01

CAN YOUTH BE A CATALYST
FOR RECONCILIATION IN SRI LANKA?

SURVEY ON
YOUTH'S KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS
ON TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Tables

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a survey commissioned by the National Peace Council (NPC) to understand the opinion and attitudes of the youth towards their ethnic other, reconciliation, and transitional justice. Youth in this study are defined as individuals in the 18-29 age bracket. The survey was conducted across 21 districts, among 1000 youth, with a control sample of 400 adults. The survey findings were supplemented by qualitative fieldwork carried out in the Northern, North Western, Eastern, Central, and Western Provinces of Sri Lanka.

The survey data reveal a few key observations:

- Awareness of micro level initiatives (such as inter-faith celebrations and twinning school programmes) was much higher than awareness of any macro level initiative. In this connection, the Tamil community showed a relatively higher level of awareness.
- There seems to be consensus among all ethnic groups that 'strengthening of the law enforcement mechanism' is of great importance to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict in the country.
- Except youth from the Tamil community, all other youths, especially Sinhalese and Upcountry Tamil youth, think that strengthening the security forces is important to prevent the recurrence of conflict. Interestingly, the full implementation of the 13th Amendment is perceived as the least important proposal to youth across all ethnic categories.
- Support for the negative statements about reconciliation - reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides, reconciliation is a waste of resources, and reconciliation is not really necessary, and reconciliation is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka - is low among youth of all ethnic communities. However, there is slightly higher endorsement among the Sinhalese and Muslim youth for those negative statements.
- Endorsement of extreme forms of intolerance such as the use of violence is considerably low among all ethnic groups irrespective of age.
- Minority communities, not just the Tamil community but also the Muslim and Upcountry Tamil communities, clearly believe that their respective communities suffered the most because of the war.
- The findings indicate that not only the Tamil community but also the other minority communities such as Muslim and Upcountry Tamil, hold that their community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process.
- Despite the heavy nationalist propaganda particularly in the aftermath of the Easter Attack, the Sinhalese youth does not subscribe to the idea that 'the security/ position of

my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process'. However, there is a sizable proportion of respondents indicating agreement with this proposition among the minority communities.

- When looking at the level of importance given by each ethnic group to proposals for the achievement of reconciliation, prosecuting the perpetrators responsible for attacking religious places during the war seemed to be the most important proposal for Sinhalese youth. For Tamil youth, finding out what happened to the people who went missing during the war was of top priority.

- It is interesting to note that appointing a special court with local and international judges to investigate into the alleged occurrence of human rights violations during the war is the least important proposal for the Sinhalese and Upcountry Tamil youth. This proposal is listed as the third priority even for Tamil and Muslim youth.

In conclusion, the report observes that since ethnicity seems to still constitute a very strong cleavage, viewing youth as the catalyst for future change may have to be qualified. This ethnicized view of things is further compounded by the youths' lack of awareness of especially macro level reconciliation initiatives, which makes them particularly vulnerable to negative campaigns looking to maximize electoral advantage by appealing to divisions.

Additionally, the suspicion with which the youth seems to view the country's political and religious leadership is a sign that any reconciliation initiative taken by either of these categories may not enjoy legitimacy among the youth. However, given that most youth across ethnicities demonstrated great faith in the ability of law enforcement authorities to facilitate reconciliation, this may be used by political leaders to earn back lost legitimacy for the reconciliation programme.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Youth have played a key role in shaping the trajectory of modern Sri Lankan history. Since independence, Sri Lanka experienced two youth insurrections in the South and one protracted rebellion in the North and East of the country. Especially the uprising of the Tamil youth in the 1970s that turned out to be a protracted and bloody conflict between the two main ethnic communities in Sri Lanka has brought about unprecedented destruction to the social fabric and the economy of the country. Part of the reason has been the lack of inclusion of youth in processes of dialogue, making them susceptible to nationalist propaganda.

It is in this context that the Yahapalana government along with the international community came together to invest in numerous activities under the umbrella theme of transitional justice, with a view to transforming Sri Lankan society to a post-conflict society. The government managed to achieve a number of its objectives, while as many – and perhaps more – have been left unfulfilled at the time it getting ready to conclude its term. This study, part of the National Peace Council's initiative on transitional justice, aims to inquire into the level of youth engagement in the Transitional Justice process, with particular reference to how much the youth are aware of the concept of TJ and the initiatives implemented in relation to it, as well as how satisfied they are with those processes. Although the study focuses on youths' opinion and attitudes, the opinion of the adults were also capture through a small control sample to distinguish the difference between youth and others.

Opportunities to harness the positive role that young men and women can play in social change and in the promotion of peace have not, to date, been properly utilized, in particular the power of young women as a driving force. With this in mind, the National Peace Council (NPC) has ventured into empowering youth as a catalyst for peace. As a component of this programme, the NPC commissioned a survey across 21 districts to understand the opinion and attitudes of the youth towards their ethnic other, reconciliation, and transitional justice. Youth in this study are defined as individuals in the 18-29 age bracket.

This report aims to share the findings of a survey conducted amongst 1100 youth in 21 districts. The survey also captured the views of 400 adults in order to obtain a comparative understanding of the youth's views on reconciliation and peace building. Interviews were conducted in the language of the respondent using a structured questionnaire, and interviews were administered by a group of trained field researchers under the supervision of Dr. Pradeep Peiris and his team. The survey findings were supplemented by qualitative fieldwork carried out

in the Northern, North Western, Eastern, Central, and Western Provinces of Sri Lanka. Survey data was tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

FINDINGS

Awareness of reconciliation initiatives

In post-war Sri Lanka, great emphasis has been placed on 'reconciliation', a process aiming at bridging the rift between parties to the conflict, at both the macro and everyday levels. Successive governments have introduced various measures by which to gradually achieve this end, including the establishment of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Committee (LLRC) and introducing an Office of Missing Persons. At the grassroots level, several national and international non-governmental organizations have initiated and carried out concurrent ventures, such as open dialogues, cultural exposure programmes, language programmes, and so on.

In order to understand their level of awareness of these macro and micro level reconciliation initiatives, respondents were given ten options covering a wide range of reconciliation initiatives and asked whether they have heard of such activities. In general, the data show that awareness of micro level initiatives (such as inter-faith celebrations and twinning school programmes) was much higher than awareness of any macro level initiative. Across ethno-age categories, those reporting to know of micro level initiatives easily exceeded 40% of the sample, while the comparable figures for macro level initiatives were around 15-20%, with the exception of the Missing Persons Commission, of which more than half the sample of adult and young Tamils as well as adult Sinhalese was aware. Close to half the sample of young Sinhalese was also aware of said Commission.

Figure 1: Composite index – Youth awareness levels of reconciliation initiatives
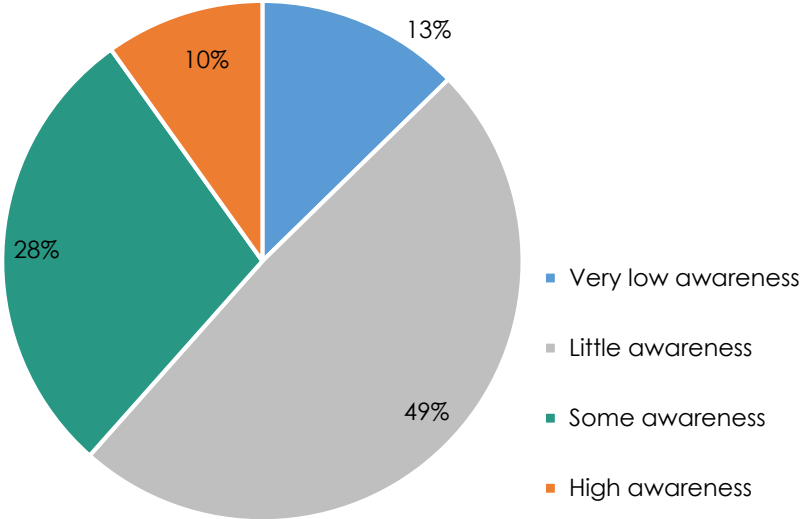
To draw out a generic analysis, a composite index was developed to categorize respondents into those who have no knowledge, comparatively less knowledge, and comparatively higher knowledge about the given initiatives. To this end, respondents who were not aware of even one out of the ten listed activities were categorized as having 'very low' awareness. Those who reported to be aware of 1-3 given activities were categorized as having 'little awareness', while those aware of around 4-7 activities were identified as having 'some awareness'. Respondents who claimed to have heard of 8-10 of the specified activities were categorized as those with 'high awareness'.

Figure 2: Composite index – Youth awareness levels of reconciliation initiatives (Ethnic Breakdown)
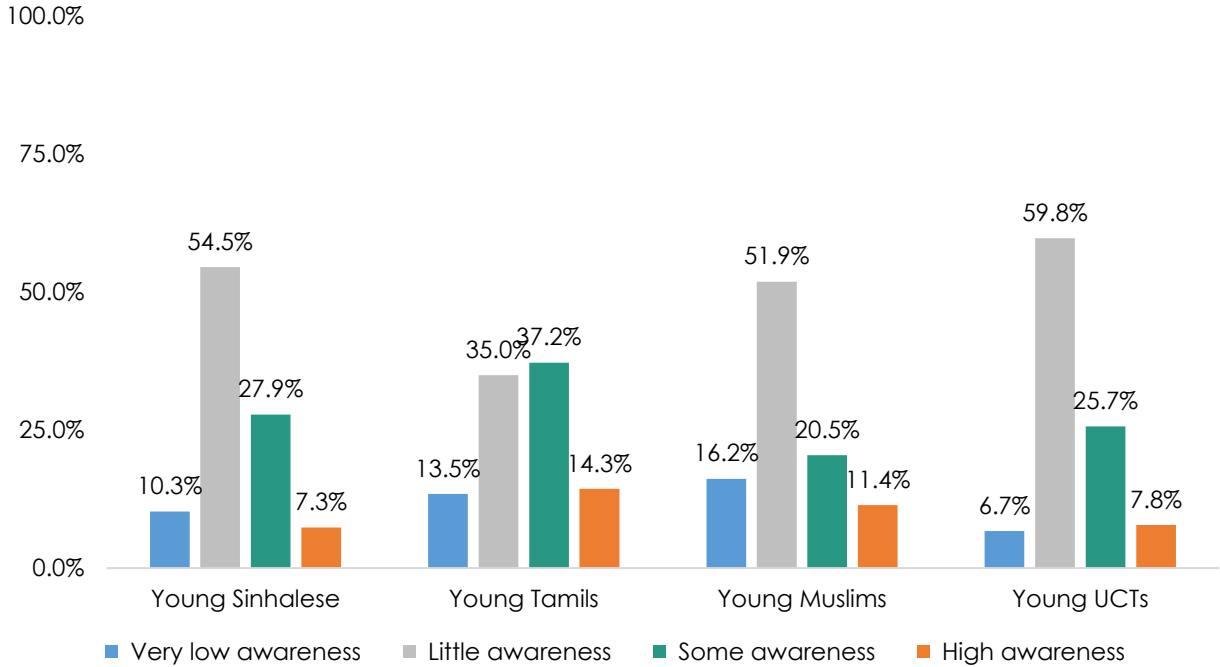
In general, as the graph shows, close to two-thirds of the youth who participated in the survey exhibited only little awareness about reconciliation initiatives that were initiated over the past years. In terms of ethnicity, the upcountry community showed comparatively low awareness. As expected, the Tamil community showed a relatively higher level of awareness, with a little over half of the Tamil youth reporting to have some or high awareness about reconciliation initiatives. Sinhalese youth demonstrated the second highest awareness.

Figure 3:Level of awareness of reconciliation initiatives by ethnicity/ age/ gender
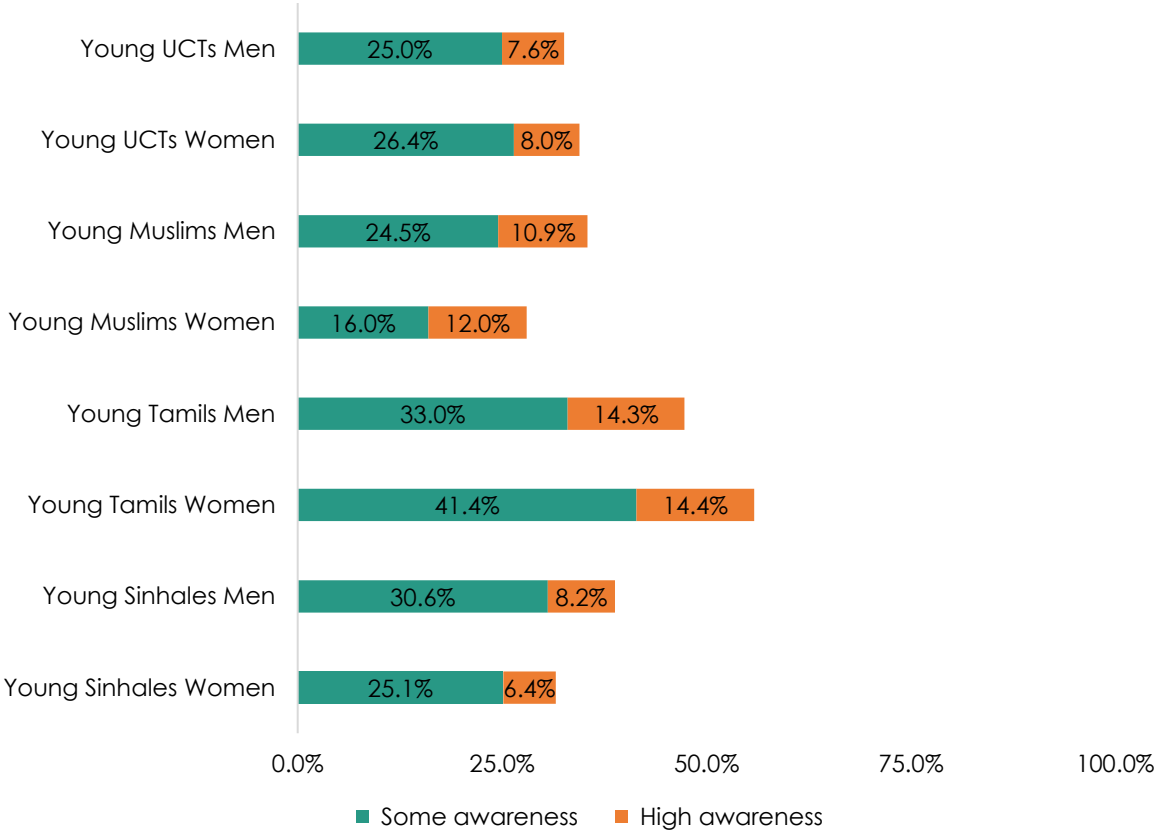
The findings highlight the gendered nature of awareness of reconciliation initiatives. Among the Tamil and Upcountry Tamil communities particularly, young women exhibit slightly higher levels of awareness than their male counterparts. This may be on the one hand due to the nature of the post-war society of the Tamil community where women have been left with more responsibilities. On the other hand, this could also be a reflection of the nature of the reconciliation programmes in that they reach out to more women than men, given how the demographics in Tamil-dominated areas have largely tilted in favour of women consequent to the massive loss of male population during the war. Among the Sinhala and Muslim communities, young men show higher levels of awareness of reconciliation initiatives compared to their female counterparts. The play of gender roles may largely account for this, whereby men of these two communities are afforded greater ability to access macro information processes due to their more active involvement in the social sphere, also resulting in them being more opinionated.

