identify success stories and lessons learned. The survey was conducted amongst 1100 youth in 21 districts. The survey also captured the views of 400 adults in order to obtain a comparative

understanding of their views on reconciliation and peace building. Interviews were conducted in the language of the respondent, using a structured questionnaire, and interviews were administered by a group of trained field researchers under the supervision of Political scientist Dr. Pradeep Peiris and his team. The research aimed to understand the extent to which youth know about TJ, related issues, concerns, misconceptions and questions related to the TJ process. It also gave a platform to discuss issues related to the TJ process that concerned young women in particular and youth's opinions on security, freedom and co-existence and their ideas on post Easter-Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka.

- ❑ Project Reflection Meeting – The event was attended by over 100 youth participants, district level partners and university focal points. On the first day of the event, stakeholders discussed achievements, challenges, lessons learned, suggestions for improvements and new/ innovative project ideas. On the second day, survey findings on Youth's Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions on TJ in Sri Lanka was shared with the participants.

Youth Championing Peace



Young people from 12 universities and 21 districts across the country met in Colombo on 2nd – 4th April 2019 for a three-day Youth Peace Champions Event as the culminating event of the Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long Lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project. The project was funded by the UN Peace Building Fund with support from Legal Action Worldwide and the Harvard Law School. The event showcased creative initiatives used by students to explain the concepts of Transitional Justice (TJ), dispel misconceptions and carry correct messaging to the grassroots.

On day one of the event, team building activities enabled participants to know each other. Last Session of the day was a panel discussion based on the movie “Her. Him. The Other” produced by ONUR (Office for National Unity and Reconciliation). This film stimulates the viewer to question the nationalistic roots of socio-economic and political structures in our society. This film ignites the passion within the viewer enabling him or her to change those ideological postures. It forces

the viewer to think about the futility of war. It persuades the viewer to reflect upon the past history of terror and violence and the need to rebuild a new future. The panel discussion focused on the reconciliation process with special reference to media and the producers of this movie- Ashoka Handagama, Prasanna Vithanage and Vimukthi Jayasundara contributed as panelists.

First session of the second day was reserved for group activities where participants had to discuss the current status of Transitional Justice processes in the country and reconciliation efforts in their respective districts. Also, participants discussed their practical field experiences gained during follow-up activities carried out to educate the community on TJ and reconciliation.

In the moderated panel discussion on “Role of young people in peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka” participants had the opportunity to question officials from the United Nations, the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms, the Office on Missing Persons, the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation and civil society representatives, on the progress and prospects for TJ in the country.

On the second day of the event, students came up with over 100 recommendations on how the government, civil society, the UN, media and victims could contribute towards effective implementation of TJ mechanisms and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Over 200 youth leaders representing universities and districts participated in the closing program- Youth Peace Champions Event- and showcased what type of creative initiatives they used to raise awareness among the younger generation on the necessity and importance of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka. The creative initiatives included using drama, debates, workshops, short films, interviews and surveys.

Speaking at the event NPC’s Executive Director, Dr. Jehan Perera, said that there was a general lack of awareness on TJ and the greatest challenge was to educate the public. “We have to take the difficult message of Transitional Justice, of dealing with our divided past and trying to create a unified future, to the general public” he said.

UN Secretary General’s Envoy for Youth, Ms Jayathma Wickramanayaka, in a video message said it was the younger generation that had to live with the mistakes of their elders. Young people were seen either as perpetrators or victims of violence but they have also positively contributed to preventing violence, building peace and reconciliation. Most young people are natural peacemakers and it is this generation that can bring about change, she pointed out.



Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka



Implemented in collaboration with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) over an eighteen-month period, the overall objective of Technical assistance to justice institutions in Sri Lanka is to contribute to an effective conflict management process through the provision of custom-made technical assistance and capacity building to key institutions and actors using a beneficiary-led approach. A crucial component of this capacity improvement effort has been to train 30 Master Trainers from ten districts with an idea to improve community level understanding on conflict management.

At the second level of implementation, the capacitated Master Trainers carried out awareness raising activities among 200 community leaders by giving them conceptual knowledge on conflict management and its applicability to address issues of Sri Lanka's war-affected families and individuals. Together, these community leaders are expected to reach more than 2500 persons in the ten project districts. The empowerment of Master Trainers, who have been sharing their improved understanding on conflict management concepts with community leaders and representatives has helped NPC to increase the public's understanding of national level conflict management processes in the ten districts.

During these discussions, participants discussed about religious rights of minorities, overcoming prejudices, facilitating dialogue between and among majority and minority communities, gender rights and representation, political will to create a conducive environment for lasting coexistence and how existing struggles for power are detrimental to that. They concluded that creating opportunities for grassroot leadership was important to disseminate understanding on conflict management.

Project Highlights

- ❑ Carried out two training of trainer programs for master trainers on Conflict management.
- ❑ Master trainers conducted 8 awareness programs on conflict management for 480 community leaders including government officers, youth leaders, community policing unit members and CBO leaders.
- ❑ Conducted a championship programme (Master Trainers graduation event) at the Bandaranayake Memorial International Conference Hall with the participation of the Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament, other parliamentarians, veteran artistes and more than 300 community leaders.

- ❑ Updated, produced and disseminated 3500 copies of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) booklet (to update the existing FAQs booklet, over 120 individuals from the ten project districts including civil society leaders, representatives of the military, youth, women and government officers were consulted through a survey).
- ❑ Researched and produced a television documentary titled 'The breath' on conflict analysis.

Story of Impact

A training on conflict management within a pluralistic framework was held at the Garden Beach Hotel in Kalutara for members of community policing units. The key objective of the training was to build the clear understanding of pluralism process within the target group. The training was beneficial in creating a dialogue among participants on an array of prevalent societal and structural issues that need to be addressed. The participants also received understanding on religious freedom, respecting other religious beliefs, opinions and diversity. The participants included the Head Quarters Inspector of the Kalutara Police division and Officers in Charge of several large police divisions in the Kalutara North and South divisions.



The training sessions for police officers were facilitated by Master Trainer Sachith Samuditha who received his training as part of the core idea of project. The first session covered conflict analysis and management. The Master Trainer held the interest of the participants together during a difficult session on pluralism, where some participants initially refused to accept the concept because they saw it as something damaging to Sri Lanka's sovereignty. The participants argued that some of these concepts did not necessarily support peace and shared their experiences in the war and rejected the concept of pluralism.

