

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



ANNUAL REPORT

2020



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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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Programme Advisor

Ms. Sumadhu Weerawarne Perera

Staff Members

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Mr. Robinson Thevasagayam	Manager Finance
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Ms. Venuri De Silva	Project Manager
Mr. Nishantha Kumara	Project Manager
Mr. W. M. D. L. Fernando	Project Manager
Mr. Vijayanthan Thusandra	Project Manager (Until June)
Ms. Rasika Seneviratne	Assistant Project Manager
Mr. Samsudeen Safi Nayaj	Project Coordinator
Mr. Nagaratnam Vijayakantan	Project Coordinator
Ms. Niroscha Anthony	Project Coordinator
Mr. Nuwan Pradeep Subasinghe	Project Coordinator (Joined October)
Mr. A. K. S. M. Yushri	Assistant Project Coordinator (From October 2020)
Ms. Yashoda Piyumali	Assistant Project Coordinator (From October 2020)
Mr. Shantha D. Pathirana	Senior Project Officer
Mr. Uwais Mohamed	Senior Project Officer
Ms. Saummya Amarasinghe	Senior Project Officer (Until January)
Ms. Kaushalya Weerakoon	Senior Project Officer
Mr. G. Wotkinson	Senior Project Officer
Mr. Lakshan Perera	Senior Project Officer (Joined January)
Mr. Sanka Galagoda	M & E Officer
Ms. L. W. N. Vishaka	M&E Officer
Ms. Gayathri Sebaratnam	Assistant M & E officer
Ms. W. A. D. T. Dilrukshi	Accounts Officer
Mr. Maduranga Dias	Accounts Officer
Ms. Gayathri Selvagumar	Accounts Officer
Ms. Ashoka Kumari Weerasinghe	Accounts Officer (Joined October)
Mr. Anton Medosan Perera	Project Officer
Ms. Ayesha Jayawardhana	Project Officer
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Ms. P. M. M. S. H. Pathiraja	Project Officer
Mr. S. Kamaladasan	Project Officer (Joined February)
Ms. Charuni Ruwanari	Project Officer (Joined March)
Ms. Wathsala Samarasinghe	Project Officer (Joined May)
Ms. Anojitha Sivaskaran	Project Officer (Joined August)
Ms. H. M. G. P. K. Herath	Project Officer (Joined August)
Ms. Shanthakumar Janani Saranya	Admin Officer (Joined February)
Mr. Priyanga Jayamanne	Project Officer (Joined November)
Mr. Sumudu Jayasooriya	Administration Associate
Mr. S. Meril Karunajeewa	Administration Associate
Mr. Sarath Karunarathne	Administration Associate (Joined October)
Ms. Asenika Madurangani	Office Aid

Chairperson's Message

2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the National Peace Council, which has throughout its history been deeply involved in work to build, sustain and protect inter-communal harmony in Sri Lanka. Our 2020 Annual Report highlights numerous activities carried out by NPC, both individually and collectively with our network and partner organisations, to increase the scope and reach of our message of peace building. An analysis of our activities contained in our report reveals our commitment to mobilizing civil society groups towards adopting non-violent strategies for peace and reconciliation, social cohesion and pluralism, among others.

Even though the violent and prolonged armed conflict ended in 2009, ethno-religious tensions persist and threaten relative peace in the country. The 2019 Easter bombings that killed more than 250 persons in churches and hotels brought an end to the ten year period of freedom from terror that Sri Lanka enjoyed. After going through a variety of experiences during 2019, the year 2020 was welcomed by Sri Lankans expecting progressive milestones to be achieved in all spheres of development. However, this optimism was short lived as COVID-19 started to conquer the world, including Sri Lanka. It did not take long to realize that the post-COVID world will be a very different one that compelled us to move from physical to virtual contact with our partners. The lesson of the coronavirus was that none of us can be secure if all of us are not secure by practicing the Golden Rule, the timeless guideline which holds more value now.

We continue to believe that real peace in Sri Lanka should mean more than the absence of open warfare. We believe in helping to create a social order governed by the ideals of participatory democracy, devolution of power and resources, upholding of human rights, satisfaction of basic human needs and dignity, nurturance of a healthy environment, and tolerance of cultural, religious, and linguistic differences.

We have remained faithful to our mission to build a strong foundation among communities towards a non-violent attitudinal and behavioral transformation for a just and sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. This achievement would not have been possible without the support of our Board of Directors, members of our Governing Council and staff both past and present, for whom I express my sincere gratitude.

In conclusion, on behalf of NPC, I wish to reiterate the position that we have always upheld. Lasting peace can be realized only through a negotiated political solution which recognizes human dignity and equality ensuring the legitimate rights and aspirations of all citizens of Sri Lanka. I would also like to conclude by quoting from my concluding remarks at the inauguration of the National Peace Council on February 6, 1995.

“We believe that the cycle of violence which strikes down the best among our youth can only be broken by peace that envelopes justice, love, solidarity and equality. To such a peace we commit ourselves as members of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka.”

Joe William, PhD
Chairperson

General Secretary's Message

Our country is presently facing an enormous economic crisis due to inherited problems that span the decades. The Covid pandemic which has affected the entire planet had made it much harder to resolve the problems within Sri Lanka due to the economic problems that Covid has caused in other parts of the world. The present government was elected with much enthusiasm and positive expectations by the majority of the people. But this was before Covid pandemic turned our world upside down. We need to be careful that the present improvement in the Covid situation does not beguile us into thinking we have finally overcome.

In this situation I am pleased to observe that the National Peace Council has been working with much diligence and very creative initiatives to take messages to sections of the population that the government is unable to reach. A recent project on pluralism that was carried out with the participation of the faculty members and students of four universities has been a rewarding period for us. We see a younger generation ready to take up the reins of building peace, which is going to be a perennial need in a plural, multi ethnic and multi religious society, in which some problems are not discussed aloud.

Among the government's pledges in regard to governance, the promise of a new constitution takes a special place. As the supreme law of the land, the constitution can set the tone and provide the structures that can lead to improved decision making. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic has had far reaching consequences and made it difficult for the committee tasked for the purpose of proposing the draft constitution to engage with the general population to the extent envisaged. The inability to change the supreme law must not, however, lead to any further delays in holding the provincial council elections.

The provincial councils are devolved bodies that bring decision making power closer to the people and also enable power sharing between the ethnic and religious majority and the minorities. This is something that NPC has stood for since its inception in 1995. I am therefore very pleased that several members of the board of directors and governing council are engaging with the government through a newly formed alliance, called the Sri Lankan Collective for Consensus to promote better respect for human rights and a political solution to the long festering ethnic conflict. I wish this process ends up in the success that all Sri Lankans would want, which is economic and political justice that brings material and psychological satisfaction to the people.

G. V. D. Tilakasiri

Hony. General Secretary

Executive Director's Report

Activities organised by NPC in 2020 stressed the importance of values of human rights, pluralism, 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. NPC consolidated its work at the community level with its traditional CSO partners but also with newer groups such as university students and state officers.

The year began with issues of national security and protection of the country's sovereignty in the aftermath of the Easter bombings taking prominence. The November 2019 presidential election, at which these issues had been canvassed, provided an opportunity for NPC to engage in community education on values that needed to be included in the governance structures. The President's election manifesto titled "Visions of Prosperity and Splendour" gives first priority to national security.

The government's priority since taking office has been to centralize power and ensure that obstacles to centralization, including devolution of power and institutional checks and balances, do not impede centralized decision making. One of the first major political initiatives of the government after the general elections of August 2020 was to pass the 20th Amendment to the Constitution which increased the power of the presidency at the expense of other state institutions.

This centralisation of power is at variance with the plural nature of Sri Lankan society. The need for the sharing of power is particularly strong in Sri Lanka where there are different interest and identity groups which need to be represented in decision making. Furthermore, the representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the government, among the Ministers and Ministry Secretaries needs improvement. This has induced NPC to focus on the need to promote an inclusive approach to foster national reconciliation.

NPC is one of the most successful NGOs in terms of getting its message through the mass media. It has consistently raised the profile of issues it focuses on through newspaper columns, media releases, newsletters- Paths to Peace (e-newsletter) and Thulawa, news stories and documentaries. There were 54 newspaper columns, 14 media releases, 12 newsletters and many news stories in 2020. Additionally, through different projects, NPC continues to disseminate information via leaflets, handouts and posters. NPC is also in the process of developing short video documentaries highlighting its interventions.

The Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation (COMPACT) project continues to give a central place to the District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) in 16 districts namely Anuradhapura, Badulla, Batticaloa, Galle, Hambantota, Jaffna, Kandy, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Matara, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam, Ratnapura & Vavuniya. Key achievements were the organising of 13 cohesion activities in 11 districts where community members including youth and school children, from different ethnic-religious communities were given the opportunity to interact with each other in various solidarity and team building events which included food festivals, sport and art competitions, religious festivals, visits to religious venues musical events conducted by prominent artists. These cohesion activities provided a platform for interaction and helped in creating a space for empathy building.

During the countrywide curfew that was imposed from March 2020, the project team carried out relief donation distribution to selected low-income families who were struggling to meet their daily needs due to adverse economic conditions. A total of 50 affected families were selected from 16 districts where DIRCs operate, with the help of the relevant Grama Niladari and Divisional Secretariat officers. These selected low-income families received a dry rations pack worth Rs. 2000 rupees. The team organised the supply and distribution of dry food rations to Children's homes, elders' homes and homes for the differently abled which were severely affected as a result of the curfew that was imposed by the Government because of the 1st wave of Covid-19 infections.

Much of the Funds were provided by the Canadian Government through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). An important event was the hybrid virtual symposium to celebrate NPC's 25th anniversary on the 1st of December 2020 with the participation of more than 500 attendees which included Inter-religious leaders and Civil Society Activists from all over the country. Mr. David McKinnon, the Canadian High Commissioner and representatives from the two donor organisations, CAFOD and MISEREOR that supports the project were also present at the event.

The Accountability through Community Engagement and Initiatives for Transition (ACE-IT) project, supported by the European Union (EU) under its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights - Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) completed its 35-month project implementation period in 2020. Through the project interventions the ace ACE-IT project supported the activities of 11 Human Rights First Aid Centres (HRFACs) including 5 new centres and 6 existing centres through which 376 HRFAC volunteers were trained to support victims in 11 districts including 180 male and 196 female volunteers and 180 volunteers trained on basic human rights mechanisms in 6 additional areas during project extension period. 517 HRFAC desk volunteers and selected members of CSOs/ CBOs in the areas trained as befrienders to support psycho social wellbeing of victims/ survivors (224 male/ 293 female).

In terms of supporting victims of rights violations, the project has supported 1133 victims/ survivors to find redressal for their grievances through HRFACs .308 general human rights violation cases submitted to Human Rights Commission (HRC) for further action (142 male/ 166 female) with 220 receiving acknowledgement. 193 applications filed with the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) (on behalf of 178 male/ 15 female victims) and 169 cases acknowledged and forwarded to Registrar General's Office. 139 Certificates of Absence (CoA) issued by Registrar General's Office for 169 cases forward by the OMP.