In general, the data show that awareness of micro level initiatives (such as inter-faith celebrations and twinning school programmes) was much higher than awareness of any macro level initiative.

In ethnic terms, the Tamil community showed a relatively higher level of awareness, while Sinhalese youth demonstrated the second highest awareness.

Prevention and non-recurrence of violence

The ending of the war in Sri Lanka does not spell the end of the conflict in the country. This understanding stems from the fact that the 'conflict' embraces a broader concept of ethnic tensions including the grievances that gave rise to such tensions. These grievances are far from being completely addressed, allowing space for the continuation of "structural violence" (Galtung 1969)[1] that may again push aggrieved parties to resort to violent redress. The government has taken numerous initiatives to prevent a relapse into active combat by addressing these structural issues that correspond with the aspirations not only of minority communities, but also of the majority community in certain cases. In this study, attention was paid to four crucial measures taken to this end, namely the full implementation of the 13th Amendment, constitutional amendment as a means of resolving the ethnic conflict, strengthening the security forces, and strengthening the law enforcement mechanism.

Table 1: Structural reconciliation – overall response

How important	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	Strengthening the security forces	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism
Very important	20.9	26.8	43.3	50.7
Important	26.1	32.8	35.8	36.5
Not important	11.6	11.6	9.7	2.6
Not important at all	6.5	4.8	4.0	0.2
DK/NS	34.9	24.0	7.2	10.0
Base	1285	1285	1285	1285

As the graph above indicates, strengthening the law enforcement mechanism is the proposal that was viewed as the most important measure in ensuring reconciliation by the most amount of respondents. Strengthening the security forces came at a close second. Interestingly, the 13th

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[1] Galtung, Johan. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research,* 6(3), pp. 167-191

Amendment, perhaps the most salient structural solution that the state has thus far produced to address minority grievances, was considered as the least important in this regard.

Figure 4: Structural reconciliation – ethnicity/ age breakdown

Young UCTs Men
- 56.5%
- 72.8%
- 72.8%
- 54.3%

Young UCTs Women
- 63.2%
- 69.0%
- 66.7%
- 62.1%

Young Muslims Men
- 44.5%
- 80.9%
- 71.8%
- 65.5%

Young Muslims Women
- 40.0%
- 78.0%
- 65.0%
- 61.0%

Young Tamils Men
- 65.2%
- 57.1%
- 80.4%
- 65.2%

Young Tamils Women
- 61.3%
- 67.6%
- 77.5%
- 64.9%

Young Sinhales Men
- 61.2%
- 98.2%
- 43.5%
- 22.4%

Young Sinhales Women
- 47.4%
- 99.4%
- 40.4%
- 26.9%

■ Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism
■ Strengthening the security forces
■ Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment
■ Full implementation of the 13th amendment

11

Full implementation of the 13th Amendment: Data indicate that the importance ascribed to the 13th Amendment as a means of achieving reconciliation very clearly varied along ethnic lines. Unsurprisingly, the greatest amount of support for the full implementation of the 13th Amendment was expressed by the Tamil community (youth – 63%; adults – 61%), followed by the Up Country Tamil community (youth – 58%; adults – 52%). Also unsurprisingly, those who reported that the full implementation of the 13th Amendment was 'not important' or 'not important at all' were mostly Sinhalese. The youth seemed especially in agreement, with 36% subscribing to this opinion, as opposed to 24% who thought it was important. It is surprising, however, that very high percentages within the two Tamil communities reported not to be aware of the 13th Amendment. In the case of Up Country Tamil adults, this figure was as high as 45.7%, while among the corresponding youth category it was 40.2%. Even among the Sri Lankan Tamils, figures were very high, with adults recording 34.5% and the youth 30.9%. The comparatively higher unawareness among adults is particularly perplexing, as this age category lived through the experience of the Amendment being introduced, and the consequences it entailed.

Political solution through constitutional reform: Minorities seemed to display greater faith than the majority in the capacity of the constitution to ensure a political arrangement to their satisfaction. This is a proposal that young Tamils agreed the most with (78%), followed by adult Tamils (72%) and young Up Country Tamils (70%). It is noticeable that the level of agreement among adult Up Country Tamils in this regard was comparatively lower at only 60%. Sinhalese, as expected, thought the least that this proposal is important, in both age groups. The incentive for constitutional reform among the Sinhalese is obviously much less than that among the minorities since the conditions are already favourable for them. Therefore, it is very likely that they wish for a continuation of the status quo as a means of ensuring their current position in the country, which makes them feel secure.

Strengthening security forces: Sinhalese youth thought the most that this is an important suggestion. Close to 100% of the young Sinhalese considered this suggestion as important, compared to 60% of young Tamils, and almost similar percentages of other young minority communities. Conversely, the Sinhalese youth were the least to believe that this proposal is unimportant, while Tamil youth believed the most that it is unimportant (32%). These patterns reflect the view of the armed forces by each ethnic community, and the fact that the young closely reflect the percentages among adults demonstrates how attitudes and perceptions are socialized down the generations. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that well above half the

sample in all ethno-age categories think it is important to strengthen the armed forces, including the Tamil community.

Strengthening law enforcement: Attitudes towards law enforcement did not demonstrate significant variation along ethnic lines. Young Tamils were mostly the ones to think of this proposal as important (97%), followed by young Sinhalese (92%). Muslim and Up Country Tamil youth recorded comparatively lesser figures (in the 70s). Among those who considered this proposal as unimportant, Up Country Tamil youth reported the highest percentage, though this was still less than 10%. What this suggests is that youth of all communities are equally disillusioned with the status quo regarding law enforcement authorities, and acknowledge the need to strengthen them before faith in any meaningful reconciliation can be inspired. More than ethnic categories, therefore, the youth first needs to believe in law enforcement as citizens.

Table 2: Structural reconciliation – detailed breakdown

	Very important	Important	Not important	Not important at all	DK/NS	Base

Young Sinhalese	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	3.50%	21.10%	25.20%	15.80%	34.30%	341
	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	9.10%	32.80%	22.90%	11.10%	24.00%	341
	Strengthening the security forces	62.50%	36.40%	0.60%	0.00%	0.60%	341
	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	53.10%	39.30%	1.20%	0.30%	6.20%	341
Young Tamils	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	42.20%	22.90%	3.60%	0.40%	30.90%	223
	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	47.50%	31.40%	1.30%	0.40%	19.30%	223
	Strengthening the security forces	26.00%	36.30%	15.70%	16.10%	5.80%	223
	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	62.80%	34.10%	0.40%	0.00%	2.70%	223
Young Muslims	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	19.50%	43.80%	6.70%	2.40%	27.60%	210
	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	21.90%	46.70%	7.10%	2.40%	21.90%	210
	Strengthening the security forces	33.80%	45.70%	8.60%	0.50%	11.40%	210
	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	40.50%	45.70%	1.90%	0.00%	11.90%	210
Young UCTs	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	36.90%	21.20%	1.70%	0.00%	40.20%	179
	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	50.80%	19.00%	6.70%	1.70%	21.80%	179
	Strengthening the security forces	51.40%	19.60%	14.00%	0.00%	15.10%	179
	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	50.80%	24.00%	8.90%	0.60%	15.60%	179

Figure 5: Composite index – structural reconciliation ethnicity breakdown

Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim	UPTC
Strengthening the security forces	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	Strengthening the security forces
Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	Strengthening the security forces	Strengthening the law enforcement mechanism
Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment	Political solution to the ethnic conflict/conflicts through constitutional amendment
Full implementation of the 13th amendment	Strengthening the security forces	Full implementation of the 13th amendment	Full implementation of the 13th amendment

The findings suggest that the level of importance given for each proposal varies across ethnic groups. Despite this variation, however, there seems to be consensus among all ethnic groups that 'strengthening of the law enforcement mechanism' is of great importance to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict in the country.

Except youth from the Tamil community, all other youths, especially Sinhalese and Upcountry Tamil youth, think that strengthening the security forces is important to prevent the recurrence of conflict. Interestingly, the full implementation of the 13th Amendment is perceived as the least important proposal to youth across all ethnic categories.

Attitudes towards the implications of reconciliation

In this section, the aim was to understand youths' response to the reconciliation process as a whole, rather than specific aspects of it. To this end, respondents were given various statements that reflect certain opinions prevalent on reconciliation, and were asked to indicate whether they agree with them or not.

Table 3: Attitudes towards reconciliation – overall response

	The reconciliation process will change the country for the better	Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides	The reconciliation process is a waste of resources	Reconciliation is not really necessary; it is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka
Strongly Agree	39.1	3.7	3.3	3.9
Agree	46.4	12.3	10.5	9.8
Disagree	5.8	51.2	53.0	46.7
Strongly Disagree	1.3	19.3	20.8	19.3
DK/NS	7.4	13.5	12.4	20.3
Base	1285	1285	1285	1285

According to the overall data, favourable dispositions towards reconciliation seemed more prevalent than unfavourable ones. As the above table indicates, greater percentages of respondents agreed that it will change the country for the better, while greater percentages disagreed with the three statements portraying the reconciliation process in a negative light.

Table 4: Attitudes towards reconciliation – ethnicity/ age breakdown

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/NS	Total
Young Sinhalese	The reconciliation process will change the country for the better	7.3%	69.2%	12.9%	2.6%	7.9%	341
	Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides	2.3%	16.4%	65.1%	6.7%	9.4%	341
	The reconciliation process is a waste of resources	4.4%	14.4%	64.2%	9.4%	7.6%	341
	Reconciliation is not really necessary; it is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka	6.2%	14.4%	53.7%	7.0%	18.8%	341
Young Tamils	The reconciliation process will change the country for the better	49.8%	39.0%	2.2%	0.9%	8.1%	223
	Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides	2.2%	9.4%	59.2%	15.2%	13.9%	223
	The reconciliation process is a waste of resources	1.3%	4.0%	68.6%	13.5%	12.6%	223
	Reconciliation is not really necessary; it is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka	0.9%	7.2%	56.1%	7.2%	28.7%	223
Young Muslims	The reconciliation process will change the country for the better	58.6%	40.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	210
	Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides	5.2%	17.1%	32.4%	32.4%	12.9%	210
	The reconciliation process is a waste of resources	3.3%	13.3%	35.7%	37.6%	10.0%	210
	Reconciliation is not really necessary; it is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka	3.3%	11.0%	36.2%	39.5%	10.0%	210
Young UCTs	The reconciliation process will change the country for the better	71.5%	17.3%	2.2%	1.1%	7.8%	179
	Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides	7.8%	7.8%	36.9%	33.5%	14.0%	179
	The reconciliation process is a waste of resources	6.1%	7.3%	38.5%	33.0%	15.1%	179
	Reconciliation is not really necessary; it is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka	6.1%	2.8%	36.9%	36.9%	17.3%	179

The reconciliation process will change the country for the better: This is a statement that enjoyed the most support from Muslims. Young Up Country Tamils strongly agreed with this statement the most (71.5%), followed by adult Muslims (61.4%). Among those that agreed somewhat, young Sinhalese numbered the most (69.2%), followed by adult Sinhalese (65.5%). When taken together, the highest percentage belonging in the 'agree' category (including 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree') came from young Muslims, followed by adult Muslims. This could suggest two things: 1) Reconciliation is largely understood as involving the Sinhalese and Tamils, and therefore Muslims are taking a normative stance on it as something that is by default good or 2) Muslims are in fact thinking about reconciliation as touching on the recent Sinhala-Muslim tensions, and believe that it will ensure better and safer conditions for them in future.

Reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides: Surprisingly, minority communities strongly agreed with this statement more than the majority Sinhalese. Adult Up Country Tamils seemed to think this the most, as demonstrated by a percentage of 10.9, followed by their younger counterparts (7.8%), and young Muslims (5.2%). Among those who agreed somewhat, young Muslims ranked the highest (17.1%), while young and adult Sinhalese followed closely (16.4% and 16% respectively). Sinhalese disagreed the most with the statement, with as much as 63.9% of adults and 65.1% of youth in this category. Young and adult Tamils came next, with percentages above 55, followed by other ethnic categories. The Up Country Tamil and Muslim communities strongly disagree with this statement the most. This signals a shift in the collective Sinhalese disposition towards reconciliation as a negative phenomenon. Promisingly, the greatest disagreement towards reconciliation as a divisive instrument comes from the two ethnic communities who were directly involved in the three-decade long conflict. Again, however, this could be due to the fact that tensions now dominantly persist between Sinhalese and Muslims, but reconciliation still aims at bridging the gap between Sinhalese and Tamils who have now found greater common ground than before in the face of a common 'enemy'.

