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National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



Paths To Peace

July 2025

Empowering Public Institutions for Inclusion

NPC's Plural Action for Inclusion, Reconciliation and Social Justice (PAIRS) project funded by Misereor and co-funded by CAFOD and implemented in collaboration with District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) and regional Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), continued to make significant strides in strengthening inclusive governance in Sri Lanka. Activities focused on building the capacity of senior government officials to institutionalise pluralism, social justice and reconciliation across multiple districts.

Ninety 90 public officials, including District Secretaries, Additional and Assistant District Secretaries, Divisional Secretaries and NGO Coordinators, participated in a series of two day residential seminars that took place in Colombo, Vavuniya and Badulla. With a focus on inclusive service delivery, linguistic rights and fair access for underserved areas, these sessions explored the Government Establishment Code.

The workshop in Colombo, which was organized in collaboration with the Darmashakthi Foundation and led by Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya, generated lively conversations about reconciliation and pluralism. Through cooperative activities, participants examined their critical role in fostering sustainable development and peaceful coexistence.



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Facilitated by Antony Mayuran with assistance from the Federation of Institutions for Rural Management (FIRM), a partner organization, the Vavuniya session gave officials the ability to evaluate their roles in putting inclusive ideas into effect. All of the participants felt confident or extremely confident in implementing these ideas to their daily job according to post-training evaluations, which is evidence of the programme's rapid impact.

Two significant initiatives in Badulla demonstrated the district's dedication to inclusivity. Professor Nirmal Ranjith of the University of Colombo's Faculty of History led a workshop for officials that reaffirmed the state's commitment to equitable governance while Future in Our Hands (FIOH) Puttalam led a DIRC meeting that placed a high priority on interfaith understanding. With an emphasis on fostering religious unity among students in religious schools, DIRC members set the foundation for upcoming actualisation activity to advocate for inclusion in the district.

A preliminary assessment of state officers' implementation of inclusive administrative procedures was carried out in Kegalle, Puttalam, Matara, Galle, Nuwara Eliya, Anuradhapura, Ratnapura, Kandy, Polonnaruwa and Kurunegala between July 2024 and June 2025. In their administrative duties, nine out of ten officials at the district level had successfully incorporated inclusive methods.

The following key practices were adopted by government officers after training by NPC:

- Multilingual communication in public service: Ensuring access for linguistic minorities.
- Gender sensitive service delivery: Addressing the needs of women and marginalised genders.
- Disability access adjustments: Improving infrastructure and processes for persons with disabilities.
- Community consultation in planning: Engaging diverse groups in decision making.
- Diversity in hiring and promotions: Promoting equitable representation in public institutions.
- Anti-discrimination grievance mechanisms: Establishing systems to address bias and exclusion.
- Flexible service hours for marginalised groups: Accommodating vulnerable communities' needs.

This achievement reflects the growing commitment among government officers to uphold principles of equity, accessibility and social justice in public service - a key milestone in the journey toward inclusive governance. The tangible changes observed demonstrate how capacity building can transform institutional cultures for lasting impact.

"The training changed my understanding of inclusion and pluralism in Sri Lanka. As a government officer, I had only encountered these concepts in policy documents but the facilitator brought them to life with clear language and practical examples. He showed us how to translate these principles into our daily administrative work, making the abstract deeply personal. The session on identity and privilege was a revelation; They helped me recognise my own biases and understand the value of others' experiences. I now see how laws and institutional practices can either uplift or marginalise communities and how we, as public servants, hold the power to drive change. Most importantly, I learned to approach my work with greater cultural and religious sensitivity," said T. Dharmendra, Regional Director of the Industrial Development Board.

"What made this training exceptional was its interactive nature. Instead of a one way lecture, the facilitator fostered open dialogue, encouraging questions, discussions and self-reflection. This created a safe space where learning felt collaborative, not imposed. I didn't just gain knowledge; I felt a renewed sense of responsibility. The lessons stayed with me, reshaping how I approach my official duties with empathy and intentionality," said Sendikumaran Sumithra, a Women's Development Officer in Vavuniya.

The workshops did more than impart knowledge; they brought a sense of responsibility among public officials to drive change from within the state structure. By bridging gaps in governance and fostering collaboration across sectors, the project is paving the way for a more inclusive and peaceful Sri Lanka.



Actualisation activities focused projects tackling important inclusion issues through community driven advocacy have begun as part of the project. Being the first of 16 districts to successfully implement one of these activities, the Batticaloa District recently celebrated a milestone and received a lot of media attention. This accomplishment establishes a standard for the other districts where comparable initiatives are currently under progress.