Through the project, 475 applications were also filed under the Right To Information Act (RTI) with 256 cases receiving acknowledgement/ or resolved and 157 cases filed with the National Police Commission (NPC) (99 male/ 58 female) with 95 cases being acknowledged. 712 financial support requests submitted to the state by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) with support from HRFACs out of which 327 financial support requests of PWDs approved by the state which also include 136 PWDs receiving monthly allowance of Rs. 5,000 from the state as part of disability welfare support (50 male/ 86 female). 2200 victims/ survivors/ marginalised communities including People with Disabilities (PWDs) received Covid relief support (899 male/ 1301 female) – and included 524 women headed households, 1411 PWDs and 265 volunteers.

In addition to supporting institutional costs, Open Society Foundations provided NPC with supplementary funding for the EU funded ACE-IT intervention which concluded during the reporting period. This included supporting a series of discussions on protecting democratic institutions through 19 Civil Society Platform (CSP) meetings based in 16 districts drawing over 1700 community members, NVC trainings for all NPC staff and 291 HRFAC volunteers

drawn from 11 HRFACs, a strategic planning meeting for NPC and Covid 19 relief support for beneficiary communities.

The Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom (CERF) project focuses on the promotion and protection of religious freedom through upholding pluralism and rule of law, in selected localities. The project is underway in twelve selected multi ethnic and multi religious DS divisions across twelve districts. Namely, Akurana, Ampara, Beruwala, Batticaloa, Kaluthara, Mannar Negombo, Panduwasnuwara, Rakwana, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Weligama. Out of these, eight locations were selected during the first phase while another five were selected for the second. These locations were identified to be prone to religious violence through an independent research and through other secondary data sources. Committee activities including social cohesion interventions, advocacy programmes and trainings succeeded in reaching more than 5000 individuals including more than 150 state officials both at the national and sub-national level along with more than 100 religious leaders.

The USAID funded Religions to Reconcile project concluded during this year completing a 42 month long intervention which began in 2016. The project was initially implemented with an international training partner- Generations for Peace (GFP). In 2020, new project activities which enhanced the overall intervention were carried out by DIRCs in 8 project locations. They included a 2-day national level follow-on training on applied conflict sensitivity and conflict analysis for 36 (21 male/ 15 female) selected members of DIRC and Sub Groups from 8 project districts. In addition, 8 district-based counter messaging campaigns to dispel localized rumours and misinformation were carried out with the distribution of 7500 handbills and over 10,000 persons were reached through subsequent media coverage via electronic and print media. Lastly, 3 CSO Partner led long term mitigation/ inclusion within TJ framework activities were carried out in Mannar, Ampara and Puttalam districts enabling local partner to continue with the work post project.

The Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka (TAJISL) project focuses on the provision of technical assistance to both state and non-state actors and institutions. The project is implemented in collaboration with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) in ten selected districts across the country namely, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kandy, Badulla, Monaragala, Matara, Kalutara and Ratnapura. The project has two main components; capacitation and public engagement. Both of which are realized through the main instrument of this initiative which is the Master Trainer group, a community level, homegrown resource pool trained to capacitate and mobilize local communities. A thirty-member pool of Master Trainers has been established and trained through the project across the ten districts. The TAJISL project conducted 41 training sessions reaching more than 1000 individuals. This included Local government Authority members, state officials, national and subnational religious leaders, journalists, women community leaders and youth leaders, bringing in a broader audience into the discourse on peacebuilding and Pluralism.

The Social Cohesion And Reconciliation (SCORE) project's main task is to build a "Cohesive Sri Lankan Identity" through a multi-level intervention with innovative trainings and activities. 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 marginalized groups in their villages to identify and implement complementary peacebuilding and socio-economic projects that address local conflict stressors.

The project reached over 500 direct project beneficiaries in its targeted locations and included 317 women members thus overachieving its target of women participants. Furthermore, the project envisaged 30% youth participation and this too was met with the participation of 164 youth members.

The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a programme aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in regions affected by conflict funded by the German Federal Government and implemented by German civil society organisations in cooperation with partners abroad. The project at hand is a cooperation between NPC and AGIAMONDO, a Catholic organization. The focus is on organizational development, knowledge management, and results monitoring at NPC. Although impacted by Covid 19, the project was able to contribute to the development of NPC as an organisation through training programmes etc.

Supported activities include streamlining activity planning, monitoring and reporting, organising monthly programme meetings/ bi-monthly structured project meetings, supporting NPC management further revise its Administration and Financial Management Manual and update it to reflect NPC and donor requirements. A complaint policy is pending to be vetted by staff and approval by the Board. A collection of policies related to digital technologies is in preparation. In addition, a workshop on revising NPC's strategic plan was supported by CPS during the reporting period.

The CSO PVE Capacity Building in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh project is a multi-country civil society initiative supported by the European Union (EU) and implemented with Helvetas Sri Lanka in six districts. The intervention provides capacity building on practical Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) methods to CSOs and will set up a resource pool of PVE experts based in the districts. In the reporting period, a virtual Structured Learning Conference on PVE with seven international and 5 local resource persons was held with over 100 participants joining in virtually. In addition, 29 members attached to state sector sub national service delivery institutions and 55 members attached to 30 CSO/CBOs were consulted as part of project implementation. In addition, an upto date review of available PVE mechanisms from around world were collated and contextually applied to the Sri Lankan context during a meeting for project partners.

The Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism (C-YEP) project is supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and is implemented in four local state-funded/owned universities since 2020. In selecting these institutions NPC focused on maximizing the diversity of the target audience thereby keeping true to the Pluralistic values the intervention aims to promote. These institutions namely, the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of Jaffna and University of Ruhuna are located in four different provinces spread across the country which guarantees not only geographical diversity but also ethno-cultural diversity of the target audience.

During this year, a group of 140 university students were trained in skills requisite in moving towards and creating a pluralistic society through national level thematic trainings and workshops. Through these events NPC also aimed the provision of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for their actualization activities where they would engage in awareness raising on Pluralism for their peers and the general public. During this year 30 academics from the 4 selected universities were also given the opportunity to participate in 10 online-based awareness raising sessions including issues of power-sharing in the domestic context, mapping opposing infrastructures to peace, nationalism, populism, majoritarianism and pluralism with reference to the US and Sri Lanka and international human rights debate and the national dimension.

The Sustaining Peace Through Pluralism and Inclusive Service Delivery project is funded by Freedom House and is implemented in partnership with four national universities to provide opportunities to front-line state officials to broaden their awareness on Pluralism and inclusive service delivery through introducing new academic study programmes in partnership with the said education institutions. The project aims to improve the capacities of state officials to deliver public services and to increase their participation in sustaining peace by enrolling them in academic courses under the guidance of the Universities of Ruhuna, University of Sabaragamuwa, Eastern University and University of Jaffna.

The development of course content for each of the study programmes has a structured process to identify the needs of the four districts in which the universities are located where the faculty members consult with selected officials from the particular district and divisional secretariats, Grama Niladhari officers, local state authorities and the general public. Faculty members of the four universities will then develop course modules based on the needs of their specific areas identified through the consultations with both uniform and location specific course components.

The Language to Reconcile (R2L) project was initiated in June 2020 to identify the issue of language as a key dividing factor in Sri Lanka which dates back to the colonial times and was also a root cause for the 30-year long civil conflict. Although both Sinhala and Tamil have been recognized by the state as official state languages, Tamil speakers in particular continue to suffer from unequal treatment where it concerns language rights. The L2R project therefore seeks to provide language education to the selected state officials from the three administrative institutions as an effort in ensuring the provision of equal space and opportunity for speakers of both languages.

During the year under consideration, we were able to conduct a focus group discussion at Beruwala Divisional Secretariat in the Kalutara District with the participation of 35 community members. Which was focused on identifying issues in state driven service delivery processes for which collaborative mitigatory action will be taken through the project by bringing together high-level state officials, state officials engaged in service delivery, LIRC members and community level representatives.

During this period there was continuing surveillance and monitoring of civil society activities, and questioning of civil society activists by police and intelligence personnel which has an intimidating effect. The government became more assertive and restrictive in denying approvals to NGOs either of their proposals, action plans or signing off on work done. NPC too experienced this hardship which was more at the psychological level than coercive and so was able to implement its planned programmes of work with the main obstacle being the lockdowns caused by the Covid pandemic. NPC's success is due to the combined efforts of its staff, board and governing council members, partner organisations, organic formations such as DIRCs, LIRCs and associated subgroups, to its international donors and to the cooperation it has received from different levels of the state.

Jehan Perera
Executive Director



PROJECTS



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

The Consolidating Ongoing Multi-level Partnership Actions for Conflict Transformation (COMPACT) project was conceptualised by the NPC with the view of maintaining a space for civil society groups to work on peace and reconciliation in contributing to conflict transformation and the reconciliation process. Through civil society interventions the project aims to address the problem of diminishing space for liberal and plural values by working closely with elected political leaders, especially at the local level. The project aims to preserve the political space for campaigns in identifying a political solution to the ethnic conflict.

One underlying issue pertaining to the transitional justice mechanisms in Sri Lanka was that the processes of change initiated by the previous regime were few and far between; be it economical, good governance or post war reconciliation. The other issue was the absence of communication about what needs to be done, what was being done and how it should be done. It was left to civil society to take these messages to masses as a matter of priority. The public had little knowledge of the process and had limited opportunity to take part in dialogue and debate. This resulted in limited acceptance of such processes. The eruption of anti-Muslim violence in March of 2018, first in Ampara and then in Kandy shortly after the local government elections, dealt a big blow to post-war reconciliation efforts and instigated violence.

Through this project, NPC was able to work with many sectors to build support for a credible transition process, in order to sustain inter-ethnic/inter-religious platforms for co-existence at local level, continuing to give a central place to the District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) in 16 districts namely Anuradhapura, Badulla, Batticaloa, Galle, Hambantota, Jaffna, Kandy, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Matara, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Puttalam, Ratnapura and Vavuniya. DIRCs through this project, will expand their reach through town hall-type meetings and cohesion and mitigatory activities and engage in messaging and counter-messaging campaigns. The project also focuses on youth parliamentarians, members of CSOs, religious clergy, women's groups, provincial journalists, government officials, mediation board members, local level professionals, university students and youth, where NPC will work to raise awareness and build consensus on a transitional mechanism for conflict healing.

This project is a follow on to the three-year project Initiating Multi-level Partnership Action for Conflict Transformation (IMPACT) funded by MISEREOR and CAFOD which ended in October 2018.

Key achievements

- 13 cohesion activities were carried out in 11 districts where community members including youth and school children, from different ethnic-religious communities were given the opportunity to interact with each other in various solidarity and team building events which included food festivals, sport and art competitions, religious festivals, visits to religious venues and musical events conducted by prominent artists. These cohesion activities provided a platform for interaction and helped in creating a space for empathy building.