Reconciliation is a waste of resources: While none of the ethnic-age groups strongly agreed that reconciliation is a waste of resources beyond 6%, Sinhalese adults agreed with the statement the most (21.8%), followed closely by Sinhalese youth (14.4%). The only other group that came close to this figure was young Muslims, with 13.3% agreeing. Young Tamils disagreed with the statement the most (68.6%), with young Sinhalese coming second (64.2%). Adults of both communities also cut close figures, with 58% Sinhala adults and 56% Tamil adults disagreeing. Those that strongly disagreed were far higher in percentages (and numbers) than those that strongly agreed with this statement. Adult and young Muslims ranked highest in this category, followed by adult and young Up Country Tamils. It seems, therefore, that receptivity

to the government reconciliation agenda has undergone considerable change, especially in relation to the Sinhalese who under the Rajapaksa regime had a much different disposition towards the phenomenon.

Reconciliation is an imposition by the West on Sri Lanka: Further testifying to a turn in the Sinhala consciousness, those that agreed (strongly or somewhat) with this statement recorded remarkably low percentages across age groups. The cumulative percentages for both age cohorts of the Sinhalese hovered around 20% of those sampled, which, though still much higher compared to other ethnic-age categories, did not make more than one fifth of the sample of Sinhalese. In comparison, those that disagreed somewhat among the Sinhalese exceeded more than half the sample for both age categories (55.5% for adults and 53.7% for youth), roughly corresponding to the percentages of the Tamil community who also agreed. It is noticeable that the highest percentages of those who strongly disagreed with this statement came from the Muslim and Up Country Tamil communities respectively. The attitudes of both age groups in these two communities towards this statement were roughly equal in terms of percentages. Those who have an opinion on this matter from these two communities (discounting the category that reported not to know or unsure) seemed to be largely concentrated within the categories of disagreement. The gradual convergence of the Sinhalese attitude with that of the minorities reflects the larger shift in the country's polity, particularly after the regime change of 2015 that saw the coming into power of a government of a pluralist orientation. Consequently, the previous reservations of the majority regarding reconciliation seemed to ease with the absence of state propaganda fuelling such sentiments.

In general, everyone thinks reconciliation will change the country for the better. However, Sinhalese youth agrees with this view with lower intensity compared to other ethnic groups. In general, support for the negative statements about reconciliation - reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides, reconciliation is a waste of resources, and reconciliation is not really necessary, and reconciliation is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka - is low among youth of all ethnic communities. However, there is slightly higher endorsement among the Sinhalese and Muslim youth for those negative statements.

For Sinhalese youth, the most popular negative view of reconciliation is that 'reconciliation is something imposed by the West on Sri Lanka'. For minorities, 'reconciliation will perpetuate ethnic divides' is the most popular negative opinion of reconciliation. However, one must remember that the support for such negative views is significantly low across the board.

Inter-community tensions

Inter-community tensions are increasingly defining the political landscape of Sri Lanka, particularly in the post-war phase of the country. The newly emergent animosity between Sinhalese and Muslims has changed the dynamics of reconciliation in the country by shifting parties to conflict, issues of conflict, as well as sites and means of conflict. Against this backdrop, this study sought to explore youth's attitudes towards communities that their group perceives in rival terms. In this section, specific attention was paid to the threshold of violence i.e. the point at which an individual maybe encouraged to condone violence in an ethnicized situation.

Table 5: Threshold of violence – overall response

	Sometimes it is okay for one to use violence to protect their ethnicity	It is alright to boycott businesses of the communities who threaten the economy of my community	I think it is natural to feel animosity towards other ethnic groups that we perceive as a threat to the future of my ethnic group	I don't like to see communities (ethnic or religious) that do not appreciate my culture in my neighbourhood
Strongly Agree	8.6	8.6	17.6	19.6
Agree	18.5	32.2	47.3	35.3
Disagree	47.1	37.1	21.2	27.2
Strongly Disagree	20.3	12.0	6.4	8.6
DK/NS	5.5	10.1	7.5	9.3
Base	1285	1285	1285	1285

As the table above indicates, the general pattern of responses to this question shows that more than half the sample of respondents do not believe that violence should be resorted to, even in the interest of one's ethnic group. However, this attitude shifts when asked about more oblique forms of antagonism, such as boycotting businesses and not tolerating alien cultures within one's neighbourhood. More respondents agreed to such statements than those who did not, suggesting that the threshold for violence through indirect means is considerably low.

Table 6: Threshold of violence – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	Sometimes it is okay for one to use violence to protect their ethnicity	It is alright to boycott businesses of the communities who threaten the economy of my community	I think it is natural to feel animosity towards other ethnic groups that we perceive as a threat to the future of my ethnic group	I don't like to see communities (ethnic or religious) that do not appreciate my culture in my neighbourhood
	Agree			
Young Sinhalese	27.6%	30.0%	39.1%	42.0%
Adult Sinhalese	21.9%	23.6%	33.7%	34.5%
Young Tamils	35.9%	37.3%	68.2%	79.4%
Adult Tamils	27.3%	36.9%	70.3%	77.4%
Young Muslims	22.3%	20.4%	27.6%	31.4%
Adult Muslims	15.6%	12.0%	12.0%	12.0%
Young UCTs	28.0%	21.2%	32.9%	62.6%
Adult UCTs	32.6%	28.2%	28.2%	56.5%

In general, Tamil youth as well as adults seem to be affected by these attitudes the most compared to other ethnic groups. A significant proportion of Tamil youth and adults state that they do not like to see people who do not appreciate their culture in their neighbourhood. Further, they also state that it is natural to feel animosity towards ethnic groups which are perceived as a threat to their community's future.

According to the findings, endorsement of extreme forms of intolerance such as the use of violence is considerably low among all ethnic groups irrespective of age.

Interestingly, 'intolerance towards the other' does not vary by age. Both young and old respondents almost equally share the same attitude towards the use of violence, boycotting of businesses, feeling animosity, and insulating their neighbourhood from ethnic others. The findings therefore may disappoint those who expect more radical and/ or positive ideas from the younger generation who did not experience the 30-year war like their parents. On the other hand, although eastern cultures presume adults to be more mature, tolerant, and understanding than the young, these findings contradict such wisdom.

Reconciliation and victimhood

In a post-war context, the prevalence and influence of victimhood as well as conceptions of perpetrators are especially acute, and tend to decisively bear on the progress made with regard to reconciliation and transitional justice. Hence in this study, an effort was made to understand what the youth feels about the position of their ethnic community within the larger framework of post-war transitional justice and reconciliation. In order to elicit these responses, a number of statements were read out to them that reflect common fears/ reservations people harbour about the future of their ethnic communities in general, and about the security and position of their ethnic community in the reconciliation process in particular. Respondents were then asked to indicate whether they agree with each statement or not.

Table 7:Perceptions of victimhood by ethnicity/ age

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/NS	Total
Young Sinhalese	My ethnic group has suffered the most in past conflicts/mass violence	3.2%	31.70%	54.50%	6.70%	3.80%	341
	My ethnic group was the most discriminated against in the past	1.2%	19.10%	65.70%	7.60%	6.50%	341
	My community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process	5.3%	34.00%	47.20%	5.00%	8.50%	341
	The security/position of my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process	4.7%	22.60%	58.70%	3.50%	10.60%	341
Young Tamils	My ethnic group has suffered the most in past conflicts/mass violence	71.7%	26.00%	1.80%	0.00%	0.40%	223
	My ethnic group was the most discriminated against in the past	73.5%	24.20%	0.90%	0.00%	1.30%	223
	My community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process	65.9%	26.00%	2.20%	0.90%	4.90%	223
	The security/position of my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process	18.8%	23.80%	37.70%	6.70%	13.00%	223
Young Muslims	My ethnic group has suffered the most in past conflicts/mass violence	36.7%	34.8%	17.10%	1.90%	9.50%	210
	My ethnic group was the most discriminated against in the past	31.4%	44.8%	11.40%	2.40%	10.00%	210
	My community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process	44.3%	41.4%	7.10%	0.00%	7.10%	210
	The security/position of my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process	20.5%	28.6%	32.40%	4.30%	14.30%	210

`Young UCTs	My ethnic group has suffered the most in past conflicts/mass violence	54.2%	30.7%	12.30%	1.70%	1.10%	179
	My ethnic group was the most discriminated against in the past	53.6%	36.3%	7.80%	0.60%	1.70%	179
	My community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process	54.7%	20.7%	9.50%	3.40%	11.70%	179
	The security/position of my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process	34.6%	20.7%	14.50%	10.10%	20.10%	179

My ethnic community has suffered the most in the past: Those that agreed with this statement (strongly and moderately both) in the minority communities – particularly Tamils – far exceeded those in the majority community. Perceptions of victimization seemed to be strongest among the Tamil community, with 71.1% youth and 72.6% adults strongly agreeing that their ethnic group has suffered the most in the past. The second highest in this category were Up Country Tamils, followed by Muslims. Less than 5% of the Sinhalese (of either age bracket) strongly agreed with this idea. When it came to moderate agreement, however, 31.7% of young Sinhalese and 43.7% of adult Sinhalese believed this statement to be true. This is compared to agreement levels in the 20s for the Tamil community, and just 17.4% in the Up Country Tamil community. The flip side was true for disagreement, whereby the Sinhalese of both age categories disagreed the most, in moderate as well as strong terms. The sense of victimhood that the Tamil community experienced largely as a result of the war, therefore, seems to still persist, possibly due to the absence of any meaningful measures taken in the post-war context to address grievances therein.

My ethnic community was the most discriminated against in the past: Youth and adults of the Tamil community agreed the most with this statement (with combined percentages for 'strongly agree' and 'agree' well exceeding the 90s for both age categories), followed by Up Country Tamils and then Muslims. Correspondingly, it was mostly the Sinhalese that moderately or strongly disagreed with this statement. No significant variations in terms of age were observed in this regard. Hence it seems that ethnicity continues to be a stronger cleavage than age, internalized by members of the ethnic community across different age categories.

My ethnic community deserves the most attention in the reconciliation process: The above patterns repeated in this question. Where the Sinhalese agreed less and disagreed more across age categories, Tamils and Muslims (both young and adult) answered in the affirmative the most, and in the negative the least.

The security/ position of my ethnic community will decline as a result of the reconciliation process: The responses of all ethnic group to this question signal a major shift in their collective ethnic consciousness from what was prevalent in the past, especially the immediate aftermath of the war. Where a cumulative percentage of only 27% young Sinhalese and 25% adult Sinhalese agreed (strongly or moderately), 62% of the youth and 57% of adults disagreed (strongly or moderately). This is in stark contrast to the opinion of the minority communities who, also signaling a shift in their collective consciousness, agreed with the statement more than they disagreed. Around 42% of young Tamils, for example, agreed, which was roughly the same percentage that disagreed with it. As for their adult counterparts, around 38% agreed (strongly or moderately), while 43% disagreed. More young Muslims seemed to agree with the statement (around 49%), than disagree with it (around 37%). While around 35% adult Muslims agreed with the statement, roughly the same amount disagreed. Close to 55% Up Country Tamil youth agreed, as compared to 25% who disagreed. Close to 60% of their adult counterparts agreed, while only around 20% disagreed. During the Rajapaksha regime, reconciliation was primarily viewed in development terms, stemming from the conviction that the conflict had more to do with economic grievances than anything else. Such conviction was politically expedient too, as it enabled national politicians to avoid the contentious issue of power-sharing altogether. Any emphasis on a different kind of reconciliation, consequently, was delegitimized as being off the point and playing into western agendas. Hence it was usual for the Sinhalese to be suspicious of reconciliation initiatives, and think that they were designed to undermine their interests. Minorities – Tamils particularly – were consequently convinced that such initiatives were chiefly for their benefit. The reversal of this pattern evident in the findings presented above warrants an investigation into the possible causes behind such an attitudinal change.

Minority communities, not just the Tamil community but also the Muslim and Upcountry Tamil communities, clearly believe that their respective communities suffered the most because of the war. Although one quarter of the Sinhalese youth also claim that they suffered from the war the most, the percentages are considerably low compared to the minorities.

The findings indicate that not only the Tamil community but also the other minority communities such as Muslim and Upcountry Tamil, hold that their community deserves more attention in the reconciliation process.

Despite the heavy nationalist propaganda particularly in the aftermath of the Easter Attack, the Sinhalese youth does not subscribe to the idea that 'the security/ position of my ethnic group will decline as a result of the current reconciliation process'. However, there is a sizable proportion of respondents indicating agreement with this proposition among the minority communities. It is possible that some of the reconciliation programmes that aimed to cultivate social integration were seen as a threat to the group identity of the minority communities as well as smaller cultural groups.

It is interesting to note that, as much as the Tamil youth, the youth from the Upcountry Tamil community also claims that their community suffered the most because of the past conflict/mass violence, despite the fact that they liv far from the actual war zone. Therefore, reconciliation initiatives should take into account these understandings and subjective experiences in order to be effective.

Main hindrances to peace

Identification of the main hindrances to peace in Sri Lanka can be an extremely ethnicized issue. Therefore, this study sought to explore who the youth feel are mostly responsible for breaching peace in the country. In this connection, a significant majority of youth point their finger at political parties as the main culprit obstructing peace. Religious clergy, corruption, and insular attitudes of certain communities were named as second, third, and fourth highest voted hindrances to peace in the country respectively.

