



ශ්‍රී ලංකා ජාතික සාම මණ්ඩලය
இலங்கை தேசிய சமாதானப் பேரவை
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

Paths To Peace

June 2016

Women's Views To Reach Policy Makers

NPC has been implementing a FOKUS Women funded Post Conflict Healing: A Women's Manifesto since 2014.

The project is implemented in nine districts across the country that were both directly and indirectly affected by war: Puttalam, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Ampara, Hambantota, Galle, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya.

The project aims to mobilise women to take an active part in community healing, to establish lasting peace and to increase the participation of women in the process of post conflict transition.



It also trains participants on Transitional Justice (TJ), women's rights, role of women in post conflict society, reconciliation, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission and its recommendations and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that deals with women and security.

Information gathered at these activities of the past two years has been documented. NPC is presently involved in collating this information resource and is commissioning briefing papers focusing on specific topics such as language rights, missing persons, inaccessibility of legal remedies, psycho social counseling needs and economic hardships, which were identified as priority issues.

The briefing papers will be presented in a creative way that captures the voices of women and also highlights the solutions suggested. They will be given to relevant decision makers and utilised as an advocacy tool.

This will be timely as the transitional justice mechanisms that the government has pledged to set up, including the truth commission, special court, office of missing persons and office of reparations, will necessarily see women playing a major role as victim-survivors.

NPC's RIID Project Builds Inter Community Trust

The third phase of the Reconciling Inter Religious Differences project (RIID), supported by USAID, was introduced to members of the District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCS) of Batticaloa, Ampara, Kandy and Mannar.

A key objective of this project is to strengthen civil society activists to support the transitional justice process. Religious leaders who are trusted message bearers are well equipped to create awareness among the general population. In this regard the project

facilitates religious clergy belonging to the four religions to identify war victims from each of their faiths and get them to share their stories to the larger gathering.

"We need to change people's attitudes so that they respect each other's religions. If we fail to protect law and order in the country, it will be impossible to follow the values and ethics of any religion. Civil society has a responsibility to face this challenge."

**Buddhist Monk
Kandy Participant**

Among the issues that arose at the discussion was the local level mistrust between the Tamil and Muslim communities and the government, and between the communities themselves. This had impeded the plan to make Kalmunai into a municipality, as it would affect control over adjacent local government entities.

Another issue related to devolution of power at the provincial level with members of the different communities expressing concern that envisaged constitutional changes could be to the detriment of their own community. The need to have more facilitated dialogue, as occurred during these meetings, was emphasised as a way to build greater trust and sensitivity to the other.

At the orientation meeting in Kandy, NPC's director Professor M.S. Mookiah explained the significance of the Geneva resolution on Sri Lanka. One participant said he thought South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission had not been successful and asked how the truth could be disclosed if the same process was adopted in Sri Lanka.

A participant in Kandy said it was vital to prevent a recurrence of the war by looking at issues such as youth dissatisfaction in the north and devolution of power while in Mannar, participants welcomed the government's TJ process as a good opportunity to assist war survivors.



The Wronged Right: Narratives of Loss, Survival and Failure of the Law

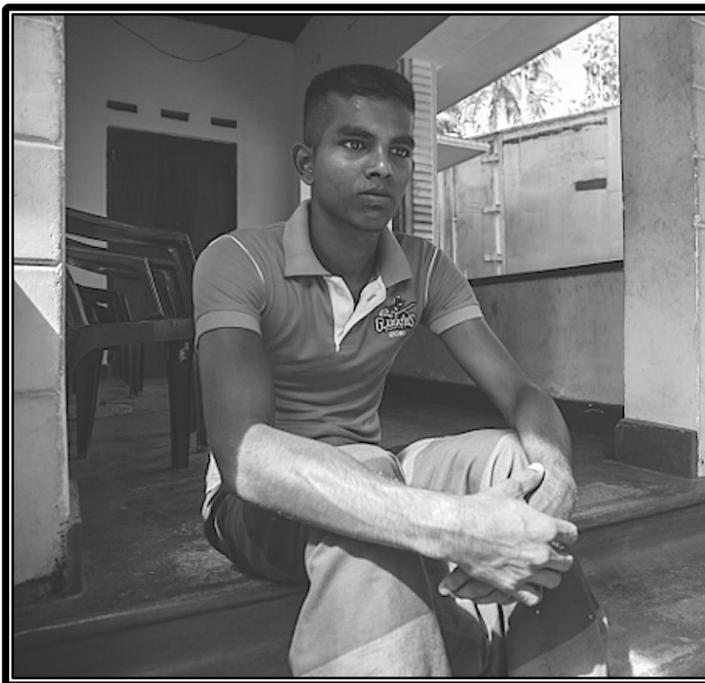
Ashan Tharanga Jeevandara from Gampaha was just 17 when he was accused of a crime he did not commit.

In an attempt to pin the robbery of a three wheeler on him, officers of the Meegahawatte police station tried to coerce a confession from Ashan through an arbitrary arrest, intimidation and repeated torture.

His torture resulted in scars on his back and numbness in his lower legs.

Ashan's experience is one of the seven stories of war and torture survivors featured in NPC's 27-minute documentary, *The Wronged Right*, produced

under its project Promoting Accountability and Preventing Torture by Strengthening Survivors of Torture in Asia. The stories are narratives of loss, pain, survival and the failure of the law.