The Master Trainer was able to engage the participants through discussions including on the war and get their opinions first. He listened to the different ideas of the participants and reiterated on the need to hold people accountable for their actions. He used two actual events from the past related to two different types conflict and discussed how investigations into the crimes were handled and how the perpetrators were punished according to the laws of the country. His point was to show that although the victims were from different ethnic/ religious groups, the law prevailed in the end.

Master Trainer Sachith handled the difficult conversations with patience, using examples and facts. He was able to discuss the topic of cultural diversity, relativism and make participants

understand that pluralism is a fundamental principle of democracy and that we must accept the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions within the same society.

Through the project, NPC was able to use the Master Trainers to train higher level police officers in the Kalutara District. This is an achievement as usually for a training of this nature, professional trainers with experience in dealing with state officers will be used. However, in keeping with the ethos of the project NPC carried out the training with Master Trainers who were just as successful in taking the message to the community.

As result of this training, the Master Trainer was invited by the police to carry out similar programmes in the future, highlighting the success of the programme.

Empowering Community Leaders on Transitional Justice

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stressed the importance of Transitional Justice (TJ) in Sri Lanka's reconciliation process and pointed out that each country had its own unique course to follow. He praised NPC's efforts towards furthering awareness of TJ and added that the government was taking steps to establish an inter faith reconciliation council made up of religious leaders. "We have the strength and you have the strength to do it," Mr. Wickremesinghe said, referring to implementing TJ process in the country. The comments were made during an event to showcase the positive outcomes of NPC's Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions, implemented with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW). Project beneficiaries, including religious leaders and community leaders, from Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Ratnapura, Kalutara, Badulla, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Kandy and Polonnaruwa attended Graduation Event held at the BMICH in Colombo. The Prime Minister added that each community, with its own experiences of war, had its own concerns about the way TJ would affect its interests. He stated that the new situation after Easter Sunday attacks should be approached systematically without leaving room for further extremism to breed.

The objective of the project was to enhance popular understanding and support for TJ concepts and processes in Sri Lanka across all ethnicities and religions through community-based information sessions, material development and dissemination, and other media-driven strategies, in coordination with civil society and government partners. The project capacitated 35 master trainers, who in turn shared the concepts with more than 200 community-based leaders representing a multitude of organisations. Speaker of Parliament Hon. Karu Jayasuriya said that all major political parties should work together to address post war issues without politicising them, so that these problems would not be passed down to the next generation. "While other countries have moved forward, we are lagging behind due to racial and ethnic violence. We all have a responsibility to look past ethnic differences and take the country towards success," he said, while praising NPC's work towards reconciliation in Sri Lanka. NPC Chairman Dr. Joe William pointed out that it would be a mistake to think that past events would not have consequences. "Ethno-religious intolerance, economic hardships, corruption, unemployment and feelings of injustice create conditions for renewed conflict, which could be reignited by even a minor disagreement," he said. Parliamentarian representing the Hambantota District, MP Mahinda Amaraweera, Sarvodaya leader Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, actor Kamal Addararachchi, chairperson of the Rupavahini corporation Inoka Sathyangani and musician Ishaq Baig attended the event. A document collating recommendation made by Master Trainers for the effective implementation of TJ at the grassroots level was handed over to the Prime Minister and the Speaker.

Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE)

The National Peace Council (NPC) continues to function as a key partner with USAID and Global Communities (GC) in the implementation of the SCORE. Its main task is to build a “Cohesive Sri Lankan Identity” through a multi-level intervention with innovative trainings and activities. NPC anticipates the accomplishments of the following results as per its SCORE mandate:

- ❑ Communities engage constructively in reconciliation processes,
- ❑ Citizen-driven initiatives and networks strengthened to promote social cohesion and reconciliation across divided communities, and
- ❑ Improved local and national government institutions and processes promoting social cohesion and reconciliation.

To achieve SCORE’s mandate NPC works to promote a cohesive Sri Lankan identity through governmental and non-governmental initiatives. The project works with communities at the Grama Niladhari division level and facilitates the establishment of inclusive community decision-making platforms to build their conflict mitigation and leadership skills to engage all marginalised groups in their villages to identify and implement complementary peacebuilding and socio-economic projects that address local conflict stressors. Here, Community-based activities support conflict-affected populations to work towards sustainable peace. In this case, SCORE applies its people-to-people (P2P) methodologies to training and mentoring local authorities, CSOs, and community members at the village level to engage in single-identity and cross-identity dialogue to identify and address conflict stressors. Building up from Grama Niladhari Division-level and cluster initiatives, the SCORE (NPC) project works with CSOs to reach scale across Sri Lanka through networking activities that bring the grassroots communities and local government actors together across lines of division to build coalitions for positive change.

To Promote a cohesive Sri Lankan identity, in 2019, SCORE (NPC) project took efforts to increase constructive community engagement in the reconciliation process by conducting programs such as Grama Niladhari level trainings, clustered community cohesion activities. Further, the project carried out trainings to improve the knowledge of local and national government actors on social cohesion and reconciliation and rule of law.

The first phase of the project was implemented in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Monaragala districts. In Jaffna, the project worked in 5 Grama Niladhari Divisions; Illawalei North West, Palali North, Kollankaladdi, Palai Veeman Kamam, Vasavilan East in Thellippalai Divisional Secretariat. In Monaragala, the project worked in Mahagoddayaya, Mahasenpura, Udagama Grama Niladhari Divisions in Buttala Divisional Secretariat and Madurakatiya, Kumbukkana Grama Niladhari Divisions in Monaragala Divisional Secretariat. In Trincomalee, SCORE carried out its activities in Samagipura, Ariyamankeni, Lingapuram, Sumedankarapura, Navakkenikadu Grama Niladhari



Divisions in Seruwila Divisional Secretariat. In Vavuniya, SCORE carried out activities in Paddikudiyiruppu in Vavuniya North Divisional Secretariat, Agbopura, Marudhamadu in Vavuniya South Divisional Secretariat and Neriyaikulam, Udaliyarkulam in Seddikulam Divisional Secretariat.