Figure 6: Main hindrances to peace in Sri Lanka – Overall response
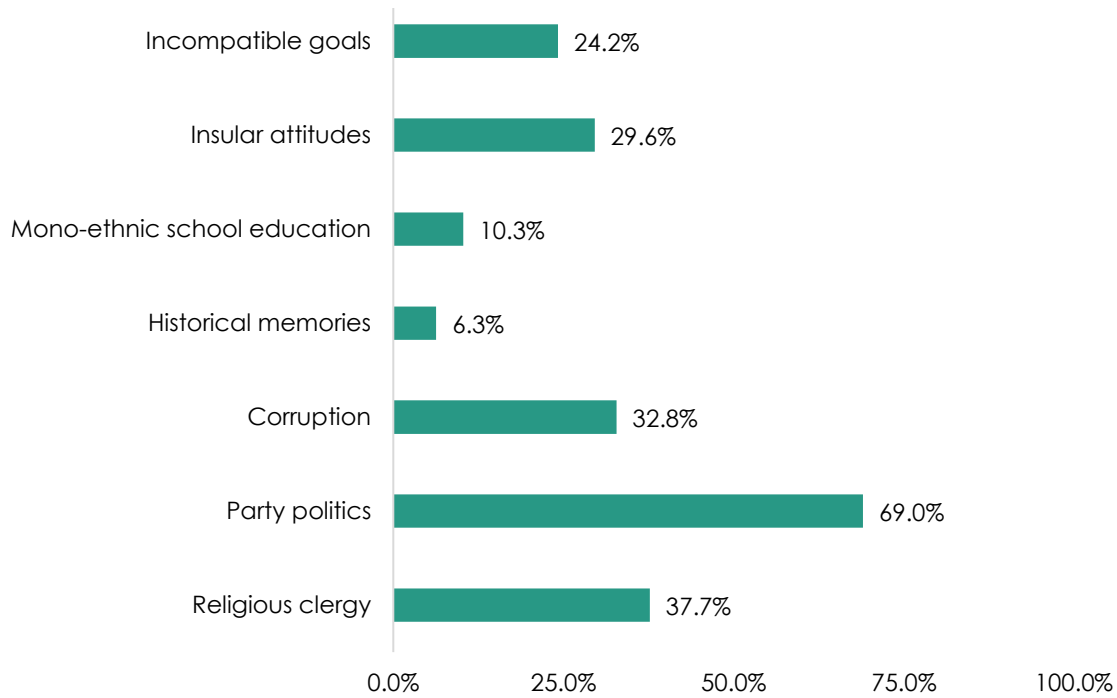
The ethno-age breakdown of these data suggests an ethnically differential pattern, whereby Sinhalese youth seemed to comprise the majority of those who blame party politics, while around half the sample of youth from all minority ethnic communities laid the blame on religious clergy. It is clear through these data, therefore, that Buddhist clergy particularly is viewed by the minority youth as detrimental to peace building in Sri Lanka, while youth of the majority community pin it on party politics.

Table 8: Main hindrances to peace in Sri Lanka – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	Religious clergy	Party politics	Corruption	Historical memories	Mono-ethnic school education	Insular attitudes	Incompatible goals
Young Sinhalese	20.2%	88.9%	34.3%	6.7%	19.4%	45.2%	26.7%
Adult Sinhalese	18.5%	81.5%	37.8%	9.2%	12.6%	50.4%	31.9%
Young Tamils	52.9%	70.9%	50.2%	13.0%	9.0%	26.5%	22.9%
Adult Tamils	54.8%	67.9%	40.5%	6.0%	4.8%	17.9%	21.4%
Young Muslims	50.0%	48.1%	27.6%	2.4%	1.9%	13.3%	9.0%
Adult Muslims	45.8%	66.3%	31.3%	0.0%	3.6%	15.7%	16.9%
Young UCTs	40.2%	53.1%	14.0%	3.9%	10.1%	25.1%	38.5%
Adult UCTs	32.6%	45.7%	8.7%	2.2%	4.3%	13.0%	23.9%

The overwhelming majority of youth across all ethnic categories identified political advantage as the reason behind obstructing peace in the country. This awareness is promising in an age of increasing political manipulation and misinformation. However, it should also be noted that around 20% of minority youth respondents also ascribed the reason to the 'majority complex' of those involved.

Figure 7: Main reasons for obstructing peace – overall response
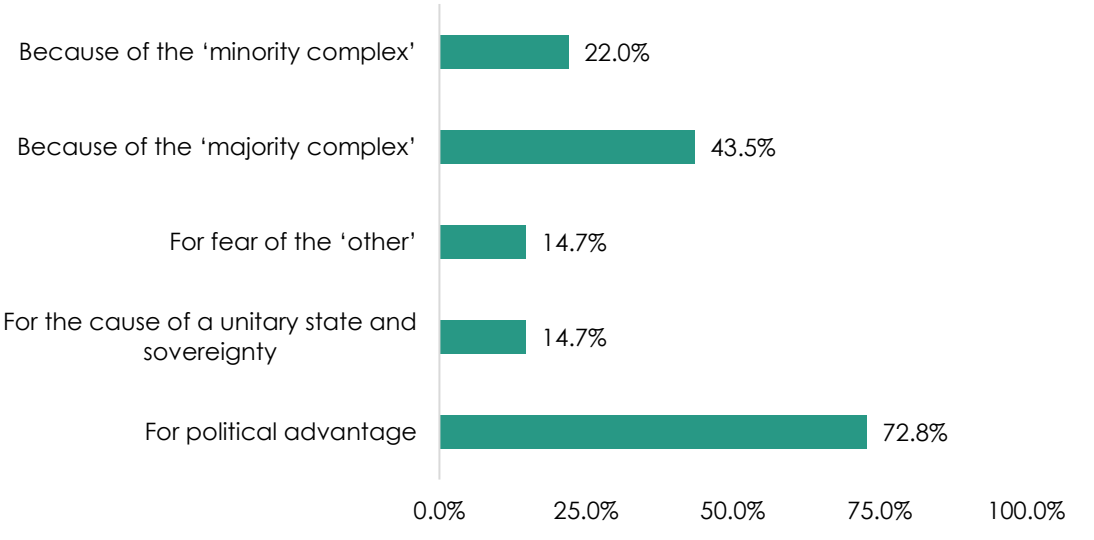
Ethnic differences in opinion can be noticed in relation to the reasons for obstructing peace in Sri Lanka. For the Sinhalese, insular attitudes of some communities and corruption are the top most reasons hindering the achievement of peace in the country. All minority groups, on other hand, voted religious clergy as the second most crucial blockade to peace in the country.

Table 9: Main reasons for obstructing peace – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	For political advantage	For the cause of a unitary state and sovereignty	For fear of the 'other'	Because of the 'majority complex'	Because of the 'minority complex'
Young Sinhalese	86.8%	19.6%	26.4%	29.9%	31.7%
Adult Sinhalese	86.6%	21.8%	25.2%	20.2%	35.3%
Young Tamils	64.6%	25.5%	14.2%	68.4%	14.2%
Adult Tamils	70.7%	15.9%	8.5%	59.8%	4.9%
Young Muslims	61.5%	3.2%	4.8%	38.5%	10.7%
Adult Muslims	56.8%	0.0%	2.5%	43.2%	12.3%
Young UCTs	68.9%	7.3%	4.6%	53.0%	28.5%
Adult UCTs	61.0%	4.9%	9.8%	51.2%	24.4%

Transitional Justice

Transitional Justice occupies a central place in Sri Lanka's reconciliation process, as it does elsewhere in the world in societies emerging out of conflict. It is considered an essential component of meaningful reconciliation, and as such has been emphasized by international actors interested in Sri Lanka's transition, as well as local civil society activists and minority rights advocates.

Awareness

Figure 8:Awareness of transitional justice – overall response
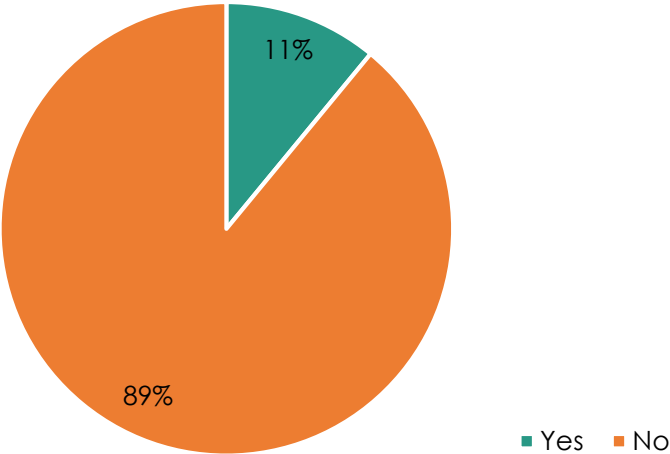
As a point of entry to gauging the youths' conceptions of transitional justice, a question was asked as to whether the respondents have come across the term at any point in their day to day life. The thrust behind this question was to understand how well-known this concept is to the post-war society of Sri Lanka.

The findings highlight the disappointing reality of the Sri Lanka's transitional justice process. Despite the government co-sponsored a resolution to implement strong mechanism to achieve transition justice only very few people – from all age and ethnic groups – claim that they aware about the term. The fact that there is very little awareness about TJ is further confirmed by the qualitative interviews that were conducted.

Table 10: Awareness of Transitional Justice – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	Yes	No	Base

Young Sinhalese	16.1%	83.9%	341
Adult Sinhalese	13.4%	86.6%	119
Young Tamils	11.2%	88.8%	223
Adult Tamils	13.1%	86.9%	84
Young Muslims	6.7%	93.3%	210
Adult Muslims	4.8%	95.2%	83
Young UCTs	7.8%	92.2%	179
Adult UCTs	4.3%	95.7%	46

Despite transitional justice being a key priority area of the current *Yahapalana* government, awareness of transitional justice seemed to be very low across the board. Paradoxically, Sinhalese exhibited relatively higher awareness of the concept than minorities. Qualitative interviews with the Sinhalese youth suggested that the negative publicity given to the term transitional justice partly has contributed to this relatively higher awareness. For the Tamil youth, although they were aware of the initiatives that were implemented under the transitional justice agendas of various agencies, they did not recognize such activities as transitional justice.

As the table above depicts, although general awareness of youth on TJ is very low across ethnic groups, Sinhalese youth showed relatively higher awareness. The comparatively low level of awareness demonstrated by the Up Country Tamil and Muslim youth is perhaps fathomable but it is puzzling to see that more Sinhalese youth have heard of the term transitional justice than Tamil youth. Sinhalese youth, according to the qualitative interviews, have heard the term, often with negative connotations, on TV news and various other programmes. Tamil youth, although they were aware of many individual initiatives, indicated less familiarity with the term 'transitional justice'. A gender breakdown of this data shows that this pattern of a relative lack of awareness generally holds. In the Sinhala, Muslim and Up-Country Tamil communities, women displayed slightly higher levels of awareness of transitional justice as compared to men. Awareness of the term varies from one district to another, where comparatively higher levels of awareness can be seen in the districts outside of the Northern and Eastern provinces. This highlights an important and perennial weakness of Sri Lanka's peace process; despite the prominence given at the national and international levels, policy makers and implementers often fail to inform and engage grassroots communities when it comes to peace initiatives.

Attitudes towards transitional justice

People may have heard about the term transitional justice but that does not mean they all derive the same meaning out of the term. Due to the nature and history of the conflict and personal experience, terms such as peace, reconciliation, and transitional justice could mean

different things to different individuals. The meaning that they associate with transitional justice can be understood from the attitudes that youth have towards various aspects of the TJ process. In order to tease out the youth's attitudes towards transitional justice, respondents were asked to indicate a) the importance and b) their level of satisfaction with the following: Finding out the fate of missing persons, investigating into alleged human rights violations, prosecuting those responsible for the abduction and killing of journalists, attacking religious places, sexual violence, and attacking media institutes during the time of the war.

Table 11: Importance of facets of reconciliation – overall response

How important	Mission Persons	Int. Judges	Killing Journalist	Attacking Religious places	Rape and sexual violence	Attacking media institutes
Very important	55.2	43.2	44.5	50.1	56.9	41.1
Important	37.4	25.4	45.2	42.4	38.2	47.4
Not important	3.9	12.3	4.6	4.0	1.2	5.8
Not important at all	1.5	12.8	1.4	0.5	0.5	1.4
DK/NS	2.0	6.3	4.3	2.9	3.2	4.4
Base	1285	1285	1285	1285	1285	1285

In general, irrespective of their awareness about the term 'transitional justice', people consider investigation into missing persons and prosecution of those who committed crimes such as kidnapping and killing of journalists, attacking religious places, rape and sexual violence during the war are important. Even though not as popular as other mechanisms, the majority of people think it is important to investigate into the alleged occurrence of war time human rights violations with the participation of international judges. As the table below illustrates, this approval predominantly stems from minority communities.

Table 12: Importance of facets of reconciliation – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	TJ initiatives	Very important	Important	Not important	Not important at all	DK/NS	Base
Young Sinhalese	Attacking Religious places	33.4%	56.9%	5.9%	1.5%	2.3%	341
	Rape and sexual violence	31.1%	62.2%	2.3%	1.5%	2.9%	341
	Missing Person	29.0%	59.8%	6.7%	2.9%	1.5%	341
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	21.4%	64.5%	7.3%	3.5%	3.2%	341
	Attack media institutes	18.8%	66.0%	8.2%	3.2%	3.8%	341

	Int. Judges	7.0%	24.9%	29.0%	33.7%	5.3%	341
Young Tamils	Missing Person	87.9%	9.9%	1.3%	0.0%	0.9%	223
	Rape and sexual violence	81.6%	17.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	223
	Int. Judges	80.7%	15.2%	0.9%	0.0%	3.1%	223
	Attacking Religious places	66.8%	30.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.9%	223
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	62.8%	32.3%	3.1%	0.0%	1.8%	223
	Attack media institutes	57.8%	35.9%	4.0%	0.9%	1.3%	223
Young Muslims	Rape and sexual violence	52.9%	44.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	210
	Missing Person	49.0%	45.7%	2.4%	0.0%	2.9%	210
	Int. Judges	48.6%	41.4%	2.4%	0.0%	7.6%	210
	Attacking Religious places	42.4%	55.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	210
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	39.0%	54.8%	0.5%	0.0%	5.7%	210
	Attack media institutes	35.2%	55.2%	4.3%	0.0%	5.2%	210
Young UCTs	Rape and sexual violence	82.1%	11.2%	1.1%	0.0%	5.6%	179
	Missing Person	75.4%	17.3%	3.9%	1.1%	2.2%	179
	Attacking Religious places	75.4%	16.8%	2.2%	0.6%	5.0%	179
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	74.3%	17.3%	1.1%	0.6%	6.7%	179
	Attack media institutes	73.7%	18.4%	1.1%	0.0%	6.7%	179
	Int. Judges	65.4%	20.7%	5.0%	1.1%	7.8%	179