- During the Island wide curfew that was imposed from March 2020, the COMPACT team with the financial support from MISEREOR, carried out relief distribution to selected low-income families who were struggling to meet their daily needs due to adverse economic conditions. A total of 50 affected families were selected from 16 districts where DIRCs operate, with the help of the relevant Grama Niladari and Divisional Secretariat officers. These selected low-income families received a dry rations pack worth Rs. 2000.
- The COMPACT team organised the supply and distribution of dry food rations to Children's homes, elders' homes and homes for the differently abled which were severely affected as a result of the sudden island wide curfew that was imposed by the Government because of the 1st wave of Covid-19 infections. This activity was carried out in selected Institutes located in 16 districts where District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) operated. The Funds were provided by the Canadian Government through its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).
- A series of Civil Society Platform meetings took island wide where hundreds of CSO activists gathered to discuss the political situation and challenges faced by civil society in a post pandemic situation. These meetings also discussed the importance of protecting the 19th amendment to the constitution and to strengthen Independent Commissions in order to ensure that democracy prevails in the country. A total of 19 Civil Society Platform meetings took place in 16 districts.
- A workshop on Reconciliation and National Integration within a Pluralistic Framework was held for higher-level state officials of the Kegalle District Secretariat at the Rathnasiri Wickramanayaka National Training Center at Hantana. Thirty-six state officials including 8 Divisional Secretaries (AGAs) and the District Secretary (GA) of Kegalle was 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. Resource persons included Dr. Jehan Perera, Attorney-at-Law Jagath Liyana Arachchi and Aruna Jayathilake, lecturer in political science, Sabaragamuwa University.
- 70 newly appointed government officers of the Matara District Secretariat were trained on pluralistic values and how they need to be embedded in their duties as state officers in service delivery on a request made by the Matara Divisional Secretary.
- A National Workshop for Local Government Authority (LGA) members titled 'Building a Pluralistic Society' was organised by the COMPACT project on the 4 November 2020 virtually. Five LGA members from each district took part and 50 per cent of this group were female LGA members. A total of 62 LGA members representing different political parties took part in the workshop. The theme of the workshop was to promote the importance and value of a pluralistic society and to examine the legal provisions in the country to promote pluralistic values.
- A hybrid symposium was carried out for the first time in NPC's history on the 1st of December 2020 with the participation of more than 500 persons including Inter-religious leaders and CSO activists from all over the country. David McKinnon, the Canadian High Commissioner and representatives from the two donor organisations, CAFOD and MISEREOR, also attended.

Story of Impact:

First virtual National Inter-Religious Symposium to build a pluralistic society

NPC successfully carried out a national inter religious symposium in December 2020. It was a significant achievement for the organisation as this was a period when the country was facing severe restrictions on movement between provinces and holding large gatherings. Accordingly, the National Inter Religious Symposium which is held once a year on site at a large conference venue with the participation of multi religious leaders and community leaders, was redesigned adhering to Ministry of Health mandated Covid guidelines. As a result, after careful consideration and planning, a hybrid virtual symposium was carried out for the first time in NPC's history on 1st of December 2020 at NPC.



Inter-religious leaders and CSO activists/ community leaders from all parts of the country took part in the National Symposium. In each district where there is a DIRC, a group of 20 religious leaders and CSO activists/ community leaders gathered at a secure location and joined the symposium virtually. In addition, other representatives, members of the media, representatives from the donor community also joined in. Over 500 people joined the symposium virtually. A few religious leaders and social activists residing in the Colombo District were invited to the office premises to attend the symposium and to take part in the ceremony.

The focus of the National Symposium was to build a pluralistic society and Dr. Jehan Perera from the National Peace Council, Professor Sasanka Perera from the South Asian University, New Delhi and Attorney-at-law Jagath Liyana Arachchi were the main speakers at the event. In addition, other prominent religious leaders joined in by delivering messages of support for the NPC.

Also joining in was His Excellency David McKinnon, the Canadian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka who joined the session to extend his good wishes and to share the highlights of pluralistic practices in Canada. Representatives from donor organisations- CAFOD and MISEREOR also joined the symposium virtually.

Participants from all 17 DIRCs brainstormed on a series of proposals and recommendations they deemed necessary to be included in the proposed constitutional reform brought forward by the constitutional reform committee. All recommendations brought forward were formulated to build a more pluralistic society which would help strengthen peace and reconciliation processes in the country. Accordingly, 17 documents of recommended proposals were produced at the end of the Symposium; and each DIRC took the initiative to submit the proposals to the National Constitutional Reform Committee.

A few recommendations listed out included- all ethnicities should enjoy freedom of expression equally and that equal space is ensured in mainstream discourse; sufficient laws should be

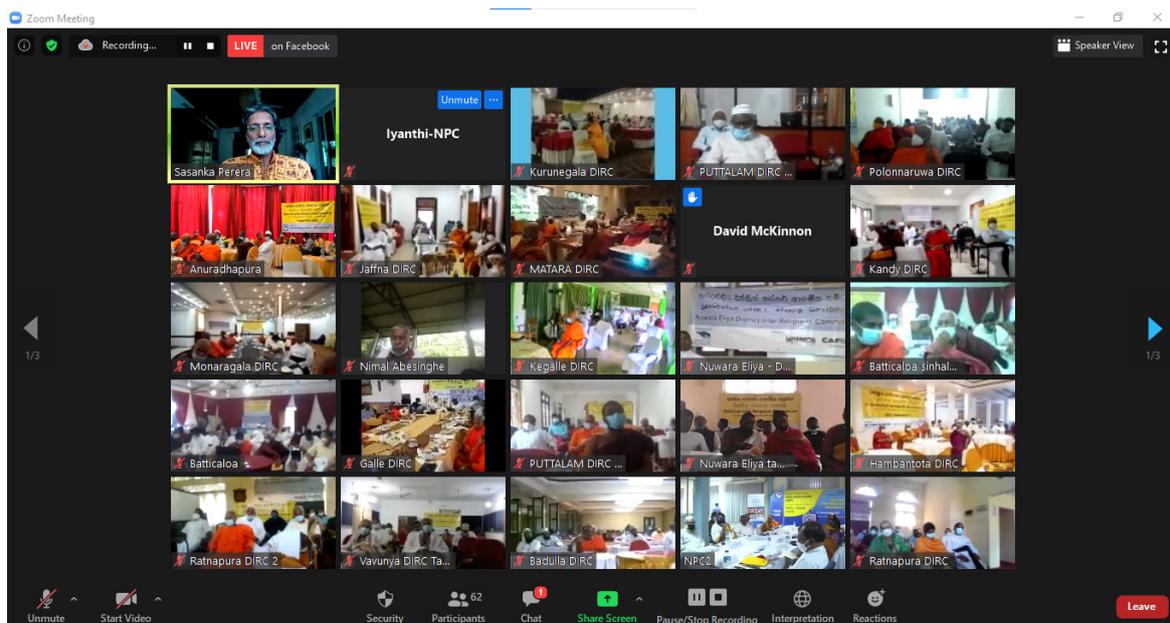
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

introduced to bar hate speech or expression where violence is directed towards a particular group or community; ensuring that the national anthem is sung in both official languages; ensuring that there are Tamil speaking officers in all government departments and to fix name boards in all three national languages on all public buildings and roads and that the state should make it compulsory for all Sri Lankan citizens to learn Sinhala and Tamil; ensuring equity in the distribution of resources and equality in delivering services which include police, health and education; strengthen independent commissions to ensure that the public sector acts without fear or favor.

Similarly, during the National Workshop on Pluralism that was conducted in November 2020, for selected LGA members from 16 districts, participants worked together to formulate proposals to improve governance from a pluralistic perspective. These proposals were also shared with the National Constitutional Reform Committee.

Accordingly, a total of 33 proposals for constitutional reform were brought forward through District Inter Religious Committee members in 16 districts, and by the group of religious leaders who took part in the onsite ceremony held at the National Peace Council on the day of the symposium.

Another memorable event that took place during the symposium was the celebration of 25 years of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka. For 25 years the National Peace Council has journeyed hand in hand with religious leaders, civil society leaders and other members of the community to build sustainable peace in the country. This significant milestone was celebrated with the cutting of a celebratory birthday cake. All DIRCs also had their special NPC cakes ready for the occasion.



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

Accountability through Community Engagement and Initiatives for Transition (ACE-IT) project, supported by the European Union (EU) under its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights - Country Based Support Scheme (CBSS) completed its 35-month project implementation period in 2020. As part of its intervention, 11 district based Human Rights First Aid Centres (HRFACs) were set up to support protection of citizens' rights and share information of new laws and institutions available through the Transitional Justice (TJ) framework. The project also built 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.



The initial 30-month intervention which commenced in February 2018, was extended through a 5-month additional no cost extension and was implemented in Nuwara Eliya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Mannar, Gampaha, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Badulla and Moneragala districts. ACE-IT was 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.

ACE-IT had 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.

This intervention was conceptualized and developed in 2016 during a period in which the Government of Sri Lanka had committed itself to a national reconciliation process in which transitional justice was accorded an important place. In 2015, the government had co-sponsored UNHRC Resolution 30/1 which entailed setting up four major mechanisms to promote transitional justice in addition to other reforms that would strengthen the democratic system

The value of the HRFAC network, which has been strengthened and expanded under this project, is timely due to the change in the government attitude towards human rights activism. As totally voluntary structures, the HRFACs can remain viable so long as its membership remains motivated and capacitated, to which this project contributed in significant degree. At the present time, CSOs throughout the country have been put under surveillance. There is a sense that some NGO work will not be permitted. Peace and human rights organisations are accused of creating problems between communities where none were in existence, and also supplying information to foreign parties.

In these straitened circumstances, HRFACs continued to have an important role to play in linking victims of human rights violations to the available state institutions that can vindicate their rights. Increasing the demand for their services will encourage members of those institutions to continue with, and to strengthen, their own efforts to serve the affected population and also to continue to demonstrate their relevance to the government and to the international community. The pro-active role played by HRFACs during the ongoing Covid crisis in mobilizing and distributing short term humanitarian aid to vulnerable groups they work with, namely victims of human rights violations and persons with disabilities (PWDs) also served to increase their relevance and credibility in continuing with their longer-term human rights work.

Key achievements

Capacitating & maintaining HRFACs:

- Through the project interventions the ace ACE-IT project managed to support the activities of 11 HRFACs including 5 new centres and 6 existing centres through which 376 HRFAC volunteers were trained to support victims in 11 districts including 180 male and 196 female volunteers and 180 volunteers trained on basic human rights mechanisms in 6 additional areas during project extension period
- 517 HRFAC desk volunteers and selected members of CSOs/ CBOs in the areas trained as befrienders to support psycho social wellbeing of victims/ survivors (224 male/ 293 female)
- In terms of supporting victims of rights violations, the project has supported 1133 victims/ survivors to find redressal for their grievances through HRFACs .308 general human rights violation cases submitted to Human Rights Commission (HRC) for further action (142 male/ 166 female) with 220 receiving acknowledgements
- 193 applications filed with the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) (on behalf of 178 male/ 15 female victims) and 169 cases acknowledged and forwarded to Registrar General's Office. 139 Certificates of Absence (CoA) issued by Registrar General's Office for 169 cases forward by the OMP
- Through the project, 475 applications were also filed under the Right To Information Act (RTI) with 256 cases receiving acknowledgement/ or resolved and 157 cases filed with the National Police Commission (NPC) (99 male/ 58 female) with 95 cases being acknowledged by the NPC
- Four video animations on Making Human Rights Real- the Historical perspective, Global context, Individual's role and Rule of Law produced for sharing among HRFACs and the public and 12 editios of the 'Thulawa' newspaper published.



