



Paths to Peace

A monthly newsletter from the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

NPC's Voter Education Campaign in 10 Districts

NPC carried out an island wide voter education campaign to encourage voters to use their franchise to elect candidates who were willing to support a transition process for reconciliation.



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

Voter education pocket meetings were held in Jaffna, Batticaloa, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Mannar, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Galle and Matara with the participation of District Inter Religious Committee members, members of local civil society organisations and government officials. A total of 609 people participated, of whom 279 were males and 330 female.

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“The time has come to educate citizen to become thoughtful voters so that they can enjoy their power. Civil society organisations and activists should work continuously to maintain a strong civil society until we change the political culture in this country.”

Participant from Kandy

Towards a Shared Future

Continued from Page 1

Nine radio panel discussions in Sinhala and three in Tamil were aired on the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation commercial channel. The programmes centred on topics such as good governance practices and their relevance to the country, rights of voters, role played by civil society to protect democracy and good governance, the participation of Muslim women in good governance, rights of fishing communities and other issues. The resource persons included members of DIRCs and representatives from civil society organisations.

The voter education campaign targeting the larger community included the publication of 52 voter education messages in Sinhala, English and Tamil.

The messages were carried in newspapers with a large readership especially in the rural areas. The messages were specifically aimed to promote candidates who upheld women's rights and those who promoted reconciliation in the country.

The wristbands, posters and leaflets also carried similar messages, which aimed to promote good governance practices and enlighten citizens on their rights and responsibilities as voters.

In total, over 15,000 wristbands, 20,000 leaflets and 10,000 posters were distributed island wide through NPC's partner networks.



“We need to elect representatives to the government who can understand the needs of the people and who will serve all people equally. We saw many problems arise when executive power was enjoyed by one person. We were able to make a change on January 8. We still need a strong and stable government. Therefore it is very important to have a government on August 17 with a majority of good members. This kind of awareness raising is very helpful at this time.”

**Participant from
Badulla**

Our vote is for Sri Lanka!



Our preferences are for

Sinhalese


Tamils


Muslims


Vote to end Racism!
Whatever political parties say, let's vote responsibly !





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 Seelana Jathika Naima Meyehayuma
 The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

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Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, we are all Sri Lankans!

Let's vote Against racism


To uphold the rights of all communities


To ensure the security of all citizens


Whatever political parties say, let's vote responsibly !





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Our vote is for a Sri Lankan nation!



Our preferences are

For religious freedom



Against racism


Against extremism

Whatever political parties say, let's vote responsibly !

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 National Peace Council of Sri Lanka
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 எங்கள் வாக்கு,
 இனவாதத்திற்கும்
 ஊழலுக்கும் எதிரானது !
 

General Election 2015

Consider qualifications and not promises!



- Has your candidate abused state power?
- Has your candidate been convicted before a court of law?
- Does your candidate earn his money legitimately?
- Has your candidate declared his wealth as required by law?
- Is your candidate active in Parliament in policy dialogue and framing legislation?
- Is your candidate committed to inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony?
- Is your candidate committed to equitable representation of women in governance at all levels?
- Does your candidate care about the future of the environment?

Whatever political parties say, vote responsibly!

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 National Peace Council of Sri Lanka
 The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

In support of the March 12 Movement.


 I am voting for candidates
 who uphold and protect
 the rights of women !
 


 My vote is against
RACISM & CORRUPTION !


News From The Field

NPC's Post Conflict Healing: A Women's Manifesto project, implemented with financial support from FOKUS Women, held a core group meeting in the Nuwara Eliya district. The project is aimed at healing women affected by the trauma of war through community participation.

The main purpose of the core group was to implement the healing activity decided by the larger group. The group discussed the healing activity and its feasibility, after which they drew up action plans and delegated tasks and responsibilities to its members, partner organisation and NPC.

The participants decided to create a support network of women from all ethnicities as a trust building activity to unite all ethnicities. People tended to mistrust others who were not from the same community due to fear and suspicion. The core group suggested a trust building activity to bring women from all ethnicities together to create networks and support systems.

The group then went into a general discussion. They spoke of language issues, where even in the AG's office forms were only in Sinhala so a Tamil person had to get to help fill them up.

The participants expressed disappointment that no female parliamentarian was elected from their district despite Nuwara Eliya having the most number of female candidates.

A participant's daughter who attended the meeting shared her experiences of working in a garment factory. She said the supervisors spoke in Sinhala, which the Northern Tamils could not understand or speak. She felt the supervisors were racist and hated the Northern Tamils. Because of this hostility the Northern Tamils did not associate with other people and had become a marginalized community. She said it was important to build trust among all communities.



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.

Opportunity to Address Good Governance Issues

The outcome of the General Election held on August 17, and the victory secured by the United National Front for good governance led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe paves the way for democratic transition to take place in two key aspects of good governance. It will consolidate the shift away from a highly centralised structure in which the system of checks and balances was weakened to a more consensual and systemic mode of governance that followed the election of President Maithripala Sirisena in January. It will also consolidate the shift away from a militarised mindset within the government in which mistrust of ethnic and religious minorities was highlighted to a society that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious in its decision making and choices.

The National Peace Council also welcomes the prospect of a government of national unity to address the challenges of the future. The agreement signed by the two largest political parties, the UNP and SLFP after the elections, to work together for two years on identified areas of good governance including the safeguarding of fundamental freedoms and protection of the rights of women and children reflects the consensus that exists in society regarding good governance.

However, we regret that the both the government and opposition did not live up to their commitments towards the empowerment of women in politics when they failed use their quotas in the national list to appoint women to parliament and instead appointed only two woman to the 29 positions. They failed to rectify the abysmally low representation of women in parliament, which fell to 4 percent. Another priority area for reform would be in the area of inter-ethnic relations and the sharing of power between the ethnic majority and minorities.

The issue of ethnic nationalism continues to be alive in the country even though the inability of the defeated opposition parties to make it a winning formula at two successive elections suggests that it is receding as a force. The past ten years of UPFA rule was primarily based on ethnic nationalism with the general population being constantly exposed to a barrage of anti-minority propaganda. Therefore there is a need for the government to commence an immediate programme of public education on the issue of inter-ethnic relations and the options for a political solution that would address the roots of the conflict. This could be done alongside civil society organisations to prepare the ground for future reforms that are necessary to resolve the conflict in a sustainable and mutually acceptable manner.

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