His father's decision to take the matter to the courts resulted in offers of bribery from police officers to withdraw the case, but the family persisted. The consequences of the arrest, however, may be irreparable for Ashan who, despite passing his exams, decided to drop out of school because of the public shame he experienced.

Ashan has two pending court cases - one filed against him at the Kadawatha Magistrates Court by the police for his alleged part in the robbery and the other a Fundamental Rights application filed by him in the Supreme Court with support from the Citizens Committee Gampaha District (CCGD) alleging the infringement of his fundamental rights as a result of the brutal beating he received at the hands of the police.

At 19 years old, Ashan is not employed and has no clear idea about what he should do. He wants to learn motor mechanics because he is good at repairing vehicles. But he hesitates when thinking about what it will be like to go back into society that has already judged and ostracised him.

Coerced confessions through torture are an accepted norm in Sri Lanka, especially when it comes to the poor. The police go to any lengths to ensure that they produce someone for the case. Innocence or guilt does not matter as by the time the case gets to court, the victims are already broken, scared and exhausted. Many do not have the strength - mentally, physically or financially - to go on. At least in Ashan's case, the fight for justice has just begun.

"In most societies, if you don't do something wrong you have no problem with the law. But this is different. The wrongdoers live freely while innocent people are treated as offenders."

Ashan Tharanga Jeevandara

Engendering Parenthood - Challenge of Paternity Leave

By Lakmini Jayathilake

Sri Lanka is in a state of transition and this is the ideal time to mainstream gender, specifically women, into the transitional justice process.

We speak of increasing female representation in decision making bodies and processes but it has become evident that a woman encounters the strongest patriarchal resistance when she is made to embrace the role of a caregiver while positioning her husband as the breadwinner.



Why are we not advocating for policy changes related to paternity leave to inculcate a social acceptance of shared or joint responsibilities? Since no process can be engendered without challenging its underlying social system, no progress can take place without addressing patriarchy.

One of the reasons that paternity leave isn't something that men have pushed for is because the patriarchal system that we live in defines fatherhood as the breadwinner but never the caregiver or babysitter, which is classified as a woman's job.

The fact remains that all roles are taught to us from the day we are born. No one is inherently born with maternal instincts; mothers are made, not born. A study conducted by Bar Ilan University in 2014 showed that women who are the primary caregivers develop neural pathways in their brains that make them more responsive to emotional cues in their children. The same pathways developed in fathers who were the primary caregivers.

If childcare became a shared responsibility, this would not only strengthen the father-child bond but it would also allow the mother to get back into the labour force. Mainstreaming gender shouldn't just be about increasing women's participation in politics; it should take a holistic approach and address underlying causes.

Due to this imbalanced responsibility of child care, many mothers face a double bind. Women who work full time and are also the sole or primary caretakers may sacrifice certain earnings and career progressions to settle into an occupation that adapts to the responsibilities of child care such as shorter or flexible work hours, less travel, less accountable and risky jobs. Some mothers may choose to drop out of the labour force during the period of child rearing.

Women are not treated equally in the labour market because of their disproportionate share of time and energy in child care. Companies are more reluctant to employ or promote a woman due to

Continued on page 5

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.

Continued from page 4

For decades many women's rights activist have tried to increase the provision of maternity leave. More governments are now starting to believe that the best way to improve women's career prospects is instead to turn to the fathers. Fathers who take paternity leave are more likely to take an active role in child care tasks. Shared responsibility leads to greater marriage satisfaction and lower rates of divorce as it promotes an egalitarian relationship.

It is proven that early interaction has long term benefits for a child's learning abilities. A study done by the University of Oslo found that paternity leave improved children's performance at secondary school. Daughters, especially, seem to flourish if their fathers had taken time off.

Paternity leave helps women re-enter the labour force, as it doesn't deprive them of promotions, depress wages and hamper experience. It also creates greater equality within the workplace. When men shoulder more of the childcare burden, the adverse effects are lessened.

In Sri Lanka, a mother is entitled to 12 weeks (84 days) of paid maternity leave but there is no provision for paternity leave. Sweden was first country in 1974 to introduce a gender neutral parental leave to ensure that both parents take an active role in the child's development.

The first year the country introduced this law only 0.5% of fathers used the leave. The government made provisions to encourage them such as reducing the total days of parental leave if fathers didn't use up their minimum 60 days. The government also introduced an incentive scheme where the more days parents shared the leave equally, a bonus was paid. Today almost 90% of men in Sweden take paternity leave. Following the success of Sweden, Korea and Japan have also initiated paternity leave.

The base of any society lies in its future generation, hence it is vital that child care doesn't become a gender restricted duty but rather a collaborative effort that will help to sensitise the next generation. Living in a collectivist society that values family and togetherness, we must view the country as a family unit and shift from segregation of duties to joint responsibilities.

"Society is a mirror of the family. The only way to achieve equality in society is to achieve equality in the home. Getting fathers to share the parental leave is an essential part of that." Bengt Westerberg, Deputy Prime Minister, Sweden.

National Peace Council, 12/14 Purana Vihara Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka

Website: www.peace-srilanka.org, Email: info@peace-srilanka.org

Tel: 2818344, 2854127, Fax: 2819064