Project Highlights

- ❑ To create a bridge between the community and SCORE, NPC selected community connectors from the respective GNs. These connectors were selected on the basis of their representation from the state sector, civil society and grassroots level communities. They assisted SCORE in mobilising grassroots communities for social cohesion activities. To orient the newly selected community connectors for field work, a Training for Trainers was held with the participation of 34 such connectors in January 2019 at the Hotel Berjaya, Dehiwala. A new training module was developed with the facilitation of PALTRA (Training consultancy company).
- ❑ SCORE conducted community assessments in all the project districts in the past year. In Jaffna, the assessments were carried out in all five functional Grama Niladhari Divisions; Illawalei North West, Palali North, Kollankaladdi, Palai Veeman Kamam , Vasavilan East in Thellippalai Divisional Secretariat. In Monaragala, assessments were carried out in Mahagodayaya, Mahasenpura, Udagama Grama Niladhari Divisions in Buttala Divisional Secretariat. In Trincomalee, three community assessments were carried out in Samagipura, Ariyamankeni, Navakkenikadu Grama Niladhari Divisions in Seruwila Divisional Secretariat. In Vavuniya, one assessment was carried out in Paddikudiyiruppu in Vavuniya North Divisional Secretariat. Through the assessments, SCORE was able to identify existing and potential conflicts stressors by a situational analysis of the data. Through the assessments the NPC team collected valuable data pertaining to the historical information of the village, geographical setting and demographic profile of the village, religious, social and cultural background, livelihoods and sources of income, environmental conditions, climate change and its impacts, social institutions and social networks, inter-ethnic group interactions, gender dimensions and female participation, how the members of marginalised groups have been treated within the social structure, youth and child participation, and level of education and availability of employment opportunities. These findings were reported in consequent reports.
- ❑ The GN level activities helped to consolidate the cohesion and reconciliation efforts at the community level. In Jaffna, 14 GN activities and one clustered activity were carried out. Development Officers and Grama Niladhari officers played a salient role as “Community Connectors” to identify the most suitable interventions for selected Grama Niladhari (GN) Divisions. In Jaffna, the most notable activities included Non-Violent Communication trainings, school level awareness creation on peacebuilding & effective communication with the participation with teachers, parents and students, fencing activity with the participation of the youth club members and Coexistence Society members, an exchange visit of selected Jaffna-based SCORE beneficiaries to their Monaragala counterparts.
- ❑ In Monaragala, NPC’s SCORE team conducted 2 clustered activities and 10 GN level trainings including commemoration of world book day dialogue on reconciliation through reading, SCORE’s signature “Use of Memory” intervention (which was later adopted as a comprehensive training module), a community exchange program, and ‘Non-violent Communication’ for Maduraketiya GN division etc.
- ❑ In Trincomalee, SCORE carried out 2 clustered activities and 14 GN level activities such as a cultural exchange Program for 50 women in Samagipura and Ariyamankeni, Non Violent

Communication (NVC) Trainings, a program on 'Reconciliation' for school children, Participatory Action for Community Enhancement (PACE) training for Coexistence Society members in Samagipura, and trainings on 'Use of Memory' for Community members of Navakkenikadu GN Division & Sumedankarapura GN Divisions.

- ❑ In Vavuniya, one clustered activity and 3 GN level activities including a street drama on social cohesion and reconciliation were carried out.
- ❑ In addition, and more importantly, as per its other major obligation to enhance the capacities of the central government and local government bodies for reconciliation and social cohesion, SCORE ventured to conduct a series of trainings on “Rule of Law” and “Social Cohesion and Reconciliation” for selected government officers and local government representative in all its phase 1 functional districts. Accordingly, approximately 135 Government Officers and 90 Local Government Authority Representatives were trained in this initiative to engage them in the reconciliation process of their respective regions and aid their regional community platforms for such purposes.



Story of Impact

Navakkenikadu and Sumedankarapura are bordering villages in the Trincomalee district. Sumedankarapura is identified as a primarily Sinhala village while Navakkenikadu is home to 850 Muslim families. Although located next to each other, relations between the two communities had become distressed overtime due to conflicts over resource-use and land-use. One such major conflict stressor concerned the cattle belonging to Navakkenikadu residents grazing without permission on lands belonging to Sumedhankarapura residents. The land dispute concerning Velagm Vehera was another.

SCORE intervention identified this key issue that threatens the coexistence of the two communities and sought to engage key people of the village in dialogue to reflect how they can collectively find a solution to their problems.

NPC conducted a series of dialogues for both communities separately in the months of August and September 2019 followed by a collaborative community dialogue. The collaborative dialogue was held on 7th December 2019 at the Seruwila Divisional Secretariat hall. The program was facilitated by M. J. M. Irfan and Amilanath Wickramaratne.

At the dialogue, Sumedankarapura residents suggested the use of Thonigala and Mangalawewa conserves for grazing purposes. Furthermore, they suggested the sharing of contact details of cow/ goat owners for any emergencies concerning the animals. Also, Navakkenikadu residents concurred to remove the animals from Sumedankarapura lands.

Thereafter both parties discussed collaborative solutions that can benefit both parties. Sumadankarapura residents brought solutions such as building a fence, resolving the issue peacefully by accepting old mistakes, and creating a committee with the representation of both communities. Meanwhile, Navakkenikadu residents agreed to get support from the local government authority and create steps to mitigate the trespass of Sumedhankarapura lands.

The SCORE initiative ended on a positive note and both communities agreed to follow up on the solutions they agreed on during the dialogue. The members in the committee noted that they will inform their communities about the solutions agreed on and how they can support to implement them. Many participants stated that they are happy to be part of dialogue and a process that was both peaceful and effective. In addition, many participants shared their optimism about the meeting of minds that took place during the dialogue.



Civil Peace Service Project



The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a programme aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in crisis zones and conflict regions. For the most part, the CPS funds what is called “personnel cooperation”. This means the contribution of German or international experts to support the partner organisation according to their particular needs. The CPS project is a cooperation between NPC and AGIAMONDO, a German non-governmental organisation. It is funded by the German government. The project focuses on organisational development, knowledge management, and results monitoring.

The first year of the CPS project has shown great results. The CPS worker has fit into the organisational culture of NPC and was able to elicit the staff’s full cooperation without being seen as an outside element. He has been included in all internal discussions of the organisation and taken by staff and management to be a source of support to their initiatives. He has also been given the task of following up on negotiations with donors due to the senior management’s faith in his commitment to the interests of the organisation.