NPC and Human Rights Civil Committee Batticaloa mobilised 100 stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials and religious leaders, for an actualisation activity that included a rally and an awareness campaign with leaflet distribution, a signature drive and media conference. Appeals were submitted to the Batticaloa AGA, Mayor and police demanding action against political hate speech on social media.

As part of its Nuwara Eliya District actualisation activity, NPC made a field visit to Talawakele's Hollyrood Estate with nine civil society leaders, along by Nuwara Eliya DIRC Coordinator, who documented the difficulties that the Malaiyaha community faced in the Holyrood, Great Western and Watagoda estate divisions where the postal service failure has had a significant impact on people's lives. Results from the field trip included gathering detailed information and video testimonies for a documentary that aims to elevate community perspectives. This initiative marks the first phase of a structured four step advocacy plan that will progress through targeted dialogues with the estate superintendent and postmaster followed by engagements with the District Secretary, local officials and affected families to present actionable proposals. The activity culminated in plans for direct advocacy with the Minister for Estate Infrastructure. Media coverage brought attention to these efforts, underscoring the urgency of systemic intervention.

The Kandy DIRC meeting at the Muththumaari Amman Kovil in Katugasthota united 30 interfaith leaders to advance two key priorities: fostering inter religious understanding through exposure visits for young monks and youth of minority faiths and advocating for inclusive multi-faith prayer spaces in Kandy's government hospitals. Participants deepened their cultural awareness by observing Hindu rituals and discussing practical steps to promote cohesion.

Ratnapura DIRC convened at Jennath Jumma Mosque where 37 members addressed systemic barriers to government services for Nanperiyal estate workers, crafting collaborative solutions to improve access. Monaragala DIRC gathered 47 stakeholders at Bakinigahawela Jumma Mosque to confront the marginalisation of indigenous Vedda communities, pledging initiatives to integrate their voices into peacebuilding processes. These meetings reflect NPC's sustained commitment to transforming interfaith dialogue into tangible progress for the most vulnerable groups.



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Empowering Women in Politics

The Active Citizens for Elections and Democracy (ACED) project, funded by the EU and implemented by NPC in partnership with PAFFREL, Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), Centre for Communication Training (CCT) and Women and Democracy in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, organized two events aimed at empowering women political leaders from across Sri Lanka. These initiatives brought together 47 women leaders representing each district, offering them opportunities to reflect, learn and advance their engagement in political processes.

NPC facilitated a national consultation meeting led by Mr. Dhanushka de Silva and Ms. Anjalee Korala, which provided a safe and open space for participants to share their experiences and reflections regarding the ongoing challenges in fulfilling the women's quota in politics.

Participants spoke candidly about the struggles they face, including political exclusion, lack of party support, societal expectations and limited access to leadership roles. They also discussed the broader issues surrounding political inclusion and the need for sustained reforms to ensure more equitable representation. The session allowed women to identify key barriers and share strategies to overcome them, fostering solidarity and a sense of shared purpose.

The same group of 47 women leaders who attended the national consultation on women's quota visited the parliament for an awareness programme. "Women need to play a more decisive role in governance and politics in Sri Lanka if it is to develop in a manner that improves the lives of all people," said Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, Founder and Chair of AWAW at a meeting with officials in parliament. She noted that the visit took place a time when Sri Lanka urgently needs more diverse and representative leadership.

The session aimed to give women politicians encouragement and inspiration in their political journeys, offering them an opportunity to learn firsthand about parliamentary processes and deepen their understanding of governance system.

Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi, Executive Director of PAFFREL, thanked the Public Outreach Division of the Parliament's Department of Communications for hosting the event. "We are proud to partner with parliament in creating spaces where women can access knowledge, experience and networks that strengthen their political voice," he said.



The keynote address on women's representation in politics and the role of parliament was delivered by Mr. Chaminda Kularatne, Chief of Staff and Deputy Secretary General of Parliament. He offered both historical context and contemporary analysis. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. M. Jayalath Perera, Director (Legislative Services) and Acting Director (Communication), who explained the committee system, highlighting avenues through which MPs and women in particular can influence policy, oversight and legislation beyond floor debate.

The participants expressed appreciation for the knowledge and inspiration gained. They noted that the visit to parliament marked was a practical boost to their capacities and confidence.