The table clearly shows that priorities and attitudes of youth from different ethnic communities vary. For the Sinhalese youth, prosecuting those who are responsible for attacking religious places, those who are responsible for rape and sexual violence during the time of war, and finding out what happened to the people who went missing during the period of war is far more important than appointing a special court with local and international judges to investigate the alleged occurrence of human rights violations during the war. On the contrary, for Tamil youth, finding out what happened to those who went missing during the period of war, prosecuting those responsible for rape and sexual violence, and appointing a special court with local and international judges to investigate the alleged human rights violations during the war are the top most important concerns out of the given six options. The priorities of the Muslim youth are almost similar to the priorities of the Tamil youth, while the priorities of the Up Country Tamil youth are slightly similar to the ones of the Sinhalese youth. This means that the Sinhala and Up County communities do not see the appointing of a special court with local and international judges to investigate the alleged occurrence of human rights violations during the war as important for peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.
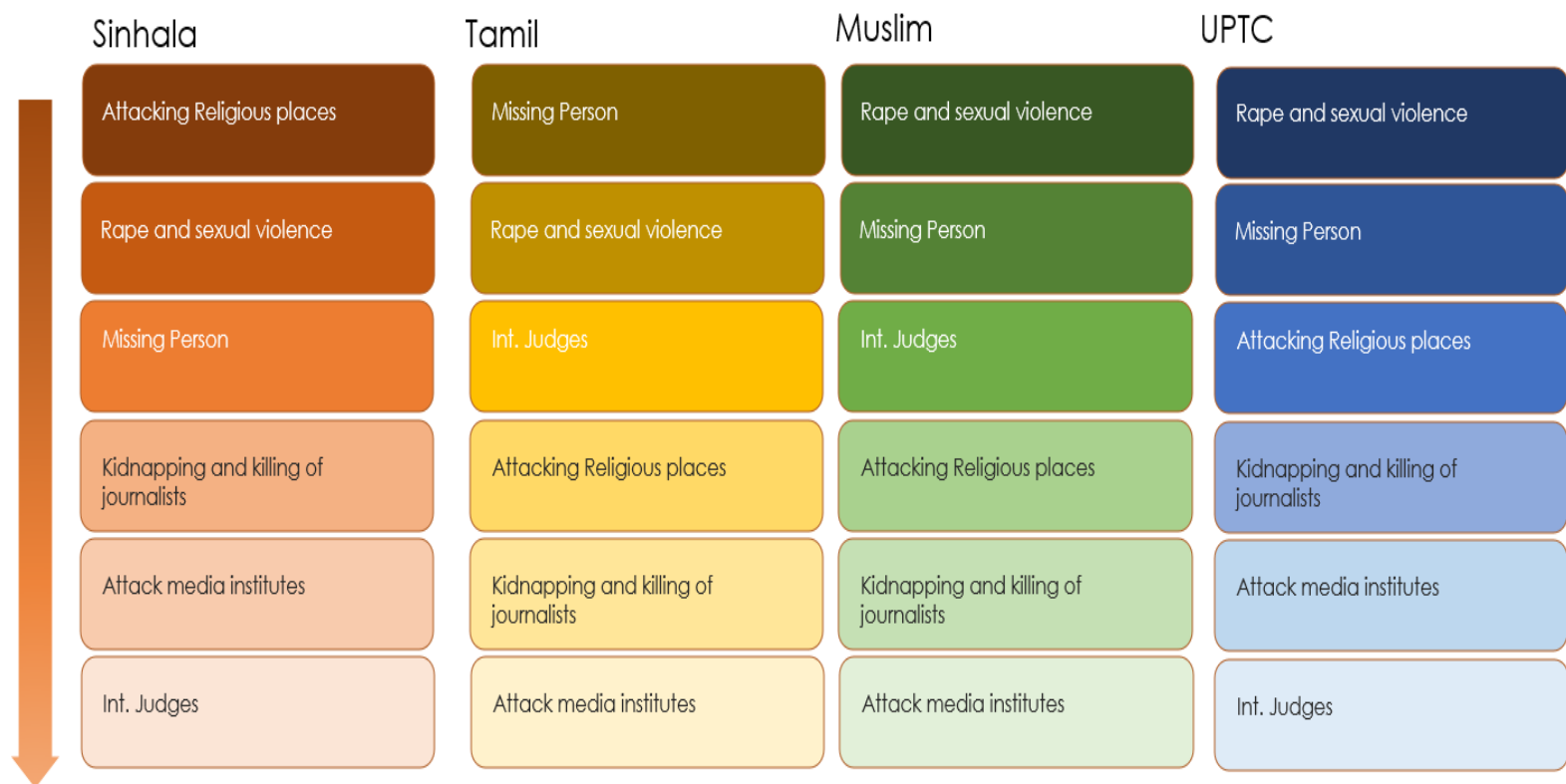
Table 13:Importance of facets of reconciliation – ethnicity/ age/ gender breakdown

	Young Sinhala Women	Young Sinhala Men	Young Tamils Women	Young Tamils Men	Young Muslims Women	Young Muslims Men	Young UCTs Women	Young UCTs Men
Missing Person	92.4%	85.3%	95.5%	100.0%	95.0%	94.5%	94.3%	91.3%
Kidnapping and killing of journalists	89.5%	82.4%	91.9%	98.2%	96.0%	91.8%	90.8%	92.4%
Attacking Religious places	92.4%	88.2%	95.5%	98.2%	98.0%	98.2%	93.1%	91.3%
Rape and sexual violence	95.9%	90.6%	98.2%	100.0%	97.0%	98.2%	92.0%	94.6%
Attack on media institutes	88.3%	81.2%	91.0%	96.4%	89.0%	91.8%	90.8%	93.5%
Int. Judges	38.6%	25.3%	95.5%	96.4%	90.0%	90.0%	85.1%	87.0%

As the above table depicts, the importance given by women and men among the youth of each ethnic group does not significantly vary except in the case of the Sinhalese youth. Among the Sinhala community, young women in general view the given TJ processes as more important than do their male counterparts. Seeing as ethnicity constitutes the major cleavage here, the following composite index was created to illustrate the ethnicized pattern of responses to this question.

Figure 9: Composite index – importance of facets of reconciliation by ethnicity

Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim	UPTC
Attacking Religious places	Missing Person	Rape and sexual violence	Rape and sexual violence
Rape and sexual violence	Rape and sexual violence	Missing Person	Missing Person
Missing Person	Int. Judges	Int. Judges	Attacking Religious places
Kidnapping and killing of journalists	Attacking Religious places	Attacking Religious places	Kidnapping and killing of journalists
Attack media institutes	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	Attack media institutes
Int. Judges	Attack media institutes	Attack media institutes	Int. Judges

Satisfaction with the progress made by the government on transitional justice

In addition to their attitudes towards transitional justice, the study also sought to explore the youth's satisfaction with measures taken to achieve various aspects of it. The thrust of this exercise was to understand how effective they think the progress made so far has been, and draw out possible tendencies in terms of ethnicity and other relevant variables (such as locality and gender).

Figure 10: Satisfaction with TJ initiatives – age breakdown
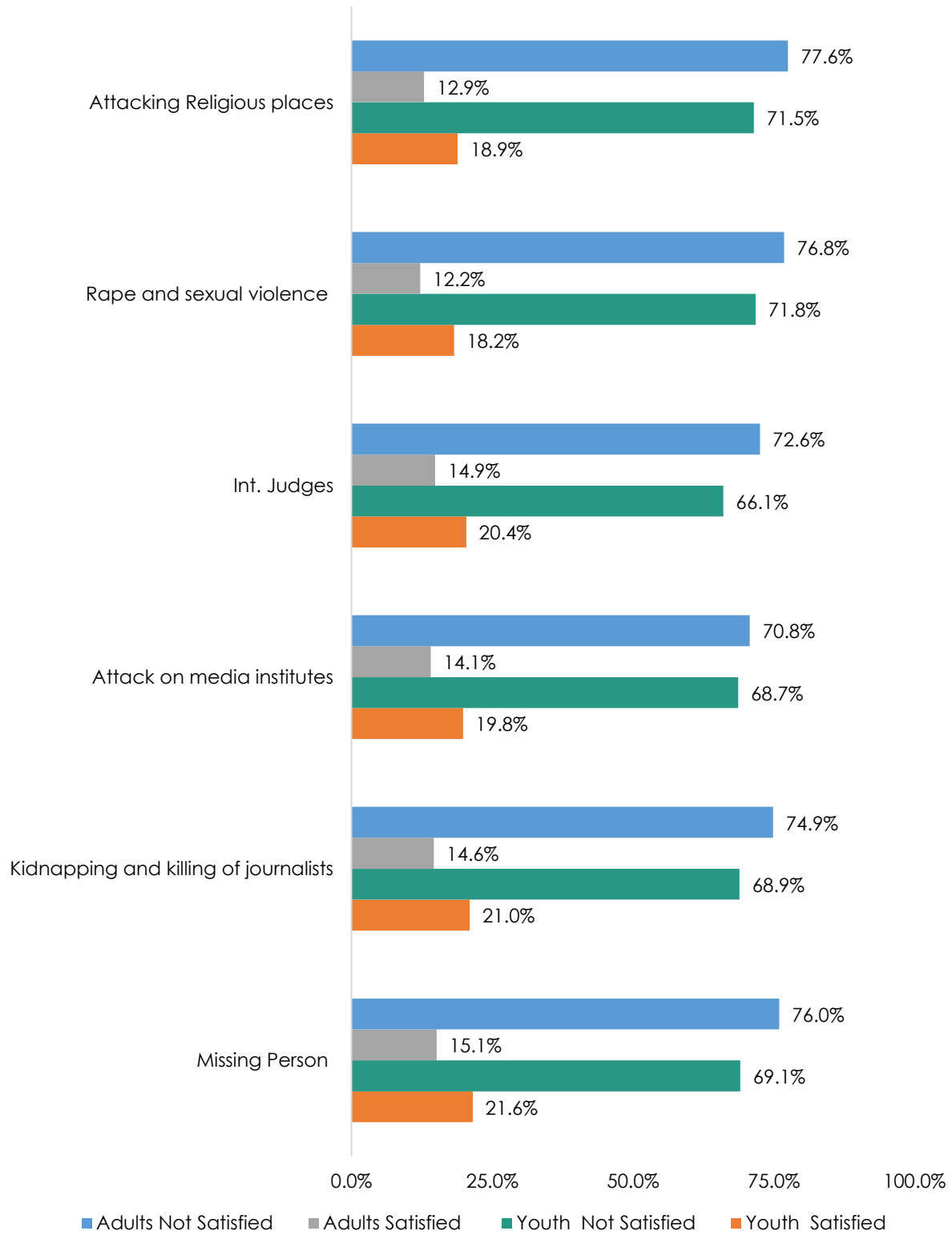
Dissatisfaction with TJ initiatives was far greater than satisfaction across ethno-age categories. However, the youth seemed generally more satisfied than their elder counterparts with regard to the progress made thus far in implementing TJ initiatives. Conversely, youth dissatisfaction with TJ initiatives is also lower than that of adults in all ethnic categories. As for individual initiatives, the greatest amount of youth satisfaction seemed to rest with the Office of Missing Persons, though this was admittedly not remarkably higher than their levels of satisfaction with the other mentioned initiatives. Measures taken to prosecute those responsible for rape and sexual violence during the war was the count on which the youth reported the greatest dissatisfaction, though again similar to their levels of satisfaction, there was no significant difference between dissatisfaction levels overall.

Table 14: Satisfaction with TJ initiatives – ethnicity/ age breakdown

	TI Initiatives	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Not satisfied at all	DK/NS	Base
Young Sinhalese	Missing Person	21.4%	64.7%	6.9%	6.9%	303
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	16.7%	67.2%	8.9%	7.2%	293
	Attack on media institutes	16.6%	66.8%	7.3%	9.3%	289
	Int. Judges	14.7%	58.7%	4.6%	22.0%	109
	Rape and sexual violence	14.2%	63.5%	10.7%	11.6%	318
	Attacking Religious places	12.0%	69.8%	11.4%	6.8%	308
Young Tamils	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	11.8%	45.3%	38.7%	4.2%	212
	Attack on media institutes	11.4%	47.8%	35.4%	5.3%	209
	Attacking Religious places	8.8%	46.3%	42.1%	2.8%	216
	Missing Person	6.9%	39.4%	49.1%	4.6%	218
	Int. Judges	4.6%	40.7%	47.2%	7.5%	214
	Rape and sexual violence	1.8%	36.7%	59.7%	1.8%	221
Young Muslims	Int. Judges	41.8%	29.6%	12.7%	15.9%	189
	Rape and sexual violence	40.0%	28.3%	14.1%	17.6%	205
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	36.6%	34.0%	9.1%	20.3%	197
	Attack on media institutes	36.3%	31.6%	11.1%	21.1%	190
	Attacking Religious places	35.9%	29.6%	15.0%	19.4%	206
	Missing Person	35.7%	36.7%	10.6%	17.1%	199
Young UCTs	Missing Person	24.1%	44.0%	21.1%	10.8%	166
	Attacking Religious places	23.6%	41.2%	23.6%	11.5%	165
	Kidnapping and killing of journalists	21.9%	41.5%	26.2%	10.4%	164
	Rape and sexual violence	21.0%	39.5%	31.1%	8.4%	167
	Int. Judges	20.1%	44.2%	22.7%	13.0%	154
	Attack on media institutes	17.0%	41.8%	29.1%	12.1%	165

Missing persons: The youth seemed generally more satisfied than their elder counterparts in this regard, though this was admittedly a meager percentage compared to the youth that

reported they were not satisfied. Among those that were satisfied with the progress made in this regard ('very satisfied' or 'satisfied'), young Muslims recorded the highest percentage (36%), followed by young Up Country Tamils (24%), and young Sinhalese (21%). Well in excess of 90% of young and adult Tamils reported that they were not satisfied ('very' or 'moderately'). Remarkably, 70% of young Sinhalese and 78% of adult Sinhalese also reported to feel the same. The Sinhalese response particularly, runs contrary to expectations.

War crimes investigation: The progress made on this front was perceived as unsatisfactory by the majority of respondents, chief among them being Sri Lankan Tamils. 88% of the young among them and 90% of the adults held this opinion. The Up Country Tamil community also had percentages exceeding the 60s for both age categories who reported that they were not satisfied with the progress. Among those satisfied ('very' or 'moderately'), Muslims ranked the highest, with 42% of the youth and 23% of the adults saying they were satisfied. Sinhalese came second, with 17.6% of the adults and 14.7% of the youth reporting satisfaction with the process. The responses, therefore, were clearly divided along the same ethnic lines prevalent during the time of the war, including the position of the Muslims.