Working with OMP to streamline recording of victim cases:

- 4 specific issues/ bottlenecks addressed through project by working with OMP to assist victim families record cases with ease
- 3 additional information sessions on the OMP process carried out for state officers attached to sub national state service delivery institutions in the north on the request of relevant divisional secretaries in the north and east
- 712 financial support requests submitted to the state by PWDs with support from HRFACs out of which 327 financial support requests of PWDs approved by the state which also include 136 PWDs receiving monthly allowance of Rs. 5,000 from the state as part of disability welfare support (50 male/ 86 female)

Covid relief support for beneficiaries

- 2200 victims/ survivors/ marginalised communities including People with Disabilities (PWDs) received Covid relief support (899 male/ 1301 female) – and included 524 women headed households, 1411 PWDs and 265 volunteers.

Support by OSF

In addition to institutional funding, Open Society Foundations provided NPC with supplementary funding for the EU funded ACE-IT intervention which concluded during the reporting period. This included supporting a series of discussions on protecting democratic institutions through 19 Civil Society Platform (CSP) meetings based in 16 districts drawing over 1700 community members, NVC trainings for all NPC staff and 291 HRFAC volunteers drawn from 11 HRFACs, a strategic planning meeting for NPC and Covid 19 relief support for beneficiary communities.

Story of Impact: Vallipuram Pawalakodi - She wants to know what happened to him

Vallipuram Pawalakodi is now 70 years old. For the past 30 years she has been looking for her husband who went missing in 1990. Pawalakodi and Vallipuram married after falling in love, against the wishes of her parents. They were residents of Naguleswaram near the Kankasanturai Port, a strategic location for the Sri Lankan government in the north. The area was heavily guarded by both the Sri Lankan Army and the Navy against the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). In 1990 at the height of the war, Pawalakodi and Vallipuram were forced to leave their village and hide in nearby jungles. A few days later Vallipuram went back to their house to collect some clothes and other essential items. That was the last time she saw him. At 41 years, Pawalakodi was neither married nor widow as a body of her husband was never found. She had no children and no family to go back to as her parents had disowned her after her marriage. She continued to eke out a living selling gram while moving from one location to another looking for any sign of her beloved husband. In 2009, when the thirty-year war finally ended, Pawalakodi moved back into her old house where she continues to live to date.



Pawalakodi has given evidence before commissions, spoken to the media and even filed a case before the Office on Missing Persons (OMP) seeking information on her husband. She says “What is the point of commissions if they can’t give us any relief? I have been looking for Vallipuram for 30 years now. There are many people like me- mothers, wives who are old and nearing our end. We will die without closure at this rate”. Pawalakodi is not alone in her plight. Thousands of women in Sri Lanka continue to look for their missing loved ones. They urge the government to give them closure so that they can die peacefully, knowing the fate of their loved ones. Pawalakodi continues to be supported through the Jaffna Human Rights First Aid Centre set up by the NPC with support from the EU and was a beneficiary of Covid relief support as part of continuing engagement with victims/ survivors through the intervention.

Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom (CERF)

The Collective Engagement for Religious Freedom (CERF) project focuses on the promotion and protection of religious freedom through upholding pluralism and rule of law, in selected localities. Launched in 2017, 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. Funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), United States Department of State, the project is underway in twelve selected multi



ethnic and multi religious Divisional Secretariat (DS) divisions across twelve districts. Namely, Akurana, Ampara, Beruwala, Batticaloa, Kalutara, Mannar Negombo, Panduwasnuwara, Rakwana, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Weligama. Out of these, eight locations were selected during the first phase while another five were selected for the second. These locations were identified to be prone to religious violence through an independent research and through other secondary data sources. From the information gathered, it was identified that communities in these sub-national divisions/localities have fallen victim to incidents of sporadic communal violence bearing racist and religious extremist undertones. This project is envisaged to curtail and counter such incidents through community-led collective efforts. The project has two main objectives. Namely, 1) Collaborative local engagement strengthens commitment to pluralism and Rule of Law to create necessary environment for the practice of religious beliefs and 2) Inter-faith dialogue provides impetus for advocacy at local and national levels for right to religious freedom within a pluralistic framework for inter religious and inter-ethnic coexistence and non-discrimination.

The main instruments of this initiative are the Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRCs) which are established in each selected 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. This inclusivity and broad representation enable committees to device and instigate collective efforts for dispute resolution and prevention and to conduct public engagement initiatives. Each of these committees comprise of thirty-five members. They are capacitated on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding through six thematic two-day trainings programmes on Mediation, Conflict Transformation, Rule of Law, Community Policing, Non-Violent Communication and Gender during the initiation period. These trainings are aimed at providing committee members the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to resolve and prevent localized 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 where 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 mobilization and response. This also legitimizes the existence of the committees allowing them to operate in an official capacity within the selected sub-national divisions.

Key achievements

- Through committee activities and interventions, the 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 5000 individuals including more than 150 state officials both at the national and sub-national level along with more than 100 religious leaders
- In spite of the fear and unrest caused by the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, LIRC members perceived the situation as a call to action. All LIRCs across the country engaged in much needed relief interventions demonstrating they are well aware of the social responsibility of an active community initiative. Committee members engaged in relief work organized through the committee as well as interventions led by other similar initiatives. Many religious leaders and several other members of the committee even engaged in self-funded charity work during the pandemic period. These activities helped to reinforce the trust and support of community members towards the committee and its interventions. Committees also shone as multi-faceted community service entities whereas they are usually perceived as an interfaith initiative.
- Committee activities received significant media attention during this year where committee-led community level interventions were published and broadcasted in both national and regional media outlets both printed and digital. Committee activities were widely circulated within social media platforms as well, broadening the public reach of the project, especially among the youth who are an important part of the demographic and a catalyst for social change.
- Through committee-led interventions, the LIRCs have been able to reach not only community members but also policy makers. Thus, both community members and policy makers have been brought into a broader and common platform that facilitates dialogue where they could work towards a common goal. Policy makers have also acknowledged the relevance and effectiveness of the LIRCs through opening new avenues for committee members to express their ideas and issues at broader platforms as well as through offering resource-related support. During 9 meetings for policy makers organized by the LIRC this year, political actors formally invited committee members to attend district development meeting sessions to express their views and concerns. They also made a request to committee members to share their findings on local issues so that both parties can work together to find solutions for them.

Story of Impact: Towards localities free of conflict

During the recent years, Al Hilal College, Negombo has had a significantly high number of Sinhala medium grade eleven dropouts compared to students in the Tamil medium. Many Sinhalese residents in the area believed that one of the main contributors for this is the limited number of teachers available for students following the Sinhala medium stream. Committee members who are also members of the past pupil's association of the school identified that this has created a misconception among the Sinhalese community that their students are being intentionally neglected by school administration and board of governors who are predominantly Muslim. Identifying an early warning that can possibly lead to an intensified situation between the Sinhala and Muslim communities, committee members met with relevant state officials to resolve the issue. As a first step, they met the principal of Al Hilal School on 14 January 2020 and the Director of Education at the Zonal Education Office on 22 January 2020 to emphasize the need to give facilities to the school to address the requests of parents. Following the two meetings, the Zonal Education Office took swift action by appointing a Sinhala speaking teacher to the primary section in July, before schools started after the long lockdown. They also promised to appoint a Sinhala speaking teacher to the secondary section.

This story reflects both the willingness and capacity of LIRC members towards influencing policy makers and decision-making personnel to provide both relevant and sustainable solutions to community level issues which could lead to community level violence both covert and overt. As of now, the issue remains partially resolved and the Negombo LIRC is following up on the course of with the relevant authorities.



Highlights for 2021

- Activities this year included both capacitation and engagement interventions which were highly successful both in terms of participation and impact where CERF managed to obtain optimum participation for all activities.
- CERF team completed 21 capacity building trainings for members of LIRCs with average participation of 35 members in each training despite them being carried out online.
- Trainings for community policing mother/ subcommittee members were carried out during the year by using innovative online methods. Two pluralism trainings, one rule of law training, and 2 community police trainings were conducted for community police members and reached a total of 485 participants online.
- Through 5 radio programs and 3 online tv programs, the message of religious coexistence was broadcasted and telecasted to the general public. LIRC's engagement

with traditional and online media added value to the project participants included key religious leaders, government officers, and civil society leaders of the LIRCs.

- LIRCs initiated meetings with national-level policymakers and as an entry point, all key religious leaders of LIRCs met with MP Patali Champika Ranawaka from the Samagi Jana Bala Wegaya to advocate for religious freedom. These meetings are continuing with politicians representing both the government and opposition.



- As engagement interventions, LIRCs completed 13 NGO network follow-up activities to promote religious freedom in their localities with diversified indirect target groups. These interventions reached 473 youth from 10 LIRCs locations through webinars and trainings conducted for youth on effective use of social media for religious coexistence, pluralism, and NVC. Further, Weligama and Beruwala LIRC reached 212 NGO/CBO representatives from their localities and raised awareness on religious freedom while Addalaichenai LIRC reached 35 journalists in their locality through their follow-up activity.
- As part of social cohesion activities, CERF team was able to bring together 100 religious leaders online through two inter-religious dialogues. Dialogues were helpful to create meaningful and continuous engagement among and between religious leaders who are core representatives who lead LIRC interventions.
- Three important project document collations were carried out during the year. A base document on the religious freedom charter was compiled following 12 consultation sessions with members of local inter-religious committees. In addition, training modules on Conflict Transformation and Mediation were developed as well.

Religions to Reconcile (R2R)

The Religions to Reconcile project funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) concluded during the reporting period. It 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 18-month period during which NPC was able complete some of the activities which were delayed due to acts of political instability that took place in Sri Lanka in late 2018 and 2019. 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.

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.

Key achievements

- Carried out 8 district-based counter messaging campaigns to dispel localized rumours and misinformation and included activities as a media conference targeting hate speech in Ampara, Media conference and handing over petition to Puttalam District Secretary, assistant Elections Commissioner, DIG and Human Rights Commission requesting 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 printed and shared and over 10,000 persons 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 the 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 Digawapli area were capacitated through this effort. Resource persons included officers of the Police Narcotics division and Excise Department and medical doctors specializing in treating addition.
- In Puttalam our local partner Women Organization 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 elders' home with 30 persons were supported through the R2R network.



Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka (TAJISL)

The Technical Assistance to Justice Institutions in Sri Lanka (TAJISL) project focuses on the provision of technical assistance to both state and non-state actors and institutions. Through its training and capacitation efforts the project aims to contribute towards improved awareness and utilization of effective Conflict Management practices both at the community level as well as the institutional level. Launched in 2017, the initiative is currently in its fourth year of implementation. The project is implemented in collaboration with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) in ten selected districts across the country namely, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kandy, Badulla, Monaragala, Matara, Kalutara and Ratnapura.



The project has two main components; capacitation and public engagement. Both of which are realized through the main instrument of this initiative which is the Master Trainer group, a community level, homegrown resource pool trained to capacitate and mobilize local communities. A thirty-member pool of Master Trainers has been established and trained through the project across the ten districts. Each of the ten Master Trainer groups is a vessel through which the core message of the project is disseminated to the public where they act as agents of community mobilization and capacitate local public through both organizing and facilitating community level training and awareness raising interventions fulfilling the public engagement component of the project. In creating the ten-person trainer groups, the project was particularly conscious of ensuring local participation and broad-based representation which affects public acceptance significantly. As such, each group includes the representation of local religious leaders, youth leaders, women community leaders, local government authorities, state officials and community policing members. Also, as the groups are locally based, they also ensure rapid mobilization and response during instances of community level conflict.