Project Highlights

- ❑ The Administration and Financial Management Manual of the organisation was revised and updated to reflect changing staff and donor requirements. These changes have been vetted by NPC staff in a participatory process, and have subsequently been approved by the Board of Directors. The code of conduct has been updated and a safeguarding policy has been created. Both have been vetted by staff, and were pending approval by the Board in 2019. The complaints policy was drafted and is pending comments by the management, vetting by staff and approval by the Board.
- ❑ A list of present and past projects was drafted and is in the process of being adapted. The coordinated archiving of the documents of current and past projects commenced, and a

common data storage facility is in discussion.

- ❑ Policies related to digital security are being discussed, based on consultancies funded by the US State Department and a short workshop on the same topic by CAFOD. The draft policies will be vetted and then adapted to NPC's needs in a participatory process.
- ❑ The monthly programme meeting of all projects and departments together was continued. A concept for these meetings was prepared, and continually improved upon. Since the meetings used to take longer than planned, it was decided that the CPS worker should facilitate the meetings. This was implemented in the last such meeting, in November. The result was a meeting that covered all items and ended in the allotted time frame.
- ❑ The project meetings were changed from a monthly to a bi-monthly frequency. To increase ownership and decrease management effort on the part of the CPS worker (formal position of the CPS worker in the organisation), it was decided that the project teams should each pick a time and date for the meetings.
- ❑ For the project meetings, results/ minutes are kept, according to a defined template. Results/ minutes from the last programme meeting are shared with all relevant stakeholders.
- ❑ Protocol for posting on Facebook was developed, and a responsible staff member was selected for elaborating Facebook posts from the photos and texts that the projects share. It was decided that at the beginning, the projects should send material for each major activity, and that the outreach indicators on Facebook would be revised at the beginning of 2020.
- ❑ One internal meeting was held on the renovation of NPC's website. It was discussed how to present own materials, weblinks, and external materials on the website. It was decided that both the NPC's Facebook wall and the YouTube account should tie in with the website. A subsequent meeting was held with a website development firm, and rough terms of reference were drafted.
- ❑ A training was planned on digital storytelling, but was then changed to a workshop on the production of short videos for all NPC staff, which was held in November 2019. A further workshop and the accompanied production of videos are proposed for 2020. The purpose is to enable and encourage the projects to regularly produce material for NPC's social media, and to use audio-visual products for monitoring purposes.
- ❑ A list of donors and funding cycles was elaborated and is being fed by the CPS worker. The internal consultation process for project ideas and interventions was improved, in that ad hoc meetings with project staff were included. During the preparation of the project proposal for a project proposal together with Helvetas, there was a targeted focus group discussion with stakeholders from the partner organisations at the district level. However, NPC does not normally have funding for such preparatory events. The CPS worker also supported the drafting of project proposals for international donors. The NPC received several major project approvals and project extensions, and several smaller project proposals were successful during the past year.
- ❑ The CPS worker gave individual support to projects to prepare their reports to donors. The projects also received individual support on monitoring practices, such as baseline studies and questionnaires. The projects also received a workshop on the basics of monitoring, which focused on the monitoring cycle and a general understanding of the logframe concept. One project was supported in the drafting of the terms of reference and of the inception report for the external final evaluation.

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 onto NPC's website. Its Executive Director, Dr. Jehan Perera, contributed a regular column to a national newspaper, which came out of NPC's work and the public discourse at its activities.

Excerpts from selected media releases (all media releases can be accessed on NPC's website www.peace-srilanka.org):

Continuing International Scrutiny Necessary To Ensure Justice For War Victims

In March this year Sri Lanka will report back to the UN Human Rights Council on its implementation of Resolution 30/1 which it co-sponsored in October 2015. This report back will be important as it will determine whether or not international scrutiny of the country on human rights issues will continue or come to an end.

27.01.2019

Political Leaders Need To Respect Independent Institutions

President Maithripala Sirisena and senior members of the opposition including former President Mahinda Rajapaksa have harshly criticised the Constitutional Council and the Human Rights Commission. The National Peace Council is concerned that the unreasonableness of these criticisms erodes the commitment to basic principles of good governance.

20.02.2019

Urgent Tasks After Easter Sunday Bombings

The carnage on Easter Sunday against three Christian churches, three leading hotels and two other locations have killed more than 300 and injured over 500. The scale and coordinated nature of the bomb attacks have been shocking. The National Peace Council condemns these acts of terror which have brought immense suffering to so many of our fellow citizens and also to citizens of foreign countries who were present at the sites that were attacked.

23.04.2019

The Need for A Non Partisan Presidency

Cognisant of the political deadlock within the country, and as a means of ending it, President Maithripala Sirisena has referred to the need to abolish the 19th Amendment to the constitution. This as the landmark legislation that reduced the powers of the presidency and increased the autonomy of state institutions.

18.07.2019

Sri Lanka's Political Future Calls For Cooperation and Collaboration

In his inaugural speech the newly elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa gave an assurance that he will be the president of all, including all ethnicities and religions and those who did not vote for him. The National Peace Council compliments the new president on his positive sentiments and wishes him all success in making them come true. In particular, we will cooperate with his policies to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation as in the past.

27.12.2019

Financial Report



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL OF SRI LANKA (GUARANTEE) LIMITED

Report on the audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying Financial Statements of National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited ('the Organization') which comprise the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2019, and Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Changes in Reserves and Statement of Cash Flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes set out on pages 06 to 20 .

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited as at 31 December 2019, and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Sri Lanka Statement of Recommended Practice for Not-for-Profit Organizations (Including Non-Governmental Organization) (SL SoRP-NPO's [including NGO's]) issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Sri Lanka Auditing Standards (SLAuSs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the Code of Ethics issued by CA Sri Lanka (Code of Ethics) and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code of Ethics. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Board and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Board of Directors ('the Board') is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with Sri Lanka Statement of Recommended Practice for Not-for-Profit Organizations (Including Non-Governmental Organization) (SL SoRP-NPO's [including NGO's]) issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, and for such internal control as Board determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, Board is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless Board either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organization's financial reporting process.