Enhancing Research Communication and Dissemination Capacity

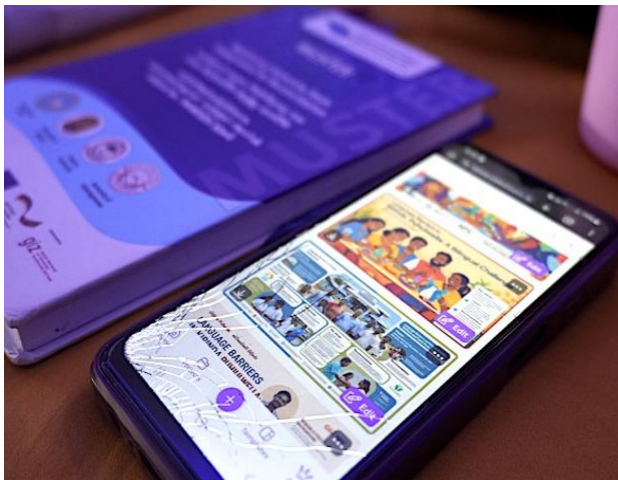
NPC's Mobilising University State Engagement for Reconciliation (MUSTER) project, supported by Strengthening Social Cohesion and Peace in Sri Lanka (SCOPE) and co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Foreign Office, focused on capacity building initiatives, enhancing student researchers' abilities to effectively communicate and disseminate their findings through creative and accessible methods. This enhanced dissemination capacity ensures that research addressing conflict resolution and cultural preservation reaches intended audiences, thus strengthening efforts to rebuild social cohesion and prevent the further decline of traditional practices.

The project conducted creative dissemination workshops designed to equip university research pods with essential tools and methods for sharing research findings with diverse audiences.

University of Ruhuna students participated in the creative data dissemination tools workshop, which introduced essential approaches for making research accessible and impactful. The session covered online dashboards for interactive data exploration, audio/visual presentations using multimedia formats, storytelling techniques for narrative driven research communication and formal academic presentations for scholarly audiences.

Dilhani Kumarasingha, a student from University of Ruhuna, said, "When I first joined the programme, I didn't expect it to be this important. But this has been a remarkable experience. It clearly showed us how to communicate the work we do to society in a more meaningful and impactful way. I believe this programme will be even more beneficial to us in the future than it is today."

Dulmi Yasara, another University of Ruhuna student, said, "We had used the Canva app before but today we truly understood its depth. It offers the opportunity to carry out many of our day to day activities in a creative manner. Another key takeaway is how to build success stories. This will be a great opportunity for us to share the nuanced aspects of the research we conducted with society."



University of Jaffna students received the same capacity building training. "We are still students. We didn't have a clear understanding of how to disseminate the research we do to society. Through this programme, we learnt how to creatively share the data we have. That was very valuable. We learnt that by using an app like Canva we can organize data quickly and easily," said Vijisnaraj Maruthalingam a student from University of Jaffna. Another student, Kathiska Kavitharajan, explained, "As students we learnt how important research papers are for us. Now we feel motivated to engage in research. This guidance was very important. We now know how to make proper power point presentations."

Both workshops emphasised practical application, with participants engaging in case study group work where they were divided into small groups, given scenarios with data and specific target audiences and tasked with identifying the most appropriate dissemination tools and methods for their particular research contexts. This hands-on approach ensures that students can effectively share research that contributes to reconciliation and social cohesion, maximising the impact of their work in addressing these critical issues.

The workshops introduced students to various tools and platforms for different dissemination approaches and addressed key considerations for each dissemination method, including when online dashboards are most effective for quantitative research data and government officials, how audio/visual presentations work best for emotional research topics and diverse educational backgrounds, when storytelling approaches are ideal for humanising statistical data and community presentations and how academic presentations remain essential for conference settings and peer review processes. These diverse dissemination strategies ensure that research on reconciliation can reach all relevant stakeholders from policymakers to community members, strengthening the overall impact on conflict resolution and cultural conservation efforts.

Participants engaged in interactive activities for sharing expectations and feedback and group presentations. The workshops concluded with practical next steps encouraging students to experiment with different tools, practice with their own research data and seek feedback from their target audiences. These practical steps ensure that the enhanced communication skills will be applied to research that supports reconciliation.

These capacity building initiatives represent an important investment in ensuring that the research conducted through the project reaches its intended audiences effectively and creates meaningful impact beyond the academic sphere. By equipping student researchers with diverse communication tools and methods, the project strengthens the bridge between university generated knowledge and community level application, supporting the broader goals of reconciliation and social cohesion in Sri Lanka. The improved dissemination of research findings directly contributes to strengthening social cohesion and preserving cultural and spiritual practices that are at risk of being lost.



Vocational Training for Youth in Monaragala

Under Phase 3 of the Women Organized for Inclusion through Community Engagement (WOICE) project, an intervention was implemented in the Monaragala District to address youth unemployment called Let's Put an End to Unemployment and Take Up Vocational Training.