Since the completion of the ToT trainings to capacitate the Master Trainers, they have been successful in carrying out more than forty community level awareness raising interventions not only focusing on grassroots communities but also focusing on state and policy level actors and institutions, which is a testament to their competence and dedication. Through its capacitation efforts, the project also creates an inclusive platform for dialogue for community members in addressing local issues. Here, the project utilizes existing ground level knowledge of community members and couples it with the technical expertise delivered through the trainings to assist them find more meaningful and sustainable solutions for local issues. As such, the trainings also facilitated knowledge sharing and fosters synergy in finding mutually agreeable solutions for everyday issues.

Building upon the success of the project, both LAW and NPC decided to widen the scope of the project by including an additional training component to the project in the following year (2021 Onwards). A series of island-wide trainings on addressing Hate Speech will be included into the existing training schedule and will broaden its impact.

Key achievements

- Carried out 41 training sessions reaching more than 1000 individuals. Beneficiaries included Local government Authority members, state officials, national and subnational religious leaders, journalists, women community leaders and youth leaders, bringing in a broader audience into the discourse on peacebuilding and Pluralism.
- A six-day training programme for two hundred and thirty-five newly appointed graduate-trainee state officers attached to the Badulla District Secretariat was carried out by Master Trainers who received training through this project in December 2020. The request for the training was made by D.M.L.H. Dissanayake, District Secretary of Badulla.
- The individual transformation of direct beneficiaries is a highlight of the project. Apart from the five groups that the project focuses on and capacitates, the most important product of the project is the regional pool of “Master Trainers”. Each of these individuals have a success story of their own. These individuals were selected for the Master Trainer ToTs in order to create a home-grown community-level resource pool which is accessible and mobilizable to engage in local capacitation. As such, these individuals did not represent elaborate social, economic or educational backgrounds. However, joining the Master Trainer initiative has paved way for them to work towards their personal growth and opened-up new opportunities which will in turn benefit their communities. Three members of the Master Trainer group are resuming their studies where they have enrolled in university diploma programmes. These instances account for the effectiveness of the project at the individual level which highlights micro-level mobilization.

Story of Impact:

Making of a Master Trainor - Story of U. Chandana, Moneragala

I quit my education after sitting for the Advanced Level examination. Without the prospect of getting into a local university, I was not sure as to what I should do next. I found work, stuck to it to make ends meet. Twenty years passed by. From one day to another, I didn't know whether I was living my life or moving away from it. One day, while I was having a chat with a friend of mine from my school days, I was told about a NGO that was putting together a team for community awareness activities. A wonderful idea I thought. But seemed a bit far-fetched to believe. Who would want to come to a village in the middle of nowhere to help people? And I had heard the things people say about “NGOs”. Nevertheless, I was intrigued and went ahead and contacted them. I was called for a meeting and was briefed about their work. They even asked me to come and sit through some of their trainings. I was still a bit cautious but I wanted to see for myself what was that they were actually doing. “I wasn't going to an observer but a critic” I said to myself. So, I went to the training. Not stopping there, I attended another.

My view of NGO work changed gradually as I began to attend more trainings and realized how important and relevant, they were. I saw the societal impact the project made and I wanted to get actively involved in their work. After that, I was offered an opportunity to become one of their Master Trainers. Joining the Master Trainer network paved the way for me to go a place with opportunities. It reignited a spark in me for growth which had withered over twenty-five years of uninspiring work. I decided to resume my education and move forward in my career path. Fast forward four years- I am now a senior field officer at an INGO, a diploma holder on my way to obtaining a bachelor's degree and an expert community trainer being called to train state officials and local policy makers. Joining the Master Trainer group changed my life. It gave me purpose and direction. I believe it is the same for many others who joined the programme.

Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE)

NPC continued to function as a key partner with USAID and Global Communities (GC) in the implementation of activities in SCORE. Its main task is to build a “Cohesive Sri Lankan Identity” through a multi-level intervention with innovative trainings and activities. NPC is carrying out activities to support the accomplishment of the following results as per its SCORE mandate:

- a. Communities engage constructively in reconciliation processes,
- b. Citizen-driven initiatives and networks strengthened to promote social cohesion and reconciliation across divided communities, and
- c. 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 marginalized 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.

To promote a cohesive Sri Lankan identity, in 2020, SCORE (NPC) project took efforts to increase constructive community engagement in the reconciliation process by conducting programs for Grama Niladhari officers and by carrying out clustered community cohesion activities. Further, the project carried out a ToT to improve the knowledge of partners on a newly developed training module on Resilient Communities through Everyday Democracy.

The first phase of the project was implemented in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Monaragala districts and in the second phase it was expanded to include Kandy, Batticaloa, Ampara, Anuradhapura, Kilinochch and Mullaitivu Districts. In Jaffna, the project worked in 5 Grama Niladhari Divisions; Illawalei North West, Palali North, Kollankaladdi, Palai Veeman Kamam, Vasavilan East in



the Thellippalai Divisional Secretariat. In Monaragala, the project worked in Mahagoddayaya, Mahasenpura, Udagama Grama Niladhari Divisions in the Buttala Divisional Secretariat and Madurakatiya, Kumbukkana Grama Niladhari Divisions in the Monaragala Divisional Secretariat. In Trincomalee, SCORE carried out its activities in Samagipura, Ariyamankeni, Lingapuram,

Sumedankarapura, Navakkenikadu Grama Niladhari Divisions in the Seruwila Divisional Secretariat. In Vavuniya, SCORE carried out activities in Paddikudiyiruppu in Vavuniya North Divisional Secretariat, Agbopura, Marudhamadu in Vavuniya South Divisional Secretariat and Neriyakulam, Udaliyarkulam in the Seddikulam Divisional Secretariat.

Initiating its second phase, SCORE started to work with co-existence societies (CES) in the respective GNs from October 2020. The initial plan was to empower these community platforms to enable them to work on strengthening reconciliation processes in the country. As a result 16 training groups were created by amalgamating two or three GN divisions together. Further, a series of trainings on democracy, preventing violent extremism and facilitative trainings to increase community engagement in the reconciliation process are envisaged while a capacity building trainings for integration officers in selected locations on conflict sensitivity, early warning, and conflict mitigation.

Key achievements

- Community activities helped to consolidate cohesion and reconciliation efforts in Grama Niladhari divisions. At the beginning of 2020, a target of 13 GN level activities, 2 clustered activities and 2 information sessions to support local peace/ reconciliation process in the country were set. All targets were met and most notable activities included “Non-Violent Communication” trainings, reconciliation through “Women’s Leadership” training program, reconciliation and social cohesion demonstration by street drama, “Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy” training, peace building programs for youth and information sessions.
- An information session for Co-existence Societies were carried out in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya, peace building programs for youth and women were carried out in Monaragala, a street drama was carried out in Jaffna, a non-violent communication training was carried out in Trincomalee. Further, Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy Trainings were carried out in Monaragala, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Trincomalee.
- Training of Trainers (ToT) on “Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy,” was conducted to enhance the participants’ skills in conducting trainings at the grassroots level. This module was compiled for the purpose of empowering village-level community platforms. The ToT capacitated 22 associates of SCORE’s partner organizations in Mullaitivu, Monaragala, Vavuniya, Ampara and Batticaloa. Gayathri Gamage and Imran Nafeer, two well-experienced facilitators in this field, conducted the training.
- The project reached over 500 direct project beneficiaries in its targeted locations and included 317 women members thus overachieving its target of women participants. Furthermore, the project envisaged 30% youth participation and this too was met with the participation of 164 youth members.



Story of Impact: Connecting communities in Udagama, Monaragala: Khema's Story

As a human being, it is a blessing to be working with all ethnic groups in a united country. It is also essential to look at religious and ethnic problems with a clear mind without being partial to any group or community. When our biases are removed, the path to peace will become clear. Most importantly, most people do not get the opportunity to work with diverse groups to build cohesion in their communities.

As a young woman looking for employment many years ago, Khema Ranasinghe did not succeed in getting the job she applied for. However, by chance she chose the field of social work to begin her career and has not stopped since. "I faced a lot of obstacles at the beginning. It was not easy for a woman from the village to carry out social work due to social norms limiting the involvement of women", says Khema, who is an active member of the Yashodha women's society, Udagama Elders' society and other community associations in her village. Representing the "Govi Committee" she was later selected as a Community Connector for the SCORE project. As a community connector she assisted SCORE to mobilize grassroots communities for social cohesion activities.

Throughout the year, she played a major role in programs promoting reconciliation in Mahagoddayaya, Mahasenpura, Udagama, Kumbukkana and Maduraketiya Grama Niladhari divisions in the Monaragala district. She says "It is not impossible to build peace, as long as you are working closely and sincerely with people and you are genuinely trying to understand them."

Khema added that the training program on Resilient Communities through Everyday Democracy conducted through the project in December 2020 helped her gain new knowledge on peacebuilding. "I learned to respect people who have different opinions in society. Further, I learned to accept the pluralistic nature of society. By respecting and accepting the differences of other communities we can strengthen democracy in a country" Khema expressed.

"The more you take part in training programs in the early stages of your career, the more it becomes helpful to look at problems analytically," says Khema. At the Women's' day celebration 2021, Khema was felicitated by the "Samangi Kantha Bala Mandalaya" of the Buttala Divisional Secretariat and presented with an award for her services to the community. "It would have been more valuable if I attended more peace-related training programs in the early stages of my career" she reflected. Not only for NPC but also for her community, Khema's service is a great achievement and may many souls like her join our cause!

Highlights for 2021

- Eight Resilient Communities Through Everyday Democracy trainings were carried out for co-existence society members in Kandy, Batticaloa, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Ampara and Jaffna.
- One consultative discussion was carried out in Jaffna to discuss and plan the activities for 2021. Another 11 consultative discussions were carried out as need assessments to determine specific needs of communities. These discussions were carried out in Kandy, Batticaloa, Monaragala, Ampara, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu, and Vavuniya with the members of Co-Existence Societies, District Inter Religious Committees, Local Inter Religious Committees and with other community representatives.
- Based on these discussions, need-based initiatives will be carried out to find solutions for 5 selected needs of communities.

Civil Peace Service project (CPS)

The Civil Peace Service (CPS) is a programme aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in regions affected by conflict. It is funded by the German Federal Government and implemented by German civil society organisations in cooperation with partners abroad. The CPS programme mainly funds the contribution of German or international experts (CPS workers) to partner organizations according to their particular needs. The project at hand is a cooperation between NPC and AGIAMONDO, a Catholic organization. The focus is on organizational development, knowledge management, and results monitoring at NPC.

The second year of the CPS project was affected by Covid 19. At the height of uncertainty about the global pandemic, the CPS worker returned to his native Germany out of safety concerns. A return was possible only eight months later. Due to the distance, the project partners cooperated mainly through virtual means.