(Contd....2/-)

EY202012303636

Partners: W R H Fernando FCA FCMA R N de Saram ACA FCMA Ms. N A De Silva FCA Ms. Y A De Silva FCA W R H De Silva ACA ACMA W K B S P Fernando FCA FCMA
Ms. K R M Fernando FCA ACMA Ms. L K H L Fonseka FCA A P A Gunasekera FCA FCMA A Herath FCA D K Hulangamuwa FCA FCMA LLB (Lond) H M A Jayasinghe FCA FCMA
Ms. A A Ludowyke FCA FCMA Ms. G G S Manatunga FCA Ms. P V K N Sajeevani FCA N M Sulaiman ACA ACMA B E Wijesuriya FCA FCMA
Principals: G B Goudan ACMA A A J R Perera ACA ACMA T P M Ruberu FCMA FCCA

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Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with SLAuSs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with SLAuSs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



15 December 2020
Colombo

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 December 2019

ASSETS	Note	2019 Rs.	2018 Rs.
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment	4	102,820,709	64,312,163
		<u>102,820,709</u>	<u>64,312,163</u>
Current Assets			
Inventories	5	9,656	15,889
Receivables	6	5,660,180	4,376,831
Cash and Bank Balances	7	64,290,996	67,784,090
		<u>69,960,831</u>	<u>72,176,810</u>
Total Assets		<u>172,781,540</u>	<u>136,488,973</u>
FUNDING & LIABILITIES			
Accumulated Funds			
Restricted Funds	11	38,644,492	42,269,467
Unrestricted Funds	8	3,566,917	9,299,839
Reserve A	9	9,868,489	4,971,962
Reserve B	10	16,094,442	10,635,215
Revaluation Reserves		<u>84,379,680</u>	<u>41,478,396</u>
		<u>152,554,021</u>	<u>108,654,879</u>
Non-Current Liabilities			
Staff Welfare Fund	12	725,852	725,852
Retirement Benefit Liability	13	5,964,100	4,875,050
Non-Current Portion of Interest bearing loans and borrowings	14	402,073	1,367,077
Deferred Liability	15	698,123	903,123
		<u>7,790,148</u>	<u>7,871,102</u>
Current Liabilities			
Income Tax Payable	21	4,530,508	3,889,162
Payables	16	6,941,860	12,889,779
Current Portion of Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14	965,004	965,004
Bank Overdraft	7	-	2,219,047
		<u>12,437,371</u>	<u>19,962,992</u>
Total Funding and Liabilities		<u>172,781,540</u>	<u>136,488,973</u>

These Financial Statements are in compliance with the requirements the of Companies Act No.7 of 2007.


.....
Finance Manager

The Board of Directors is responsible for these Financial Statements. Signed for and on behalf of the Organization by;


.....
Director


.....
Director

The accounting policies and notes on pages 07 through 21 form an integral part of the Financial Statements.

15 December 2020
Colombo



National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 December 2019

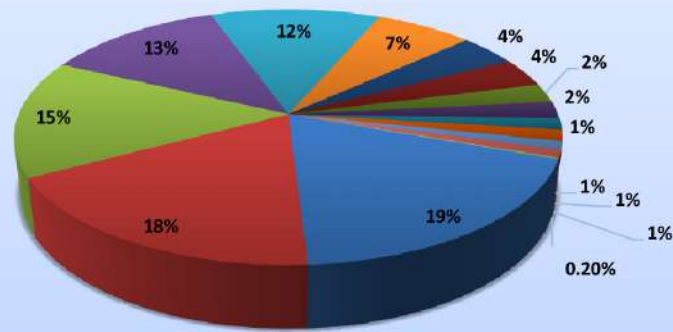
	Note	2019 Rs.	2018 Rs.
Incoming Resources	17	196,595,150	222,032,244
OPERATING EXPENDITURE			
Project Expenses	18.1	(196,595,150)	(221,032,244)
Total Operating Expenditure		<u>(196,595,150)</u>	<u>(221,032,244)</u>
Net Deficit on Operating Activities		-	1,000,000
Revenue Earned from Other Activities	19	11,492,286	6,910,830
Administrative Expenses	18.1	(5,531,885)	(5,157,572)
Finance Cost	20	(487,109)	(436,871)
Net Surplus Before Tax		<u>5,473,292</u>	<u>2,316,387</u>
Income Tax Expenses	21	(850,459)	(2,262,134)
Net Surplus After Tax		<u>4,622,833</u>	<u>54,253</u>
Other Comprehensive Income		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year		<u><u>4,622,833</u></u>	<u><u>54,253</u></u>

The accounting policies and notes on pages 07 through 21 form an integral part of the Financial Statements.