Prosecution – attacking journalists: Tamils (both young and adult) were the most dissatisfied with the progress made on this count. Curiously, other minority communities were among the most satisfied in this regard, age notwithstanding. Young Muslims made up the highest percentage of those satisfied (40), followed by adult Up Country Tamils (19.5), and their younger counterparts (18.9). Percentages of those who were not satisfied hovered around the 60s and 70s among ethnic communities other than Tamils. In terms of age, adult Tamils were more numerous in the category of those who were not satisfied than young Tamils. The same was true of the Muslims. The relatively greater satisfaction of the younger generation with the prosecution of those who attacked journalists during the war is possibly suggestive of lack of awareness of this issue, seeing as no actual measures have been taken to this end.

Prosecution – attacking religious places: Interestingly, all ethnic communities (and age groups) reported remarkably high percentages of dissatisfaction with the progress made regarding this facet of reconciliation. Highest percentages among them were observed among adult Tamils (90%), followed by young Tamils (89%). 83% of Sinhalese adults and 81% of Sinhalese youth also reported to be dissatisfied. Young Muslims reported the highest degree of satisfaction (36%), followed by young Up Country Tamils (23%). These figures are very much a reflection of communal grievances regarding the destruction of their own religious places, rather than sensitivity towards religious places in general. As such, these responses do not necessarily indicate attitudes conducive for reconciliation, but rather demonstrate a need for vengeance.

Prosecution – sexual violence: The Tamil community expressed the most amount of dissatisfaction with the progress made in this regard (above 90% for both age groups). What was intriguing was that the Sinhalese also recorded figures of dissatisfaction above 70% in both age categories. Muslims recorded the highest percentage of satisfaction and lowest level of dissatisfaction among all ethnic groups. This is possibly because they were the least involved in the war, and therefore opinions on such matters are more informed by normative stances rather than actual experience (such as in the case of Tamils) or identification (such as in the case of Sinhalese).

Prosecution – attacking media institutes: Only a minority of the sample reported to be satisfied with the progress made in this connection. Among them, young Muslims ranked the highest (36%), followed by young Sinhalese (17%) and young Up Country Tamils (also 17%). This suggests that the younger generation may be more optimistic about measures taken to ensure media freedom within a transitional justice framework. However, it should also be noted that the great majority in the sample opted for the 'not satisfied' options on this count, which should be taken to qualify the relative optimism of the youth mentioned above. In this connection, adult Tamils displayed the most amount of dissatisfaction (84%), with adult and young Sinhalese closely following at roughly 74% each.

Prosecuting the perpetrators responsible for rape and sexual violence during the war is considered an important proposal across all ethnic groups. When looking at the level of importance given by each ethnic group to these proposals, prosecuting the perpetrators responsible for attacking religious places during the war seemed to be the most important proposal for Sinhalese youth. For Tamil youth, finding out what happened to the people who went missing during the war was of top priority.

It is interesting to note that appointing a special court with local and international judges to investigate into the alleged occurrence of human rights violations during the war is the least important proposal for the Sinhalese and Upcountry Tamil youth. This proposal is listed as the third priority even for Tamil and Muslim youth.

CONCLUSION

This report presents the findings of a survey commissioned by the National Peace Council (NPC) to understand the opinion and attitudes of the youth towards their ethnic other, reconciliation, and transitional justice. Youth in this study are defined as individuals in the 18-29 age bracket. The survey was conducted across 21 districts, among 1100 youth, with a control sample of 400 adults. The survey findings were supplemented by qualitative fieldwork carried out in the Northern, North Western, Eastern, Central, and Western Provinces of Sri Lanka.

A key observation stemming from the data is that youth opinion on many of the issues captured here is divided along lines of ethnicity. Their ordering of reconciliation priorities, importance attached to various facets of reconciliation, and identification of those responsible for breaching Sri Lanka's peace are all issues on which ethnically differential responses were obtained. Further, there were no great variations in relation to various age cohorts within ethnic categories, regarding ethnically sensitive issues. What this points to is the fact that even though one may, on the premise that they did not experience the war in a personal capacity, pin higher hopes on the younger generation to be the catalyst of positive change, in reality they have been strongly socialized in the divisive culture of their older generations.

Secondly, given the youths' prevalent lack of awareness of especially macro reconciliation initiatives across ethnic categories, a note of caution is due: The young may, because of their oblivion, be vulnerable to negative political campaigns that manipulate general lack of awareness to manipulate facts for electoral gain. In light of the above observation that youth hold opinions not much different from their older counterparts on ethnically sensitive issues, this possibility looms large.

Thirdly, it is telling that political and religious leaders are viewed suspiciously by a large proportion of the youth. As such, one cannot anticipate any decision made by them regarding reconciliation or transitional justice to enjoy legitimacy among the young generation. Seeing as political will and initiative are absolutely necessary for macro level change to be possible, this state of affairs poses a challenge that policy makers should seriously take into account.

All hope may not be lost, however. As the report has shown, faith in the capacity of law enforcement authorities seems particularly high, as a majority of young respondents identified the strengthening of law enforcement authorities as crucial for reconciliation to succeed. This, then, is an avenue that may be used to earn legitimacy for any political initiative geared towards achieving reconciliation.

02

PROJECT REFLECTION MEETING & RESEARCH FORUM

"YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE FOR LONG-LASTING PEACE

IN SRI LANKA"

E V E N T   R E P O R T

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Peace Council (NPC) conducted an 18 months project to enhance national efforts on Transitional Justice (TJ) by improving the inclusiveness and viability of the TJ process in Sri Lanka by equally empowering young men and women to understand, engage with and utilize the TJ process. A two-day reflection meeting and a research forum was carried out with participation of project working groups -youth from 12 universities and 21 districts- in order to evaluate and conclude the project.

First day of the event included four main sessions, and the first session was a collective reflection gathering where participants discussed achievements, challenges and lessons learned by engaging with the project. The district programme and university programme conducted two separated facilitated meetings, through which they shared personal and collective insights. The second session was conducted to discuss the 'role of youth in electoral process and democracy' where Executive Director of PAFREL engaged with participants in an open discussion on technical matters related to the Presidential election and role of citizens to elect leaders. The participants actively engaged with the discussion and a proposal was put forward to the groups and NPC for further actions. The third session was conducted to clarify frequently asked questions about Transitional Justice (TJ) at grassroots level where participants were equipped with technical and practical insights on the subject. As the last session of the first day, a discussion followed by documentary 'Tears of Paradise' took place. In this session, participants engaged in an active discussion about unclear crucial elements, facts & myths of the history. Notable that one of the participants invited the panelists to screen the documentary in his village for 100 youth where he promised to organize.

The second day of the workshop began with the challenges with the framework of TJ and participants discussed the background of TJ coming into the discussion in the context of Sri Lanka. The absence of action by government and other responsible actors to address cases of injustice of victims of war and assure the non-recurrence brought the need of mechanisms such as TJ. Following this session, a brief on the survey conducted by Dr. Pradeep took place. In this discussion, the participants were presented with the framework and results of the survey carried out and participated in a discussion with Dr. Jehan – Executive Director of NPC. The forum was concluded with the vote of thanks from the manager of the project.

INTRODUCTION

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (NPC) is an independent Non-Governmental Organization which works towards a just and peaceful Sri Lanka in which freedom, human and democratic rights of all people are assured. Therefore, NPC works in partnership with different target groups with an aim to educate, mobilize and advocate the building of a rights conscious society of citizens that work towards a political solution to the ethnic conflict, reconciliation and equal opportunities for all.

NPC implemented the project "Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long-Lasting Peace in Sri Lanka", funded by United Nations Peace Building Fund. The project's overall objective was to enhance national efforts on Transitional Justice (TJ) by improving the inclusiveness and viability of the TJ process in Sri Lanka by equally empowering young men and women to understand, engage with and utilize the TJ process.

Expected results of the project were:

1. Ethnically diverse law students develop legal knowledge and skills required to help advocate for and implement a transitional justice mechanism.
2. Ethnically diverse university students help disseminate correct information and facilitate dialogue on transitional justice and reconciliation benefits and approaches
3. Community youth leaders are mobilized to increase understanding of peace building within local youth groups

The project was implemented by NPC since November 2017 and ended on 31 October 2019. This initiative has been implemented in collaboration with Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM), Legal Action Worldwide, state universities and district level partners.

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

At the end of the project period, final project reflection meeting was organized with the participation of all project partners including district coordinators, partner organization representatives, university lecturers and students as well as selected beneficiaries. Objective of this report is to elaborate the proceedings of the meeting.

Day 01 – 30 October 2019

Welcome & Introduction

Participants were welcome by V. Thusandra - the project manager of the TJ for youth project. It was mentioned that the project was implemented as a 2-year project, in 21 districts and 12 universities. Objectives of today's session is to reflect on achievements, challenges as well as lessons learned for future interventions.

Participants' introduction – Participants were asked to form a circle and a challenge was given to the group to re arrange the circle by standing in the alphabetical order of each participant's first name in 2 minutes. Then each person was invited to introduce him/herself by repeating own name 3 times after the wording "My name is .."with an action and then others to repeat the same action after the wording "Your name is.."

After briefing the proceeding of the workshop, participants were divided in to 2 groups to represent the university programme and the district programme. University programme group consisted of university academics and students from different universities while District programme group consisting district coordinators and representatives of district level partner organizations. Each group discussed the project achievements, challenges and lessons learned and innovative ideas for future project interventions, separately as 2 break-up sessions.

SESSION 01: PROJECT REFLECTION

The group was divided into two discussion groups as District Programme and University Programme. Achievements, challenges and lessons learned were discussed in a facilitated discussion.

A. District Programme

I. Project achievements

- Conducting a TJ awareness programme in Kotagala teachers training school (Nuwara Eliya)
- Formation of a club called "Heart Beat" and organizing some annual events through the club. i.e.: Sripada trip, Cancer hospital donation programme & awareness creation programmes
- Started the programme with 8 youths and in the process, it was possible to attract more youth to the programme. Partnerships created with different institutions such as Vocational Training Authority (VTA), District Reconciliation Committee (DRC) and Helvetas (Trincomalee)
- Conducting several follow up activities and as a result some of the resource persons who were trained by the project are selected as resource persons for sessions conducted in Youth camps organized by the youth council within the district. Most importantly it is a paid service by Youth council which is a good sign of the empowerment of youth as resource persons and the sustainable continuation of their service (Rathnapura)
- Conducting an exchange programme with the participation of 40 youth from Panduwasnuwara in Kurunegala district (Jaffna)

- Organizing a *Sramadhana* event in a coastal fisheries village with the participation of all ethnicities (Matara)
- Organizing a *Dansel* event with the participation of multi religious groups on *Vesak* fill moon *poya* day (Nuwara Eliya)
- It is quite positive that the youth trained by the project have become leaders and have contributed in different programmes conducted by other organizations (i.e.: Helvitas, DRC) as resource persons. This is a motivational factor the trained youth and much beneficial for their personal career (Tricomalee)
- Organizing awareness creation programmes for youth after A/Ls, multi-religious people and Grama Niladhari officers (Batticaloa)
- Organizing awareness creation programmes for Sesatha (women) organization, Retired Grama Niladhari officers' organization as well as youth. (Galle)
- 3 of the youth who were trained by the project have become active resource persons in different programmes organized by other organizations such as NAITA. (Badulla)
- Conducting an awareness creation programme at District secretariat and organizing an arts competition (Puttalam)
- Youth who were trained by the project have become resource persons in different programmes organized by other organizations. Also, several activities were organized including creation of a street drama in partnership with Helvitas and formation of multi-religious youth forum. (Kalutara)

Organizing a blood donation programme and awareness creation campaign for youth (Ampara)

- Organizing 10 awareness creation programmes within the district. However, it is quite doubtful to measure the real achievement by just conducting those awareness programmes. It can be assumed that such awareness creation would have contributed for the lesser tendency of violence within the district after 21st April attack. However, to be honest it is quite questionable to gauge the real achievement by just conducting an awareness creation programme without measuring its real impact (Matara)

II. **Challenges faced**

While agreeing with the comment made by the representative from Matara, facilitator invited participants to bring up the challenges faced in relation to the project implementation.