Key achievements

- As in the previous year, the CPS worker has supported NPC's projects individually in their activity planning, monitoring and reporting, and the NPC management as needed.
- During the first two months of the year, the monthly programme meetings (i.e., meetings with all staff) and the bi-monthly structured meetings of each project team were carried out as scheduled. At the last programme meeting, notably, the agenda that is laid out in the corresponding concept was fully followed for the first time, which resulted in a shorter and more concise meeting. The minutes from the project meetings were taken in the dedicated format and sent to the Executive Director and other management for their information. The practice of holding programme and project meetings was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, and meetings were held ad hoc and needs-based until the end of the year.
- The Administration and Financial Management Manual was further revised and updated to reflect NPC and donor requirements. These additional changes have again been vetted by NPC staff in a participatory process, and have subsequently been approved by the Board of Directors. Both the code of conduct and the safeguarding policy have been further revised and were in the process of being approved by the Board by the end of 2020. The complaint policy is pending to be vetted by staff and approval by the Board. A collection of policies related to digital technologies is in preparation. The two planned workshops for the joint review of NPC policies were postponed into 2021.
- Like in 2019, there was a workshop on revising NPC's strategic plan. This year's event included inputs via Zoom by two notable commentators, one a former government ministry secretary and presently a member of the Public Services Commission and the

other a renowned professor of sociology. Contrary to previous CPS-financed events, the main language was Sinhala, with simultaneous translation for the CPS worker and Tamil speaking participants. This fact and the more detailed event concept resulted in more refined inputs by staff and more extensive results than the workshop in 2019. Integration of the results into a revised NPC strategic plan is pending.

- The procedure for posting to social media that was planned in the related meetings that the CPS worker facilitated in 2019 has functioned well. A review meeting was held in March. As planned in 2019, NPC's projects posted all major project activities on Facebook, and some major events are also broadcast live. A detailed analysis of the social media procedure and its results is pending. The renovation of NPC's website was postponed to 2021.
- Encouraged by the CPS worker, the project team of the GIZ funded C-YEP project proposed video monitoring as the central element of qualitative monitoring of the project's impact. The CPS worker subsequently supported the project team in drafting a concept for the video monitoring and for a corresponding training on filming interviews, to be financed through the GIZ project. Later on, the CPS worker suggested to open it up to interested staff from other projects, and combine it with a video production training that was budgeted for in the CPS project.

Highlights for 2021

- A two-day training on Facilitating Dialogue was held for all NPC staff at a hotel outside of Colombo. The first day was a participatory workshop, where NPC's project teams discussed the challenges of animating participants to share their experiences and thoughts about potentially fraught subjects, and to listen to others do the same. The second day was an immersive training on using theatre and drama to foster dialogue, led by a Sri Lankan expert on the performing arts.
- A two-day workshop on video production for NPC project staff built on the knowledge acquired in a previous CPS project workshop. The projects were given the knowledge and space to come up with their own ideas for short videos about their project, with the aim to be published on the NPC social media channels.
- The corresponding video production programme was planned in a participatory fashion. The second output (next to the project videos) will be a short and a long introductory film about the work that NPC does.
- A two-day training on monitoring methods was held for all NPC staff. The first day was an deep dive into monitoring frameworks that are in use in the development and peacebuilding communities, held by a monitoring expert from Israel. The second day was an introduction by a Sri Lankan sociologist on methods on quantitative and qualitative methods.
- A one-day internal conference on the new NPC policies was held, where the policies were introduced and their application discussed with all staff.

Preventing violent extremism by capacitating CSOs (PVE)

CSO PVE Capacity Building in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is a multi-country civil society initiative implemented in Sri Lanka by the National Peace Council and Helvetas Sri Lanka with 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. Project activities are centred in six districts- Ampara, Batticaloa, Kurunagela, Kandy, Mannar and Vavuniya. 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 community 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. In the year under consideration key activities including national level capacity building workshop for district project partners, district-based consultations with CSOs, state sector officials, youth women etc. One of the key highlights was a structured learning conference jointly organised by NPC and project partner Helvetas Sri Lanka where specialists and academics on violent extremism from around the world joined in virtually.

Key achievements

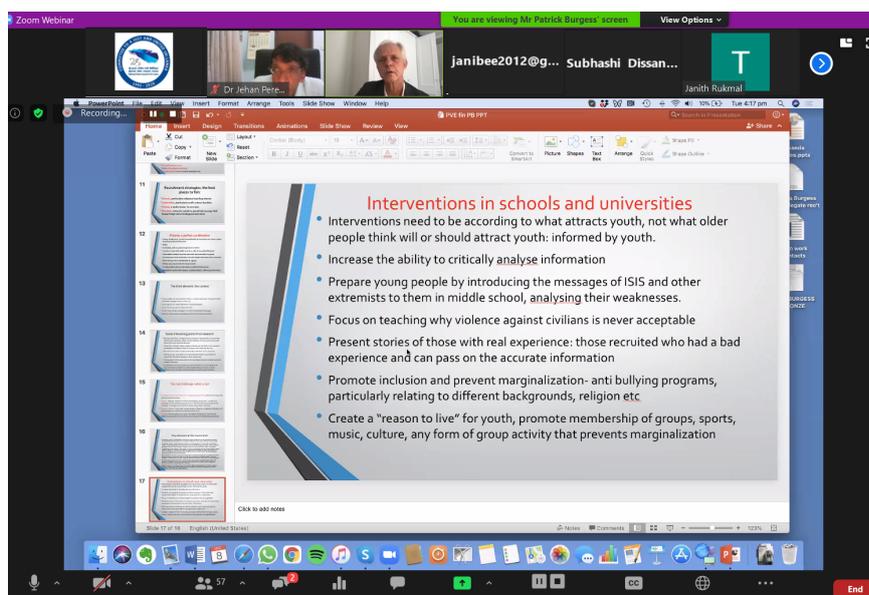
- Organised a virtual Structured Learning Conference on PVE with seven international resource persons
- Successfully completed district/ divisional level meetings with 29 state sector sub national service delivery institution members including district secretaries, divisional secretaries, NGO coordinators and other staff.
- 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 collated an upto date review of available PVE mechanisms from around world and contextually applied it to the Sri Lankan context and shared it with beneficiaries.
- Carried out multi lingual (Sinhala and Tamil) information session on PVE for lead local partners and LIRC Coordinators in Colombo and discussed specific issues from their localities in relation to PVE.
- Completed staff/ partner Capacity Building workshop in Colombo with participation of 12 lead CSO Partners/ Local Inter Religious Committee (LIRC) Coordinators and staff at Hotel Renuka.

Story of Impact: Virtual learning on PVE techniques with international resource persons

A virtual Structured Learning Conference on PVE was carried out successfully through the PVE CSO Capacity Building in Sri Lanka & Bangladesh project on 8th and 9th December 2020. This is part of the European Union's support to civil society actors in promoting confidence-building and preventing radicalisation in South Asia. The project is implemented across six districts in Ampara, Batticaloa, Kandy, Kurunegala, Mannar and Vavuniya.

As part of learning and capacitation through the intervention, NPC and partner Helvetas carried out a structured learning conference on PVE with valuable input from several international and local experts through two days of virtual engagement. The conference brought together experts, practitioners, resources, experiences and a discussion on the contextual relevance and nuances along with national and regional perspectives. The activity was originally proposed as an onsite training for beneficiaries. However due to Covid 19 restrictions and rising number of cases, especially in the Colombo district, the conference was realigned as a virtual learning engagement. As a result, on both days of the conference, additional people, aside from anticipated beneficiaries could participate in it and learn from a group of experts on PVE and related topics from around the world.

The Learning Conference began with an introduction to PVE by Australian barrister Patrick Burgess, an international human rights expert and co-founder and President of Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR.) based in Indonesia. His presentation focused on a simplified approach to PVE by looking at the three elements – supply, demand and the context. Executive Director of NPC Dr. Jehan Perera discussed the root causes of PVE by identifying examples from Sri Lanka. This was followed by the role of religion and PVE by Prof. Shahab Enam Khan from the Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh. Professor Oliver Richmond joined in from the United Kingdom to discuss the interaction of peace process and PVE. Professor Richmond is an internationally recognised peace building expert and founder of the MA in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Department of Politics of the University of Manchester. Sri Lankan expert Prof. Gamini Keerawella currently the Executive Director of the RCSS- Regional Centre For Strategic Studies shared his analytical insights on prevention of VE in South Asia. Closing session for day 1 was presented by Dr. Barbara Perry, professor and Associate Dean of Social Science and Humanities at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology who is an expert on hate speech. In all, day one of the Structured learning conference proved to be a day of learning on the fundamentals of VE and what leads to people becoming not just radicalised but violent as well.



Day two of the Conference began with a moderated panel discussion on the role of the state

in PVE. The session was moderated Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, Executive Director of the Center for Poverty Analysis. Panelists included retired presidential adviser, who was also a former Governor of the Eastern Province, Secretary of Defense, Secretary-Ministry of Rehabilitation, Home Affairs and Provincial Councils, Austin Fernando, founding Director General of the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL) Asanga Abeyagoonasekera and Abdul Mannan, the Deputy Commissioner, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit (CTTCU), Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Bangladesh Police. This was followed by a session on PVE in the digital age by Asela



Waidyalankara, an expert in technology and cybersecurity. Evening sessions of day two commenced with a session on engaging and empowering youth for PVE by Dr. Kazi Maruful Islam, the professor of Governance and Politics at the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka. This session was followed by Dr. Sandra Pogodda, lecturer in politics at the School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester who spoke on radicalization and countermeasures using examples from Egypt and Tunisia. Sessions of the virtual Structured Learning Conference came to an end with a presentation by Brazil based Dr. Rashmi Singh who succinctly explained the key drivers and dynamics of VE by using examples from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and the push and pull factors that contribute to VE. Dr Singh is associate professor in International Relations at PUC Minas (Brazil) and Co-founder and co-director of the Collaborative Research Network on Terrorism, Radicalisation and Organised Crime (TRAC). Day two of the conference concentrated on the specific areas of VE, including how the state addresses it, how VE uses digital technology to approach different groups and how civil society can be a positive influence in addressing PVE.

Each session was followed by questions and answers. Learnings from the Conference will feed into future activities of the PVE project, especially the Training of Trainers workshop to set up a cadre of PVE trainers in Sri Lanka.

Highlights for 2021

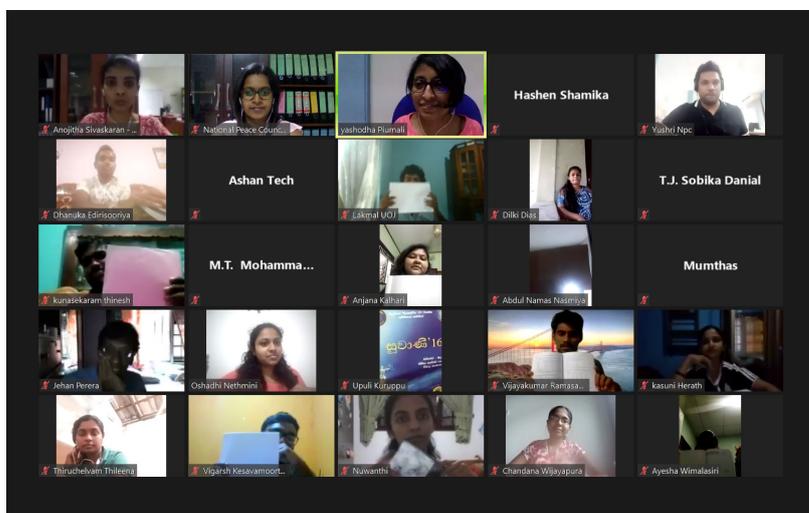
- Carried out a Training of Trainers workshop for 30 members drawn from CSOs, divisional secretariat offices, youth councils and youth groups and religious leaders.
- Produced a resource document on PVE with examples from around the world as part of the learning tool for ToT participants.
- Carried out 3 refresher training sessions for trained ToT group through virtual engagement including on the legal aspects of PVE in Sri Lanka
- Participated in 4 digitally enabled inter country learning sessions

Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism (CYEP)

#TowardsaSharedFuture

The Creative Youth Engagement for Pluralism (C-YEP) project is supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and is implemented in four local state-funded/owned universities since 2020. In selecting these institutions NPC focused on maximizing the diversity of the target audience thereby keeping true to the pluralistic values the intervention aims to promote. These institutions-

the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of Jaffna and University of Ruhuna are located in four different provinces spread across the country which guaranteed not only geographical diversity but also ethno-cultural diversity of the target audience.