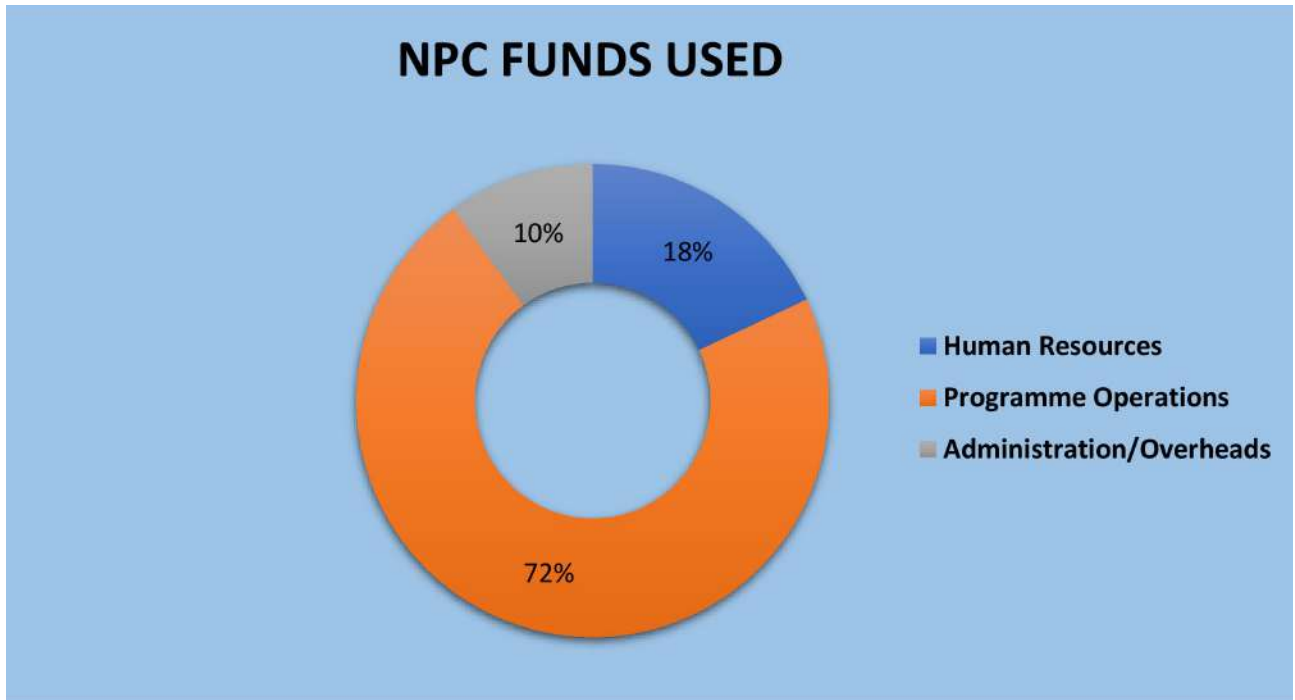
Funding Portfolio

SOURCES OF FUNDING IN 2019



- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- MISEREOR
- Global Communities
- Office for National Unity and Reconciliation
- Open Society Foundation
- Helvetas - Swiss Intercooperation
- The Asia Foundation
- Harrogate, United Kingdom
- US Dept of Health & Human Services
- USAID
- Legal Action Worldwide
- CAFOD
- The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
- AGIAMONDO
- International Organization for Migration

Funds Utilisation



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

Major Donors



Project Partners



Future Directions

Sri Lanka is in a transition phase to more centralized governance. In the aftermath of the presidential and general elections there is the likelihood of a new constitutional framework. An indication of what it might contain is the proposed 20th Amendment to the constitution which seeks to centralize power and to reduce the independence of watchdog institutions of the state. Such centralization of power can be detrimental to the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Strengthening civil society becomes important in this context in which the system of checks and balances gets weakened and the political authority becomes less representative of the plural nature of the polity.

As its way forward, the National Peace Council proposes to engage in education programmes in concepts of pluralism, power sharing and reconciliation as a counterpoise to the prevailing national discourse. NPC has been working with many sectors to build support for a credible transition process, continuing to give a central place to the District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs). New target groups will be added to the existing ones based on NPC's success in implementing its programme of work with them. New groups will include government officials at the district level, religious clergy at the national level, women politicians in local government authorities, youth and civil society networks.

The main feature of the present phase will be the endeavor to mainstream the concepts pluralist coexistence within a rights framework and to take them to a wider constituency. In the past two years NPC has been working in collaboration with government officials and community police at the divisional (sub district) level to protect and preserve inter-religious coexistence and religious freedom. In our work with the divisional secretariats we have found that there is an interest in training of staff on different matters. We hope to expand this training programme to other districts as well building on this experience.

The importance of enhancing peace building skills at the district level has been increased by the government's decision after the recently concluded general elections to establish District Development Committees to be the main vehicle of decentralized development. NPC will seek to establish sub-committees at the sub-district level in potential hotspots to troubleshoot and engage in mitigation activities in which economic activities will serve as a point of connection to build bridges and ease tensions.

Another aspect of NPC's longer-term goal is to expand its role as a key think tank and training organisation. Through its network of over 21 partner organisations spread throughout the country, it has access to information at the community level and has a readymade network that it can harness to better position itself for generating new knowledge. It is necessarily an NPC policy to enhance the substantive capacity of its sub national tier of partners so that there is a constant upgrading of information flow, both top down and bottom up and improved analysis, all of which in turn contribute to fact based and better interventions on the ground.

Project Highlights for 2020 - New Projects

Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism (C-YEP)

Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism (C-YEP) is a project supported by GIZ and implemented in Jaffna, Eastern, Ruhuna and Sabaragamuwa Universities. This project capacitates selected University students to raise awareness and positively influence the public discourse on pluralism and inter-community relations in order to strengthen the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. This initiative engages University students and academics by making them aware of pluralism and inter-community relations, and by increasing their skills for publicly addressing these issues. The students will be provided opportunities to design and implement their own actualisation tools, such as debating championships, art competitions, folklore events, or similar.

Project Highlights

- ❑ National Level Training for University Academics on Pluralism and Peacebuilding - Due to the pandemic situation in the country and restrictions on gatherings of people, C-YEP conducted a national level online training for university lecturers from 29th June – 6th July 2020 with support from local and international experts on peace building etc. Some of the topics discussed included, The Three Big Problems of Power-sharing with Reflections on Sri Lanka by Prof. Donald Horowitz from the Duke Law School and Duke University, USA, Mapping Opposing Infrastructures to Peace - A Comparative Perspective by Prof. Oliver Richmond of the University of Manchester, United Kingdom, Nationalism, Populism, Majoritarianism and Pluralism with Reference to the US and Sri Lanka by Prof. Neil Devotta of the Wake Forest University, USA, International Human Rights Debate and The National Dimension by Prof. Vasuki Nesiah of the New York University, USA, Memorialisation, Gender and Ethics by Dr. Malathi de Alwis of the Faculty of Graduate studies, University of Colombo and Peacebuilding and Pluralism in the Sri Lankan Context by Dr. Jehan Perera, the Executive Director of the NPC.
- ❑ Local and international experts made presentations on relevant topics and engaged in an interactive discussion with course participants. C-YEP opened this opportunity for 20 academics from the universities where the project is being implemented. At the completion of the course, course participants are required to carry out follow-on activities including incorporating these topics in their lectures, motivating students to engage in research, blogging, utilising the learnings in their academic researches and supporting C-YEP project in respective universities.
- ❑ Preparatory visits to universities - A series of field visits were undertaken to Ruhuna, Eastern, Jaffna and Sabaragamuwa Universities from 11th-14th August 2020. The purpose of these visits was to introduce the project to university leadership and university coordinators. In the main discussion, C-YEP team discussed key activities and outputs of the project. This opportunity led to a reflective discussion regarding the national level online training on pluralism and peace building. During these discussions, as an academic contribution to the project university academics suggested a collaborative research on relevant terminologies and their impact on peace building initiatives carried out at grassroot level.

Preventing Violent Extremism by Capacitating CSOs (PVE)

CSO PVE Capacity Building in Bangladesh & Sri Lanka is a multi-country civil society initiative implemented in Sri Lanka by the National Peace Council with support from Helvetas Sri Lanka and funding from the European Union (EU).

The intervention is part of EU's support to civil society actors in promoting confidence-building and preventing radicalisation in South Asia. The intervention is implemented across six districts in Vavuniya and Mannar in the North, Ampara and Batticaloa in the East, Kandy in the Central region and Kurunagela in the North West. In each of the districts, project activities will include working with specific divisional secretariat divisions for some of the activities to be carried out jointly with state sector service delivery institutions and the police. The basic idea of the intervention is to provide capacity building on practical Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) methods to CSOs in the working districts and build a resource pool of PVE experts from the districts contributing to a wider national resource pool.