- It was not possible to get the active engagement of all 40 youth who participated in the initial training programme. It was observed that some had no real passion on the topic and they participated only for the sake of inviting them. Also, some of them were reluctant to bring the message of TJ to the society due to the fear of general societal perceptions and media trends against the TJ and discontinued in the process. On the other hand, lack of a continuous follow up programme within the project to ensure the continuous engagement of the youth was a challenge. It would have been better if we could have such mechanism within the project. (Kalutara)

- Rejection from the administrative authorities of partnering organizations (i.e.: NAITA) due to the negative attitude, perception and lack of conceptual understanding on TJ was a real challenge in getting the engagement of youth from relevant organizations. Also, there was a significant rejection from some religious leaders as they had some doubts on the TJ concept and approach. (Badulla)
- Lack of continuation and drop-outs from initial training to the follow-up activities was a challenge (only 8 were available at follow-up stage). Some of them did not respond even with some continuous efforts to get them engaged and hence we believe that the efforts and resources put on them was a waste. There is a concern on the self initiativeness and responsibility of selected participants. (Matara)
- Responding to the concern the facilitator mentioned that it should be a shared responsibility of the PO and the NPC to get continuous engagement of the selected youth.
- (While agreeing on the shared responsibility of the PO), it should be noted that there was a criteria by NPC in selecting the participants which was a positive strategy. However, you should expect some drop outs in a programme of this nature. But my main concern is that there was no continuous engagement programme within the project. Also, a lack of strong M&E mechanism within the project would be another weak point. There was no proper mechanism and facilities available to use the skills of trained youth in certain extended activities (i.e.: transport allowance for long distance programmes which they participated as resource persons) we believe that it would have been more effective if we could have such a mechanism. (Ratnapura)
- Facilitator agreed on the concern and acknowledged that the project was unable to address such requirements even with some requests from POs as there was no budgetary allocation for such extra (un-planned) activities.
- Representative from Ratnapura proposed that it would be better to predict such extended requirements to ensure the extension of messages to the community using direct beneficiaries and plan accordingly in future project interventions.
- Lack of proper coordination between the district programme and university programme – As an example as the PO we did not have any awareness on the programme organized with the Uva wellassa university. It would have been a better opportunity for us to contribute such programme to utilize our resources (trained youth) specially as we are struggling with financial limitations to expand our services beyond the beyond the planned limits. (Badulla)
- Similarly, in Batticaloa, the PO had no awareness on programme organized with Batticaloa university (in fact we got to know it only yesterday once we met with the university representatives). It would have been better if there was a better communication with us.
- Further, it would be better to have a community follow-up campaign after the awareness creation - people ask different questions on the credibility of different aspect of TJ after the awareness creation (i.e.: truth seeking process, office for missing persons etc.) Therefore, I think it is our responsibility to respond/ attend those concerns by the community. (Batticaloa)

III. Lessons learned and innovative suggestions for future

- In planning a project, it is good to consider possible unexpected situations – As an example, we could consider April 21st attack. In our district, majority is Sinhalese and there are Muslims concentrated in certain areas. There is a clear separation and mistrust between 2 ethnicities. It would be good if the project could predict such unexpected shocks and have a contingency plan. (Kalutara)
- We have trained a large number of youth all over the country and it had created a skilled, young resource pool. It would be great if we could review the capacity, commitment and self-imitativeness of the existing pool to and a pool of champions on TJ at national level. (Badulla)
- We can think of using the artistic skills of the youth to convey the message of TJ. I would like to propose a national level Newsletter (probably as a quarterly publication) to utilize the skills of the youth (Creative writers, cartoonists, etc)
- When we are dealing with a concept like TJ, it is important to focus on Conflict management aspect. Specially youth are like two sided knife and in a conflict situation they can be used positively and negatively (example – April 21st incident and consequent conflicts in different areas). Hence it is good to address the conflict management aspect.
- It is proposed to have better coordination with POs on all programmes coordinated within the district. That would help to utilize available resources more effectively and efficiently. It was observed certain disparities on facilities provided between university programme and district programme. It would be good such disparities could be eliminated.
- It is proposed to consider possible negative perception within the community (on so-called NGO approach and misconceptions/ rejections of the society (i.e.: is TJ really needed for Sri Lanka). It is better to consider these at the planning stage. Also, it would be worth to consider possible political (government) changes too.
- Responding to the suggestion, facilitator mentioned that "as we believe, regardless of possible government changes, our focus should be on establishing the rule of low, assurance for non-recurrence etc. and we at NPC will continue to work on our focus.
- It is proposed to include Non-Violent Communication (NVC) component in to the project design.
- It is proposed to focus on some exclusive and vulnerable target groups like three- wheel youth
- It is proposed to give specific focus to young female in the society and different institutions (NAITA, Youth Council, etc)
- There are continuous communal tensions specially affecting the North people (i.e.: there is one company (in Dehiwala) which banned its staff to speak in Tamil, language priority issues in Jaffna airport, Pullair Kovil incident, etc. I think we need to address such contemporary issues to achieve project success.
- Our key focus should be to contribute for non-recurrence of conflicts. I think we should not bother on possible government changes, doubts on not having governmental support etc. I believe that it could create self-discouragement. Within ourselves. We should think positively and do our work perfectly under any situation and with whatever challenge we may face. There is a social problem that we need to address, which go beyond popular political talks. We have to understand that reality and react accordingly.

B. University programme

The facilitator introduced the project and recalled multiple initiatives undertook by the universities under the programme such as short film on TJ produced by Eastern University, Debate on TJ by University of Jaffna, workshop conducted by University of Ruhuna, campaign on TJ carried by Sabaragamuwa University and the film review discussion conducted by University of Colombo.

The facilitator entered to a guided participative discussion with the multiple questions, inviting participants to share their opinions and experience. Following experiences were shared:

I. Project Achievements

Eastern University:

- Reached 2500 students in both University and School levels. In the university level, the batch of 2016-17 participated in the programmes and received knowledge on this. In the school level more than 500 students were reached.
- developed a drama and presented at BMICH programme.
- gained knowledge in the subject of TJ -which is an unfamiliar exposure-.

University of Jaffna

- 42 students from Jaffna university participated in the programme.
- Most of them have finished their degrees and left. They are in the society now carrying this message forward to their communities. The programme was able to create messengers.
- debate programme with 1000 law students, in war affected areas in Tamil medium. This programme was able to build good awareness on the subject through discussions.

University of Ruhuna

- Participants did a workshop on TJ for more than 650 students of first year. Many Political science students decided to take their dissertations on TJ.
- A student who participated this programme received an opportunity to go to a programme about TJ in London.
- University newsletter had an article about TJ and what students learned from this programme.
- Government thinks that building bridges is enough to achieve TJ. But there are people who disappeared, and war made us lose our loved ones. Tamil people can't say this directly to the government. This kind of programmes filled that gap, and people will be encouraged to work with government to achieve TJ.
- brought the knowledge to around 600 people through an 8-hour workshop. We wanted to know what their attitude was, give them the basics of TJ and make them realise the need of TJ. We believe this workshop was a success.
- The students took part in the workshop mentioned that TJ is a necessary and knowing what actually TJ helped them realise that. They clearly refused a war again. I am hopeful about the message being

socialised more. TJ is the weapon to prevent another war. There is nothing we can't do if we think. Universities and schools are a very good way to carry the message.

Sabaragamuwa University

- knowledge: TJ was refused by youth in education sector in South. basic knowledge was given to youth, faculty staff and administration. Next steps were taken by students, and we only guided them. They did a question and answer sessions, campaign through leaflets, a drawing competition, songs and poems were selected and presented on TJ, drama on TJ was presented. The knowledge given was really helpful.
- developed team building- we had to work for the above initiatives very hard and worked day and night. As a result, we were able to identify leaders and a good team to advocate for TJ.
- Through this programme, TJ was institutionalised. Sustainability was achieved through institutionalising the TJ concepts. The university is processing a new degree programme for 'peace education' and now decided to include TJ as a main subject. We are now working on it. TJ is already included in new syllabus for the external degree programme. Further, TJ is included under the Human Rights education of Internal degree system.
- Thus far, students' unions were often criticised for their irresponsible behaviour, but Maha Shishya Sangamaya, Political Science and Art Faculty Students Council participated and took the lead for our interventions in the university on TJ programme.

II. Challenges faced and suggestions for improvement

- I was confused about TJ in the beginning. I wanted to know more about TJ and this programme helped. But we need more knowledge, what we have is not enough. I have a framework built in my head about this, but the challenge is to understand this complicated subject better. (University of Jaffna)
- As a subject applied in the society, Economic development is required alongside TJ. Reparation provided in a just manner would be a challenge for Sri Lanka. (University of Jaffna)
- Not many people knew about TJ. Saying this in a way that they can feel this in their heart was a challenge. We tried to build awareness on TJ in the university. We didn't use the term TJ, but we used the word 'peace' and enquired the people whether they think there is peace in Sri Lanka. The responses were negative. We selected 50 people and built awareness on TJ. And the trained students brought the message to their circles. (University of Kelaniya)
- When we were implementing programmes within the university, other questioned us on our intentions of doing it, and challenged us with extremist ideas. We realised that it is a long journey. (University of Kelaniya)
- Deadlines were a challenge, as there were exams, strikes etc. It was stressful. We request you to take dates from us and consult us on making deadlines in the future.
- As we discuss TJ, people thought we take the side of tigers, it was difficult in the beginning. But we were able to address it.

- There were less materials published in Sinhala on TJ. It was a challenge to not to have enough reading materials for our knowledge and also for our participants and interested parties to learn more.
- Prejudices on NGOs in south was a challenge. We were pasted with labels on 'NGO kaarayo' and were refused by some.
- University students were critical and curious of our intentions. We had to make clear statements that this is not politically affiliated. Some thought that we try to take a side of parties. But as we began, and people were able to mix with other ethnic groups and mingle, it got easier.
- Administrative issues with assignments, exams were an issue. It was difficult for both lecturers and students to engage.
- People were hurt from war and did not like taking about it. People fear talking about it. (University of Jaffna)
- People were curious why a chemistry lecturer is in this TJ programme. I told them that I am doing this as a citizen who has right to do political activities.

SESSION 02: ROLE OF YOUTH IN ELECTORAL PROCESS AND DEMOCRACY

The session was conducted by Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi -The Executive Director of PAFFREL- under 2 main components as an interactive discussion. The main two components were: A) Technical matters related to the Presidential election, and B) Role of citizens to elect our leader.

A. Technical matters related to the Presidential election

- We will have the choice to mark preferential vote in this years' presidential election
- Most ideal method to mark the preference is marking 1,2,3 against relevant candidates. However, traditional mark used by people for voting is "X", You cannot mark preferences along with X and only X would also be accepted. Final decision on accepted voting method is with election commission. We will have to be on alert on the official statements of the election commission in this regard.
- A vote symbolises the preference of a citizen. In a vote of presidential election all preferences will have a single value.
- Some legal aspects related to presidential election
    o Eligibility criteria to become a candidate for a presidential election -
      Being a citizen of Sri Lanka, Cannot be a citizen of another country, Should be over 35 years, Should be qualified to be registered as a voter (not necessarily be registered), Should not prove guilty for a criminal offence (over 2 years imprisonment would hold candidateship for 7 years' time), should be from an accepted, registered party (at present, there are 70 registered parties out of which 06 has legal issues for operation) or if an independent candidate – should be an ex parliamentarian or a current parliamentarian.
    - Benefits offered to presidential election candidates –
      During election period – Free air time at state media, free mail service, ability to appoint polling booth members and counting centre representatives,
      General - Citizenship advantages in other countries, Visa benefits,
    o Most of candidates are put by main parties in the contest in order to get above benefits indirectly. Legally it is prohibited to promote another candidate by a particular candidate.
      Increased no of candidates may consider as a reflection of a democratic culture, but in practice it may be not.
      There is an enormous rise of the expected cost for the elections due to this higher number of candidates - Longer poling sheet of 26 inches, Poling time extended (7.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.), Counting issues, cost of free services provided to candidates, etc.
    o Eligibility criteria to be registered as a voter –
      Being a citizen of Sri Lanka, should be over 18 years, confirmed general residential address (even some plantation workers who doesn't have private address they are accepted under state name). Voters list is renewed annually and the list which is valid as at the announcement of particular election is considered for a particular election.
      o Criteria to select the president under preferential voting system –
      A single candidate should get more than 50% (50%+1 vote) out of valid votes, if any candidate had not fulfilled the above criteria;
      Step 1 - Identify 2 most leading candidates (Assume A & B Candidates)
      Step 2 – Sorting ballet papers of other candidates and count 2nd or 3rd preference for A & B (Only 1 preference is counted)

B. Role of citizens to elect our leader

- How can we challenge the injustice to the society with this un-necessary increased number of candidates?
- Justice and law are different from each other. Law is related to court and decision of law will depend on the logic. Best option is to empower civil society to avoid this injustice. Politicians will have to deliver what people are demanding. (i.e. Certain people are out of active politics as those were rejected by the public. On the other hand, there are examples that public selected candidates with proved offences on crimes, drug deals, etc. Consequently, political parties respond to such community demand and put candidates accordingly. If such candidates are rejected by the people, parties will be pushed not to give nominations for such candidates.
- As community leaders, what we could do to change this political culture?
- As community leaders, we would start within our control. If we could compare manifestoes of each candidate and start a community dialog, it will make some change. We may not be able to do a miracles in the short run. However, it will surely make a change in the long run. So, we have to start from ourselves and then expand it.
- A suggestion was made to do a collective petition during the workshop, to be handed over to the Election Commission. Suggestions was highly appreciated by the resource person.
- A participant raised a concern on reducing community interest and decreasing voter percentages especially in rural areas. However, resource person responded that he would not agree with the comment and suggested to wait until the election results to confirm.
- A question was raised by a participant on NOTA (None of The Above) option. Resource persons opinion was that it may not be suitable to use if for the first time in a presidential election considering the Sri Lankan context. It may be ideal for a healthy election culture. In the Sri Lankan context, NOTA option is used by smart, independent voters with some thinking power, Party-bond traditional voters do not use it. Hence there is a possibility to elect the worse person. Also, it can be a waste of money spent on the election.
- Questions was raised by a participant on the suitability of E-voting system and possibilities of securing voting rights of foreign employees. In response, it was mentioned that E-voting systems are used in countries with large voter base. Therefore, considering the scale it may not be a wise option for Sri Lanka. Also, there are higher possibilities of technical failures in related equipment and machines requiring higher standards of technical capacity. However, in view of creating the accessibility for disabled, etc. it can be considered. Regarding the Foreign employees matter there are certain concerns (politicized Counsel offices/ high commissions, Practical difficulties to reach counsel offices, etc.). On the other hand, before considering the people outside the country, it would be worth to include those who are within the country (Prisoners, those who are having pre planned events (weddings, etc))
- The session was concluded and the participants were given Mr. Rohana's phone number for further inquiries– 0777590154.

SESSION 03: FAQ ABOUT TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AT GRASSROOT LEVEL

Based on a survey conducted in 10 districts by NPC and Published as a booklet, 10 Questions related to TJ were discussed along with participants' ideas on possible responses that can be provided as TJ activists. The session was conducted by Ms. Nirosha, Project Manager of NPC.

1. Why has it taken such a long time after the war to introduce this concept of TJ
   - Overall it is due to the incapability of the civil society and political leadership. There were some initiatives taken and progressed to a certain extent (i.e.: LLRC, Office for missing persons, Office for Reparation, etc. But not so efficient due to lack of political vision and passion
   - Long lasting division within the country may also hindered the progression (caste/race/religion, etc)

2. Isn't memorialization a painful experience? why should buried memories be exhausted?
   - Yes, it is painful, and pain is common for every corner in the country due to different reasons. However, without remembering such memories, we may not be able to find real root causes of problems.
   - However, we should acknowledge that it is important how we use such memories (not to deepen the hatred but to promote empathy and mutual understanding)

3. Since the war has ended at present, what is the need of such mechanism like TJ
   - Even though the war is over, the real peace is far away from us. It is a transitional period after the war and hence there is always a possibility of recurrence of such violence.
   - However, we should appreciate that, it may be reasonable general public to think like that due to opportunistic political and media influences.