Youth are a catalyst for change. As a key demographic, engagement and inclusion of youth is vital in bringing about meaningful and lasting socio-political change both nationally and locally. Unfortunately, in the national reconciliation process such engagement and inclusion is sparse. Often, rural youth are underrepresented in national dialogues and due to limited engagement and capacitation efforts, they lack the skills, knowledge and resources to make a meaningful impact. The C-YEP initiative aims to capacitate university students through thematic trainings and workshops on Pluralism thereby bringing them into the public/ national discourse on Pluralism in order to strengthen the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

In achieving this, through a diverse set of interventions, C-YEP continued to engage with not only undergraduates but also the academic staff of these institutions in bringing about the desired changes leading up to the achievement of its objectives. Both parties, with the support of the project team planned, designed and implemented intra and inter university activities to achieve the objectives.

Overall, 140 undergraduates including 35 students from each of the four institutions were selected at the inception and were provided with the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and resources to use actualization tools of their choice which thus far included a debating competition, art competition, events to showcase folklore and a drama festival.

In spite of restrictions imposed on public gatherings due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, both students and academics continue to support and engage with the project through virtual/online platforms. In organizing and implementing actualization events too, both parties came up with innovative means where they utilized online platforms to engage with the public through awareness raising and advocacy events overcoming challenges and demonstrating their commitment to this worthy cause.

Key achievements

- During the year, a group of 140 university students were trained in skills to help them move towards creating a pluralistic society. These included national level thematic trainings and workshops. Through these events NPC also aimed to provide knowledge, skills and attitudes which are necessary for follow on actualization activities where they would engage in awareness raising on pluralism for their peers and the general public.



- Phase 1 and 2 of the National Training for university academics on pluralism and peacebuilding was also conducted during this year for 30 academics from the 4 selected universities. They were given the opportunity to participate in 10 online awareness raising sessions that included issues of power-sharing in the domestic context, mapping opposing infrastructures to peace, nationalism, populism, majoritarianism and pluralism with reference to the US and Sri Lanka and international human rights debate and the national dimension. These trainings provided a platform for national and international academics to share knowledge and experiences creating new institutional level connections and affiliations. Through engaging and including both students and academics in these events, NPC envisaged the accomplishment of C-YEP project objectives in a more holistic and comprehensive manner where it would nurture and strengthen the national discourse on pluralism through their collaborative efforts,
- In conducting trainings and capacitation interventions, NPC managed to obtain technical assistance from local and international experts on pluralism, transitional justice, preventing violent extremism and peacebuilding from renowned academic institutions which included the likes of Prof. Donald Horowitz from the Duke Law School and Duke University, USA; Prof. Oliver Richmond of the University of Manchester, United Kingdom; Prof. Neil Devotta of the Wake Forest University, USA; Prof. Vasuki Nesiah of the New York University, USA; Dr. Malathi de Alwis of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Colombo University; Mr. Lakshman Gunasekara, journalist and communications consultant and Mr. Pieter D' Almeida, motivational speaker, MD/CEO of N-able Tech Forum.
- In supporting and guiding university students on their actualization initiatives, long-distance mentoring sessions were conducted under the respective themes. The project organized five mentoring sessions including three sessions for research groups and two sessions for debate groups.
- The project took initiative to conduct a collaborative research on "Language of Peacebuilding in Post-War Sri Lanka: Redefining Terminologies for Multicultural Coexistence". The research study was conducted with the intention of exploring the public understanding and existing interpretations of terminologies related to peace and pluralism. Suggestion for conducting the study was brought forward by university academics of the four educational institutions during an institutional level discussions.

- A social media awareness raising campaign on Covid 19 and related health guidelines was organized by students of the four universities. This included informative videos, poster and drawings created by the 140 students that were shared across multiple social media and online platforms. The campaign received immense praise and positive feedback from other social media users where they received more than 1000 “likes” and “shares” indicating that both the potential of the youth group trained through the project in creating public dialogue as well as the public’s interest and willingness to support such youth lead initiatives.

Story of Impact: Learning from international experts

Educators and academia play a pivotal role in initiating and changing the national level discourse. Thus, they are integral to the creation of positive change. Throughout the years, the involvement of local academia in the discourse on the national peacebuilding process has been limited to single or small-scale collectives where there is still a space for a broader and inclusive engagement in nurturing and bolstering the process. Identifying this, the C-YEP project created a platform through which educators of higher educational institutions could not only come together and discuss but also gain international technical expertise on strengths and areas that require improvement within the national peacebuilding process.

Thus, local academics from four state universities engaged and shared knowledge with international experts and academics from three world renowned universities and three local higher education institutions creating networks both locally and internationally propelling the discourse on peacebuilding and pluralism forward. NPC strongly believe that such engagement and networking is the cornerstone to ensure future collective action and engagement to create a shared future we all desire.

Highlights for 2021

- Carried out four skill building trainings for 140 university undergraduates
- Carried out 4 trainings on research, 4 trainings on debating, 4 trainings on video making and one training on drama for each university
- Conducted series of research mentoring sessions for undergraduates who had selected research as their thematic area
- Completed 4 debating competitions at the University of Ruhuna, Eastern University, Jaffna University and at the Sabaragamuwa University as actualization activities

Sustaining peace through pluralism and inclusive service delivery

Sustaining peace through pluralism and inclusive service delivery project is funded by Freedom House and is implemented in partnership with four national universities. It supports to provide opportunities for front-line state officials to broaden their awareness on pluralism and inclusive service delivery through introducing new academic study programmes in partnership with the said education institutions. Initiated in December 2020, the project aims to improve the capacities of state officials to deliver public services and to increase their participation in sustaining peace by enrolling them in academic courses under the guidance of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of Jaffna and University of Ruhuna. The development of course content for each of the study programmes has a structured process to identify the needs of the four districts in which the universities are located. Faculty members from the institutions will consult with selected officials from the particular district and divisional secretariats, Grama Niladhari officers, local state authorities and the general public to identify these needs. Faculty members of the four universities will then develop course modules based on the needs of their specific areas identified through consultations with both uniform and location specific course components.

The two main objectives of the project are to 1) enhance the role of the local Universities in promotion of pluralism and peacebuilding skills and to supporting a second tier of NGOs and 2) to strengthen civil society at the community level.

In achieving the above, the project completed their preliminary meetings with some District Secretariats, Divisional Secretariats, Grama Niladhari Officers and Local Government Authorities to ascertain procedural requirements and carried out preliminary focus group discussions with service deliverers and receivers. All major project activities are scheduled for the following year. They include key informant interviews, sharing of findings of preliminary meetings and focus group discussions with the four selected universities, residential training and discussion session on how to develop a syllabus with university faculty members, meeting to draft and develop specific location based syllabi by university faculty members and commencement of the Certificate Course at each of the universities where 40 candidates will receive the opportunity to follow this certificate course. In addition, five sub grants will be given to five civil society organizations to support them address lacunae in service delivery in their respective locations.

Highlights for 2021

- Throughout the past year the project has reach more than 1100 individuals through its various interventions and activities. This includes 240 high level state officials including District and Divisional Secretaries and 240 mid-level state officials and community members who are part of the state driven service delivery process in the capacity of service deliverers and recipients.
- Twelve preliminary meetings were held with government officials in Matara, Batticaloa, Jaffna and Ratnapura, who responded positively and said they appreciated getting practical knowledge to frontline public officers. “We are living in a society with unresolved conflicts so we need officers who are similar to the counsellors,” said Jaffna

District Secretary, Mr. K. Mahesan. The meetings discussed the challenges faced by government officers in providing nondiscriminatory public services and the steps to be taken to overcome them.

- Four focus group discussions were conducted with the public and state officials who are working as the front-line public officers and the general public including civil society activists and religious leaders in Matara and Batticaloa districts.

Language to Reconcile (L2R)

The Language to Reconcile (L2R) project was initiated in June 2020 to identify the issue of language as a key dividing factor in Sri Lanka which dates back to the colonial times and was also a root cause for the 30-year long civil conflict. Although both Sinhala and Tamil have been recognized by the state as official state languages, Tamil speakers in particular continue to suffer from unequal treatment where it concerns language rights. The L2R project therefore seeks to provide language education to the selected state officials from the three administrative institutions as an effort in ensuring the provision of equal space and opportunity for speakers of both languages.

With promoting language equality to reconcile as the overall goal, the L2R project has two main objectives- namely mobilizing established CSO platforms/ forums to vindicate language rights and improving inter-ethnic engagement through language learning. In achieving the above, the project is implemented in three subnational divisions in the Central, Eastern and Western provinces. Existing records indicate that in these subnational divisions namely Akurana, Trincomalee and Beruwala, only a miniscule proportion of state administrative officials engaged in public service delivery are proficient in Tamil.

In this context, the project is implemented through Local Inter Religious Committees (LIRC) which are localized platforms for ethno-religious coexistence established by the NPC and community police sub committees. They will work collaboratively to implement language rights/policy within state sector organizations, particularly service delivery organizations that maintain routine engagement and interaction with the public and in promote language learning as a key element of improving community interaction towards more engaged reconciliation.

The project also aims to engage the larger community on language rights through targeted campaigns and provide language learning support for youth through information sessions on language learning applications. On the one hand, the project focuses on the need and right of citizens to be able to communicate with the state in their own language. On the other hand, the project utilizes language to unify, and not divide on the basis of the language they speak which hinders the creation of lasting inter community relations, through interactive activities which include language camps and exchange visits. Thus, the activities of L2R project encompass all cross-sections of society making it a comprehensive and holistic initiative in creating unity, realizing community needs and protecting rights.

Key achievements

- The L2R project is well received by state officials of the three selected subnational divisions. Higher level state administration officials including Divisional Secretaries of Beruwala, Akurana and Trincomalee have praised the initiative highlighting that it is a timely need and have pledging their fullest support for the initiative. The willingness to support the initiative by divisional administrative heads is key in ensuring the continues participation of state officials in planned language classes.
- One focus group discussion was held in the at Kalutara District in their Beruwela Divisional Secretase division with the participation of 35 community members, which was focused on identifying issues in state driven service delivery process for which

collaborative mitigatory action would be taken through the project by bringing together high-level state officials, state officials engaged in service delivery, LIRC members and community level representatives into a common discussion platform.