Project Highlights

- ❑ Identified 6 lead partners with experience in similar work, especially working with district/divisional level state institutions and other stakeholders in their localities, to assist in the implementation of project activities in the districts.
- ❑ Identified and shortlisted 33 community-based organisations (CBOs)/ civil society organisations (CSOs) from the project districts with experience in similar work and ability to reach targeted communities, to become repositories of PVE knowledge in the districts.
- ❑ Carried out district-based meetings with 55 identified CBO/CSO members to gain knowledge and insights on their views on the current situation in the districts and their understanding of VE and its many facets, identify issues related to VE etc. from different localities.
- ❑ Successfully completed district/ divisional level meetings with 29 state sector sub national service delivery institution members including district secretaries, divisional secretaries, NGO coordinators and other staff.
- ❑ Completed staff/ partner Capacity Building workshop in Colombo with the participation of 10 NPC staff and 12 lead CSO Partners/ Local Inter Religious Committee (LIRC) Coordinators at Hotel Renuka.
- ❑ Successfully presented an upto date review of available PVE mechanisms from around world and contextually apply it to the Sri Lankan context at the Capacity Building workshop in Colombo (at Hotel Renuka).
- ❑ Carried out multi lingual (Sinhala and Tamil) information session on PVE for lead local partners and LIRC Coordinators in Colombo (NPC Board Room) and discuss specific issues from their localities in relation to PVE.

Language to Reconcile (L2R)

Language to Reconcile (L2R) project is part of several language related initiatives implemented in Sri Lanka by the National Language Equality Promotion Project (NLEAP) with funding from the Government of Canada. The Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Government is a key partner in the project.

The primary objectives of the initiative are to mobilise established civil society organisations (CSO) platforms/ forums to vindicate language rights in Sri Lanka and to improve inter-ethnic engagement through language learning. The one-year engagement will benefit members of NPC mentored Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRCs), coexistence societies/ committees and community police sub-committees. The project will be implemented in the Akurana Divisional secretariat (DS) in Kandy, Beruwala DS in Kalutara and Trinco Town DS in Trincomalee. NPC is working with 3 local community based organisations in each of the localities to implement activities.

Project Highlights

- ❑ NPC joined NLEAP coordinating and networking sessions at Kandy, Trincomalee and Colombo.
- ❑ NPC met with divisional secretariats (DS) of Akurana, Trincomalee and Beruwala to discuss project implementation.
- ❑ The District Secretaries of Akurana and Beruwala expressed their interest to participate in the Tamil language learning course.
- ❑ Carried out initial project implementation meetings with local CSOs.

Project Highlights for 2020 - Existing Projects

COMPACT - Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation

- ❑ 13 cohesion activities were organised in 11 districts where a large number of community members including youth and school children from different communities were able to interact with each other through solidarity building activities, team building games and events. These cohesion activities provided a platform for different communities to come together and spend time with each other engaged in interactive activities as cooking, cricket, taking part in art competitions, celebrating each other's religious/ cultural festivals and visiting places of worship.
- ❑ As part of efforts to support communities affected by the lockdown experienced as results of the Covid 19 pandemic, starting in March, the COMPACT team carried out relief distribution activities for selected low-income earning families from 16 districts. These families, 50 in each of the districts, were selected with recommendations from the relevant Grama Niladari officer and officers at the Divisional Secretariat. These selected low-income families received a dry rations pack worth Rs. 2000 that had necessary items to feed them for 2 weeks.
- ❑ Organised the distribution of dry rations to children's homes, elders' homes and homes for differently abled persons, severely affected as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and resultant lockdown that lasted over 2 months. This activity was carried out in selected institutions located in 16 project districts. The Canadian Government through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) provided funding for this activity.
- ❑ Carried out 19 Civil Society Platform meetings and reached over 1770 community members who gathered to discuss the political situation, importance of protecting the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, strengthening and maintaining independent commissions to ensure democracy etc.
- ❑ Carried out district level media briefings jointly with District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) and CSOs to promote a general election free of hate speech and fake news in order to protect democracy and strengthen ongoing peace and reconciliation processes in the country.
- ❑ 60 bi-monthly DIRC meetings were carried out in all 16 districts and this included 16 Need Assessment meetings that were conducted to assess community needs on the ground and plan for the next phase of the COMPACT project. These meetings included the participation of many multi ethnic/ religious members of DIRCs. While focusing on the core purposes of building peace and reconciliation, DIRC members also pointed out the need to resolve economic hardships faced by the community.
- ❑ A workshop on Reconciliation and National Integration within a Pluralistic Framework was held for higher-level government officials attached to sub national state sector service delivery institutions in the Kegalle District. Thirty-six government officials including the District Secretary (Government Agent) of Kegalle and 8 Divisional Secretaries (Assistant Government Agents) were among the participants. This workshop was organised by NPC on the request of the Kegalle District Secretary and Kegalle DIRC. Topics discussed included how to analyse conflict, reconciliation mechanisms and law and order.