The goal was to promote vocational training as a career path among school leavers, particularly those who were unemployed or underemployed. The event was organized by the WOICE Super Group and Youth Group leaders in collaboration with the Uwa Wellassa Women's Organization, which identified eligible youth in the district and organized a training session to raise awareness of available vocational courses and the process for enrollment.

Participants were directed to vocational training centres in Monaragala and Wellawaya. After the session several youth enrolled in courses such as motor mechanic, masonry, salon, electrician, information technology, bakery and cookery. There was an increase in vocational training participation and some youth were helped to set career goals. Parents responded positively to their children joining skill development programmes.

Challenges included low motivation, limited awareness of vocational qualifications, social perceptions of vocational jobs and mismatches between student interest and parental expectations. Some students struggled to maintain consistent attendance. In response, the project team conducted additional awareness sessions, supported goal setting and engaged with parents. Immediate enrollment support was provided after the initial session to maintain momentum. Feedback from participants indicated that many youth gained clarity on future plans and understood the value of vocational training. Parents said that they observed positive changes in their children.

This intervention served as a platform to elevate the leadership of local women involved in the WOICE network. By taking ownership of the planning and execution process, women leaders were able to demonstrate their capacity in community mobilisation and strategic problem solving. Their leadership was not only central to the success of the event but also reinforced their role as active contributors to social change in their communities.

Beyond youth employment, the activity addressed broader concerns of community reconciliation and inclusion. By engaging families and community members in discussions about vocational education, the initiative opened up dialogue on the value of diverse career pathways and broke down some of the social stigmas associated with non-traditional jobs. These discussions encouraged cooperative thinking and community level understanding, aligning with NPC's goal of strengthening social cohesion.

The cross district learning component embedded in WOICE Phase 3 allowed Monaragala's women leaders to share their experiences and strategies with peers in other districts. The exchange promoted a culture of shared learning, mutual support and adaptive leadership, all essential to building a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Through this activity, NPC reinforced its commitment to nurturing local women as leaders in reconciliation and inclusive development. The initiative demonstrated how empowering women at the grassroots can lead to sustainable solutions for long standing social challenges.



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Black July 1983 - Remembering the Past to Secure the Future

Forty-two years after the violence of Black July, Sri Lanka continues to live in the shadow of unacknowledged violence that shattered the lives of thousands of Tamil families. Homes were burned, livelihoods destroyed, and innocent lives lost. Starting from Colombo, the riots and violence spread countrywide. Hundreds of innocent people were killed. Tens of thousands displaced. But there has still been no full accounting, no official truth, no justice, and no assurance that it will not happen again. The National Peace Council (NPC) marks this anniversary not only to mourn the victims, but to affirm that there can be no lasting reconciliation without first confronting the past and finding a political solution that addresses the roots of the problem.

The events of July 1983 were not spontaneous. They were the result of a long festering ethnic conflict that had turned violent. The riots in the south followed an LTTE attack that claimed the lives of 13 soldiers in the context of growing Tamil militancy in the north. The violent reaction was a result of political manipulation, state inaction, and a culture of impunity. Until this is openly acknowledged, healing cannot begin. The unanswered questions of 1983, who was responsible, how many died, why the state failed, continue to haunt the country. These unresolved truths echo in more recent national tragedies, including the Easter Sunday bombings of 2019, the mass graves at Chemmani from 1995, and other instances where justice has been delayed, denied, or buried.

With the passage of time, as the decades pass, fewer and fewer citizens have knowledge of what took place in July 1983. But unless we know the past, there can be no meaningful foundation for a peaceful future in which the political roots of the problem are dealt with. In this context, the government's proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission needs to include within its mandate a thorough examination of the events of July 1983. If younger generations are to inherit a country built on justice and mutual respect, they must be given the opportunity to learn the truth of what happened and why.

NPC also proposes that July 23 be set aside as a date on which the entire country can commemorate all those who lost their lives due to the unresolved ethnic conflict and resolve such bloodshed will never occur again. This will be a marker of the commitment of the present generation and government leadership to building a prosperous and developed country through a just political system based on the devolution and sharing of power that includes and protects all communities regardless of ethnicity, religion, caste, or class.

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Our Vision:

A just and peaceful Sri Lanka, in which the freedom, human rights and democratic rights of all peoples are assured.

Our Mission:

To work in partnership with different target groups with an aim to educate, mobilize and advocate the building of a rights conscious society of people that work towards a political solution to the ethnic conflict, reconciliation and equal opportunities for all.

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