- The competence of LIRC members in identifying community level needs and their vast experience, in particular state officials who are members of committees working at the community level and have first-hand experience in engaging with the public, is a strength to the project. Through their expertise and ground level knowledge, L2R was able to identify pressing location-specific needs in service delivery which would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Story of Impact: Ensuring language rights of communities

Language rights promotion is a key focus of the project. Although constitutional provisions are in place ensuring the language rights of all citizens, ground level reality particularly in remote locations of the country is vastly different. Identifying the need to sensitize the public on the matter and raising civic consciousness on the same, the L2R project conducted a division-wide consultation session to identify gaps and issues in service delivery encountered by the general public in the Beruwala Divisional Secretariat division with the participation of representatives of the state as well as different ethno-religious communities and profession categories.

The event was successful and helped community members realise that they too have rights in terms of language that are included and guaranteed through the constitution. The event also helped to mobilize them through capacitation and allowed them to network with each other to create a collective and collaborative approach towards demanding their language rights.

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):

President Needs to Resolve Dispute Over National Anthem (28.01.2020)

An issue that has surfaced and which is causing heartburn among Tamil-speaking citizens is the likelihood that the national anthem will not be sung in Tamil at the forthcoming National Independence Day celebrations on February 4. Government members have been making contradictory statements on this issue. Some of them have openly declared that the national anthem will not be sung in Tamil on this occasion.

Keep Open The Space For Soft Skills Programmes by NGOS (06.03.2020)

A set of guidelines issued by the Mullaitivu District Secretariat to all non-governmental organisations working in the district has notified them that their work should be focused on infrastructure development and not on soft skill training. Examples of the latter that are provided are women's empowerment, child rights, youth training, human rights, land rights training, and formation and strengthening of self-help groups.

Presidential Pardons Need To Consider Institutional Stability (04.04.2020)

The presidential pardon given to an army soldier convicted and sentenced to death by the courts of law, including the Supreme Court, has generated severe criticism from political parties, human rights organisations and citizens groups. The eight killings for which this soldier was convicted were particularly brutal and included three children under the age of 18 with one being only five years old. The pardon is unacceptable.

Solidarity in The Time of Covid (29.05.2020)

The lifting of the day time curfew in all parts of the country from the beginning of this week reflects the government's determination and confidence to restore normalcy to the lives of people. This government decision will be welcomed especially by those whose very livelihoods depend on the economic and social transactions that normalcy makes possible.

Proposals Made to Experts Committee to Draft A New Constitution (29.12.2020)

The government's intention to replace the present constitution with a new constitution offers the possibility of developing a framework of governance that could address the conflicts between the ethnic and religious communities that have marred the post-independence progress of Sri Lanka. Under colonial rule Sri Lanka was at the top of Asia's economies and described as the "Switzerland of the East." However, the inability to forge a unified polity, and ensure a feeling of equal belonging and participation in national policymaking, led to decades of conflict.

FINANCES

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 2020, 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 2020, 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/-)

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

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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.



22 November 2021
Colombo

National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 31 December 2020

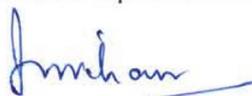
ASSETS	Note	2020 Rs.	2019 Rs.
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant and Equipment	4	99,354,273	102,820,709
Intangible Asset	4.10	296,037	-
		<u>99,650,310</u>	<u>102,820,709</u>
Current Assets			
Inventories	5	17,350	9,656
Receivables	6	1,241,707	5,660,180
Cash and Bank Balances	7	56,117,421	64,290,997
		<u>57,376,478</u>	<u>69,960,833</u>
Total Assets		<u>157,026,788</u>	<u>172,781,541</u>
FUNDING & LIABILITIES			
Accumulated Funds			
Restricted Funds	11	26,617,980	38,644,493
Unrestricted Funds	8	752,892	3,566,917
Reserve A	9	9,601,213	9,868,489
Reserve B	10	16,094,442	16,094,442
Revaluation Reserves		84,379,680	84,379,680
		<u>137,446,207</u>	<u>152,554,021</u>
Non-Current Liabilities			
Staff Welfare Fund	12	725,852	725,852
Retirement Benefit Liability	13	7,873,932	5,964,100
Non-Current Portion of Interest bearing loans and borrowings	14	-	402,073
Deferred Liability	15	789,161	698,123
		<u>9,388,945</u>	<u>7,790,148</u>
Current Liabilities			
Income Tax Payable	21	4,908,349	4,530,508
Payables	16	4,881,214	6,941,860
Current Portion of Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14	402,073	965,004
		<u>10,191,636</u>	<u>12,437,372</u>
Total Funding and Liabilities		<u>157,026,788</u>	<u>172,781,541</u>

These Financial Statements are in compliance with the requirements of the 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.



National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Limited

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Year ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 Rs.	2019 Rs.
Incoming Resources	17	176,468,426	196,595,150
OPERATING EXPENDITURE			
Project Expenses	18.1	(173,368,426)	(196,595,150)
Total Operating Expenditure		<u>(173,368,426)</u>	<u>(196,595,150)</u>
Net Deficit on Operating Activities		3,100,000	-
Revenue Earned from Other Activities	19	3,423,261	11,492,286
Administrative Expenses	18.1	(5,896,051)	(5,531,885)
Finance Cost	20	(191,694)	(487,109)
Net Surplus Before Tax		<u>435,516</u>	<u>5,473,292</u>
Income Tax Expenses	21	(377,841)	(850,459)
Net Surplus After Tax		<u>57,675</u>	<u>4,622,833</u>
Other Comprehensive Income		-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year		<u><u>57,675</u></u>	<u><u>4,622,833</u></u>

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

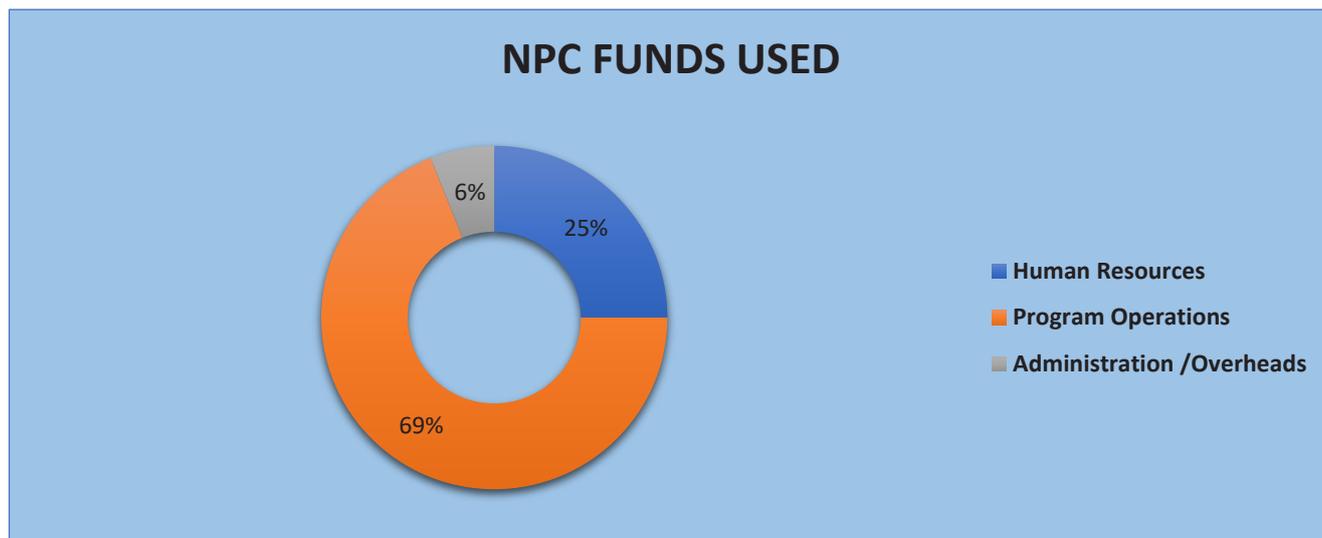


Funding Portfolio



Name of donor	Amount (LKR)	Percentage
US Dept. of Health & Human Services	33,933,057	21.04%
MISEREOR	19,945,698	12.37%
Global Communities	19,648,261	12.18%
AGIAMONDO	12,303,544	7.63%
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	12,003,272	7.44%
USAID	10,913,313	6.77%
European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights	9,742,912	6.04%
The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)	7,806,946	4.84%
CAFOD	7,021,209	4.35%
Open Society Foundations	6,217,278	3.85%
Helvetas - Swiss Intercorporation	6,062,213	3.76%
Legal Action Worldwide	5,466,000	3.39%
Freedom House	3,710,000	2.30%
National Languages Fund (NLF)	2,185,250	1.35%
International Organization for Migration	2,120,746	1.31%
Amnesty International, Sri Lanka	1,956,000	1.21%
Harrogate, United Kingdom	267,238	0.17%
TOTAL	161,302,938.24	100.00%

Funds Utilisation



THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 PARTNERS AND DONORS

Major Donors



This project is funded by the European Union



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Project Partners



Way Forward

In the coming period NPC will continue to maintain a balance between facilitating voluntary formations and necessary state engagement. The organisation, through its LIRC process, which involves both local government and community police, is engaged with sub-national central administration structures and community policing structures. Through its DIRC formations, it fosters voluntary engagement for community peacebuilding and rights protection. While NPC will engage with state entities through its work to influence the mindset of its actors and policy delivery on the ground, it will ensure that the facilitated groups remain neutral and committed to the ideals of human rights and pluralism. At the same time NPC will seek to deepen its engagement with academic institutions – universities as part of its continuing efforts to mainstream ideas of reconciliation and rights-based pluralism. Engagement with universities will give greater legitimacy to and acceptance for NPC's work enabling it to navigate a challenging environment.

NPC will continue to raise funds for relief work to sustain trust with communities that it engages with. This will enhance the profile of its networks enabling them to garner greater influence within the communities for collective benefit. With the increasing economic crisis, the work of organisations focused on rights and peace building will be challenged in terms of their ability to engage meaningfully with disempowered groups, which will be more focused on economic sustenance. As all donor funding that NPC raises disallows development/ livelihood support work, it will be difficult for the organization to respond to this need. Nevertheless, peace building groups will need to endeavour to weave in components on economic resilience into their general programming. Members of NPC networks consistently request for support to reconciliation centred economic activities as a contextual response.

NPC's presence in 23 districts of the country through its various projects and its ability to network its DIRCs and partner organizations continues to be its strength and main source of value addition as an activist CSO. While there are several government and civil society engagements that promote social cohesion and conflict mitigation, most of them are reluctant to engage in discussion on the roots of the underlying causes of the ethnic conflict. The importance of the NPC intervention is that it brings the politics of ethnicity and religion into focus in its engagements throughout the country. This is through trainings and discussions in which the roots of the conflict are explored and dealing with its manifestations and consequences are taken up in educational programmes such as on pluralism, human rights, political solutions and reconciliation.

In the spirit of a peacebuilding organization, NPC will engage with the government on issues of reconciliation, institutional reform and civil society oversight. It has been able to effectively engage with the Foreign Minister and hopes to continue this process to influence state policy and action while maintaining its commitment to rights and pluralism-based reconciliation. NPC members are part of a group- the Sri Lanka Collective for Consensus (SLCC) currently engaged with the government on issues of reconciliation and civil society space. In addition, civil society activists and organizations working for peace, reconciliation and human rights must continue to work together. NPC will continue to give its full support to all like-minded civil society platforms to continue their efforts.



National Peace Council of Sri Lanka.

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