R2R - Religions to Reconcile

- ❑ Carried out 8 district-based counter messaging campaigns to dispel localised rumours and misinformation and included activities as a media conference targeting hate speech in Ampara, media conference and handing over petition for ethnic/ religious harmony in the district, media conference and sticker campaign requesting communities to refrain from acts of hate speech in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, media conference and distribution of handbills in Matara, Galle and Nuwara Eliya. Over 7500 handbills were printed and shared and over 10,000 persons were reached through subsequent media coverage via electronic and print media.
- ❑ Carried out a 2-day national level follow-on training on applied conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis for 36 selected members of DIRC & Sub Groups from 8 project districts. This group included 21 male members and 15 female members.
- ❑ Carried out CSO Partner led long term mitigation/ inclusion within TJ framework activities in Mannar, Ampara and Puttalam districts. In Mannar, our local partner Mannar Association for Relief and Rehabilitation (MARR) worked with 3 zonal education directors in Mannar, Musali and Madu on countering the effects of drug addiction that is affecting long term reconciliation between different communities in the area through capacitating over 300 ordinary and advanced level school children. In Ampara, our local partner Social Organisations Networking for Development (SOND) led the activity centered on information sharing on the effects of drug addiction on youth affecting ethnic harmony in the district. Over 200 youth from Muslim schools in Addalachchanai and 100 Sinhala youth in Dhamma schools in the Dheegavapi area were capacitated through this effort. Resource persons included officers of the Police Narcotics division and Excise Department and medical doctors specialising in treating addiction. In both districts, the activity was conceptualised with active participation of our DIRC members led by NPCs multi religious leaders, members of Sub Groups specifically from the youth and women groups and the zonal education directors.
- ❑ In Puttalam our local partner Women Organisation for Development, Equality, Peace and Temperance (WODEPT) worked with the People With Disabilities Sub Group and Puttalam DIRC based in Anamaduwa to build/ renovate access ways to enable PWDs receive state services better. The PWD Sub Group presented compelling evidence to show that lack of access for PWDs in the district barred them from meaningfully engaging in activities that enabled their inclusion within a pluralistic society. As a result, 9 access ways were built, including at the Anamaduwa Police Station, Samurdhi Bank and Samurdhi Office, Anamaduwa Public Bus Stand and two community halls (Praja Shala) and the Maternity Clinic located within.
- ❑ As part of Covid 19 related activities to support beneficiary communities, 40 families per district received a support package through the NPC. Beneficiaries included members of the PWDs Sub Group and women headed households in the districts. In total 287 families in 7 districts, 3 orphanages with 175 children and 1 old people's home with 30 persons were supported through the R2R network.

CERF - Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom

- ❑ There have been multiple requests from state authorities such as regional Disaster Management Units established under the Ministry of Disaster Management, and state universities, namely the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, to engage their staff in committee activities. This is significant in two ways. i.e., these staff members contribute to broaden the effectiveness of committee activities. Also, providing them with training programs on NVC and pluralism will enable them to make more meaningful efforts in promoting coexistence in their localities.
- ❑ LIRC activities have received significant coverage from both regional and national level media during 2020. Six (6) activities conducted by LIRCs across the ten districts received significant media coverage from both print and electronic media highlighting the relevance and importance initiatives.
- ❑ Through activities and interventions, LIRCs managed to reach a broad audience, encouraging them to actively contribute towards propelling the discourse on coexistence and religious freedom. Committee activities including social cohesion interventions, advocacy programmes and trainings succeeded in reaching more than 7000 individuals including nearly 150 state officials, both at the national and sub-national levels and more than 100 religious leaders.
- ❑ Committee activities were widely circulated within social media platforms as well broadening public reach of the project, especially among youth who are an important part of the demographic and a catalyst for social change.
- ❑ One of the objectives of LIRCs is to interlink community members and state officials through which both parties could be brought into a more inclusive dialogue on religious freedom and religious harmony. To that end, it is imperative that the LIRCs gain the trust and confidence of state officers who engage in regional governance. The relationship and cooperation demonstrated between the two parties during the Covid 19 outbreak is a solid example. Both parties sought the assistance of each other and entrusted each other when carrying out relief work in the respective divisions. The work of the LIRCs were appreciated especially by relevant Divisional Secretaries of for their efforts both inside and outside the committee.
- ❑ In locations as Negombo, Addalachenai and Beruwala, LIRC members were allowed to use the LIRC committee identity card as a curfew pass when engaging in community relief activities whereas other citizens were required to obtain a certificate from the divisional police station. This shows goodwill between the committees and regional administration bodies and highlights trust that regional administration has placed in LIRCs as institutions.
- ❑ Worked with relevant divisional and district secretariats to distribute Covid 19 related aid through the LIRCs. Over 2450 families and 48 institutions including children's homes, elder's homes and religious establishments received support.

ACE-IT - Accountability through Community Engagement and Initiatives for Transition

- ❑ Published the Thulawa newspaper with stories capturing accountability related issues excluded from mainstream coverage. Five editions published and over 8,000 copies printed and shared.
- ❑ Completed 10 district-based information sessions on leadership building, skills development, process for applying for state benefits (disability benefits) for marginalised community members including Persons with Disabilities. A total 516 marginalised community members, including 413 or 80% women were supported through these sessions.
- ❑ Provided Covid 19 related support to 1100 beneficiary families including Families of Missing registered under the Office on Missing Persons through the HRFACs, Persons With Disabilities (PWD) and members of Female Headed Households who are part of the Marginalised Communities network of the HRFACs, selected vulnerable HRFAC volunteers who are also human rights defenders and other marginalised persons during two rounds of support in April and July.
- ❑ The Batticaloa HRFAC and local partner Caritas EHED together with NPC hosted EU Ambassador Denis Chaibi during his visit to the Eastern Province to assess progress of EU supported interventions in the province and carry out discussions on the overall situation on ground.

SCORE - Social Cohesion and Reconciliation

- ❑ A module on “Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy” was produced as a tool to empower village-level community platforms. This document was developed by an experienced external consultant who worked closely with the SCORE team and NPC.
- ❑ Carried out a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop to familiarize 22 associates of SCORE’s partner organizations in Mullaitivu, Monaragala, Vavuniya, Ampara and Batticaloa on “Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy” module. The training was carried out by experienced facilitators Gayathri Gamage and Imran Nafeer.
- ❑ ‘Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy’ trainings were carried out in Maduraketiya, Monaragala in August with the participation of 24 community members and in Mulliyaweli, Mullaitivu for 32 Co-Existence society members. Two further training were carried out in late August in Vavuniya for 34 Co-Existence society members in Agbopura and Maruthamadu Grama Nuladhari divisions and for community members in Lingapuram, Trincomalee.
- ❑ A training on “Business Leadership Through Co-Existence” was conducted in Monaragala for 38 members of the Yashoda Women’s organization. The training contributed to enhance leadership skills of women who are involved in joint ventures in a multi-cultural society.

LAW - Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka

- ❑ Conducted 26 awareness programmes on conflict management in 10 districts for youth, women community leaders, government officers, religious leaders and local level politicians.

CPS - Civil Peace Service Project

- ❑ Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the CPS worker returned to Germany in March 2020. Working from home, the CPS worker continued the individual support to projects as far as possible. For instance, the project “Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism” was supported in their elaboration of the monitoring plan and the elaboration of their Pluralism and Skill Building activity modules.
- ❑ The changes to the Administration and Financial Manual that the CPS project contributed to, were finalised and approved by the Board of NPC. The policies were already useful in new project applications.
- ❑ A new Toyota van was purchased for use at NPC, financed through the CPS project.



National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

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