4. Is there a proper mechanism for financial compensation? Is it handled by Government? Otherwise, will there any risk that commission mongers thrive on them without allowing to reach real victims.
   - Yes, cannot guarantee such a smooth mechanism considering the polluted culture and we should not deny such doubts. However, it is handled by the Government and is a progressive step taken towards TJ. We may need to address such potential mal-practices through the existing legal mechanisms.

5. Can the military heroes who sacrificed their lives for the country and those who died for terrorism be considered equally in TJ process?
   - It may not be suitable to use the term "terrorism" and use some other term such as "combatant"
   - All their lives are valued. You may not value a life based on any difference.
   - However, we should acknowledge that the term reconciliation is been misinterpreted. We all have different identities and cultures. Real reconciliation is to live in harmony by valuing those different identities and cultures.
   - Any military combatants will not be punished on war activities. Punishments are for activities beyond war rules. All non-military combatant is not considered like that and all their actions are illegal and not accepted (as long as they represent a banned terrorist group).

6. Will minorities get priority in reparation?
   - Reparation does not have any preference/ division for any segment. Its base is the level of loss/ disaster. Sometimes it can be quite difficult to define reparation (it can be in different form – Monetary or non-monetary)
   - We should understand that such community perceptions are also misled by opportunistic political agenda.

7. Are only the military heroes and Sinhala people are accused in TJ?
   - No, one may argue that the LTTE had done more crimes than the military (we can provide many examples). The process is to inquire on all such crimes/ misbehaviours and punished accordingly.

8. Can justice that was not delivered through the local legal system be expected through TJ?
   - The justice has to be delivered through the local legal system itself. We may need to introduce new laws as required, however, still such formations should be within the local framework.

9. Is TJ is aimed at achieving the narrow objectives of NGOs?
   - The responsibility of a process like TJ should be with the state. However, no government is openly speaking on this topic as it is not popular/ due to the fear of losing their vote base. NOGs have no such narrow intentions and hence they raise their voice as they believe it is a real need of the country.

10. Since the crimes have been committed by both parties in the past. Wouldn't remembering such past damage the reconciliation? Isn't there any space for forgiveness to create reconciliation within TJ mechanism?
   - It was briefly discussed that Forgiving is not just a simple process and in order to forgive, aspects like truth revealing and apologizing would be needed.

The session was concluded with a song done by NPC on TJ.

SESSION 04: "TEARS OF PARADISE" DOCUMENTARY ON THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF SRI LANKA.

After the documentary screening which had a keen attention by all the participants, a Q & A Session was held. Mr. Dharmasiri Bandaranayake and Prof. Sunil Ranasinghe participated the discussion as the panellists.

- A question was raised on certain terms used in the film and the details presented in certain places (party list of election results) and it was made clear that certain strategies (summarizing lists, etc) were used with the intention of saving the time to present the key political story.
- As the film ends with incidents of 83 Black July, a question was raised whether there is an intention to make the next part to showcase the era after 83. In response Mr. Bandaranayake said "It is the repeatedly asked question. Honestly, I do not think that I wold be able to answer you like this if I do the next film to elaborate the era after 83. On the other hand, I feel ashamed, to hear things as such. As a reaction to express that ashamedness I thought of been silent. However, I may do it if it should be".
- Expressing his experience on the film he added "it made me emotional to hear voice cut of Prof. Sivathambi on his idea of being a Sri Lankan and a Tamil. It brought me tears several times during the edit. I would say that you cannot expect such statement from a Sinhalese intellectual". It was mentioned that there were many emotional responses in previous screenings too, and however, those who committed such violence are still safe. "These productions should be preserved, and you cannot expect it from the government. Hence, I believe that it is the responsibility of public with good faith" he added.
- Few points were raised on the involvement of India and Pakistan to the Sri Lankan conflict, asking why those involvement were not presented in the film. In response, it was mentioned that some incidents were not presented with the view of effective time management and it was made clear that intense involvement of India was reported after 89 which was not covered in this film. "there were many incidences happened in Sri Lanka in the early 90's – standardising university entrance, Black July, and such other events. Many Tamils migrated to India during that time and India had a severe interest and involvement to our conflict only after that"- Prof. Sunil Explained.
- In response to the question "Why did Sinhala governments continuously refuse to act upon the agreements made with Tamil politicians", Prof. Sunil explained that the "national state" was the concept practices by many countries to establish internal peace after the independence (i.e.: South Africa, Germany, India – may not be the most successful example). In Sri Lanka there are 31 different cultural groups. However, we were unable to include all of them to Sri Lanka as a nation. We did not form a "national state", instead what we formed was an "ethno state". This is the main reason behind our division. Further, it was added that the modern trend is the "universal state" from which Sri Lanka is far behind.
- Responding to the question whether there was any involvement of JVP in 83 riots it was cleared that there was no connection with JVP or any left movement. As evident in the film, it was done by the government and no actions were taken against those who committed riots. Instead, the government falsely placed the blame on JVP and other leftist movement and banned their parties.

- Explaining the global context, Prf. Sunil mentioned that there were 15,000 wars happened during the past 5,000 years, and there were only 72 peaceful days for last 3,000 years (as per Marks & Engles,1948). Now, as humans on Earth, we have much severe problems such as global warming and environmental degradation which directly affect our persistence. In Sri Lanka we have been discussing this for 5 generations and it is the time for us to do something beyond talks.
- Tamils who were directly affected by the riots and left the country and their engagement with Sri Lankan conflict forming a Tamil diaspora was discussed as stated in Pr. Sivathambi's voice cut.
- While appreciating the effort to create the film and the opportunity created to watch it, a participant revealed that similar riots happened in different places in the country (with personal witnesses in Kandy). It was also highlighted the importance of screening this all over the country to educate people.
- Confirming the importance of the film, a participant stated that this was his first experience to understand what has happened in the past and invited to screen the film in his area (Kurunegala). He expressed his interest to organize a group of 100 youth in the area at his own cost as the audience. "I feel so emotional and desperate, please visit my division with the film" he added.
- A participant recalled his memory of the attack against Amirthalingam in Kandy in the year of 1977. Confirming the incident, Prof. Sunil added that Amirthalingam won 16 seats at that time, and the reason behind the attack was the fear of Sinhalese political leadership on his win.
- A question was asked "who killed S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake" and it was revealed that he was killed by a Monk named Somarama and mentioned that the incident is included in the other film "in Search of the paradise".
- It was discussed the hidden agenda of using Rohana Wijeweera to eradicate/ disable other Marxist parties by the UNP government in power at that time.
- In the final note Mr. Bandaranayake mentioned that the Artists are made subjected to cultural degradation and injustice due to the dirty political culture in this country. Ananda Samarakoon and Sunil Shantha were taken as two examples and it was revealed that Ananda Samarakoon -the lyrist of Sri Lankan National Anthem- committed suicide as the wordings were changed (Namo namo matha to Sri Lanka Matha) by the authorities without his consent.

With this discussion, proceedings of the first day came to an end with the agreement to start the next day at 8.30 am.

Day 02 – 31 October 2019

The participants received with welcome by Mr. Joe William, Chairperson of NPC.

It was mentioned that NPC is in operation in Sri Lanka many years recognizing the role of community for a better society and this particular project on TJ is another important initiative of NPC. Responsibility of youth was stressed as they have to act as catalysts to bring about the change we need in this society. Specially, at this election time to be conscious, analyse the manifestoes of different parties and candidates in order to select the correct person or party. Also, it was proposed for youth to review the focus given by different parties on education and ethnic harmony.

SESSION 05: CHALLENGES WITHIN THE TJ FRAMEWORK

- TJ came in to discussion with certain human right violations during the final battles of the war.
- There are different estimations on death counts during Sri Lankan war and it is inevitably quite challenging to get an exact count.
- Complaints received to Office for missing persons were very limited due to different reasons (reluctance of victims' families to file a complaint & Ineffective/ inefficient government mechanism, etc.)
- Responsibility to address social problems of war victims is not only with the government. Civil society have a significant responsibility on this in a similar capacity. Governments tend to lose their interest on the community once they come to power, but as a society we cannot get rid of this responsibility.
- There was no certain initiatives and mechanism created to deliver justice to war victims. And, there are some gaps and inefficiencies of such mechanisms.

As per the global records, there were 32 Truth & reconciliation mechanisms in the world and the best out of those is considered as South African one. One main reason behind this is that they had the power for decision making & taking legal actions.

SESSION 06: SURVEY ON KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRCESPTION OF YOUTH ON TJ

This session was conducted by Dr. Pradeep Peiris, and participants were engaged in an open discussion about youth and Transitional Justice. As an introductory approach, it was mentioned that there are 2 approaches that decides social/ human behaviour.

- Utilitarian Approach
- Normative approach

Unlike the past, the present common social behaviour is based on utilitarian approach. Hence there is a challenge in creating a positive change. If we recall our memories as adults, we should appreciate that youth tend to behave based on normative principles compared to the adults. Therefore, the role of youth is quite significant is creating a positive change.

As an overview to the survey it was mentioned that the survey was conducted in 21 Districts, covering 1100 youth and 400 adults with equal male female representation. Comparative analysis was done in 4 main categories representing different ethnic categories in Sri Lanka – Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Up-Country Plantation Tamils

Results were presented under 8 main categories as follows

1. Awareness on reconciliation initiatives
2. Prevention of Non-Recurrence
3. Attitudes towards implications of reconciliation
4. Inter community tensions

5. Reconciliation and victimhood
6. Hindrance to peace and reconciliation
7. Awareness on TJ mechanism
8. Proposals/ recommendations for TJ

An open discussion was conducted after the presentation of survey findings

- It was proposed and agreed that the media should have been included as an option in key hindrance factors for peace and reconciliation in the survey questionnaire. When considering the media, freedom of expression is considered a key factor in democracy. Democracy is a system with self-control as human (govern you by yourself). In order to practice that you have to be free citizen and not a subject. In this process, media is expected to be the intermediary between government and public. But it is not the reality in Sri Lanka and it is highly manipulated by different political interests.
- It was shared that youth in Sri Lanka tend remain in silence after 80's without raising their voice and the reason behind this silence would be the dirty political culture.
- Even though the general perception of the society on TJ is that it is an NGO agenda, we know that lesson learned commission too had raised the need of addressing wounds created by the war. However, those were not been communicated to the society due to dirty politics.
- A question was asked whether marginalized state Tamil were included in this survey. It was replied that the survey used random sampling and tried best to cover all segments of the community.
- It was highlighted the importance of the point that such a lesser awareness on TJ has recorded even after a significant involvement and investment by the government on TJ. One participant pointed that even it was highlighted the issue of political leadership in day 01 session (FAQs on TJ by Ms. Dilrukshi) the real issue is within the society. As citizens we should fulfil our responsibility.
- There was a discussion on the interpretation of the options given as "Strengthening the security forces" under proposals for TJ. It was proposed to re-word it as "Strengthening the security of the country". It was replied that the statement was put purposely and those who opted that option might interpret as it reflects country's security. Also, it was pointed that the perception on National Security is different in the North. That option was given the least priority by the North Tamils which reflects the reality.
- Dr. Pradeep highlighted that intention of this survey is not to review peoples' perceptions (whether they are correct or wrong) but, to understand different perceptions of communities and to realize the difference in understanding/ perception between us (activists) and the society. Further, some important findings such as minimal difference of perceptions between youth and adults and changing perceptions of plantation Tamils similarly towards Sinhalese mind-set were highlighted.
- Few questions were asked on the current context and Dr. Jehan was invited to comment on those representing the NPC.

      Questions:
1. What are the actions taken against the War crimes committed by the government?

2. Violating war ethics and International laws happened from both sides. In a situation where the justice did not deliver at that time, could we expect it from a process like TJ?

Response

International law is not different it is our law as we are agreed to obey such. We should consider healing any unhealed wounds. TJ has 4 pillars and however more attention may have given to Truth & Justice. We may realize that truth & justice is a very challenging aspect. To deliver justice you need to prove, and it is quite difficult in certain incidents without firm evidences. Example - In Myanmar, after 20 years of the conflict, accused leaders were brought in front of international court. There were many cases, but only 05 could be proved guilty.

In Sri Lanka – No punishment was given to incidents within the war. Even within local legal framework, punishments had given for crimes off the battle fields. However, crimes happened in the war field are difficult to address. Theoretically one would argue that it shod happen, however, in practical reality it is really challenging. One party thinks that it is very important, and others think that it should not because certain things were happened for the betterment of the country.

This is not only the case of Sri Lanka. Even in other countries, same incidents had happened. It took many years to settle those. In our country also, we could hope that things would work out and however, it will take a longer time. What our leaders should do may be to acknowledge the occurrence of such incidences. I think it will help to heal to a certain extent and move forward.

- A participant raised the point that Human Right violations during the final battle should be addressed and should deliver justice to the community and it is not necessarily be done by the international community. Otherwise people may not accept the mechanisms like TJ.
- A different opinion was raised by a participant who is a recipient of NPC training and did a similar research in collaboration with NPC. He highlighted that more or fewer same results were obtained from his survey too. His key concerns were 1. How can we force politicians to implement these mechanisms properly? 2. How to address divided identities between different societies? 3. How to effectively introduce the concept of TJ to the society. Adding his opinion, he said "As I believe battle was between the LTTE &government. However, Tamils tend to think that it was between Sinhalese and Tamils. Please don't think like that. On the other hand, Military people are having more Sinhalese mind-set and I think it should also be addressed. Further, rather than arguing what happened and not in the past (i.e.: what is the point of delivering justice now without having it at that time which was needed) Try to deal with the present context and issues to get the maximum out of it".
- A suggestion was made to NPC to document and present what are the real war crimes happened in Sri Lanka and what are being addressed by now as it will help to settle the confusions within the society.
- A comment was made that it was pretended that war crimes happened only from government side without mentioning any crimes committed by the LTTE. It was mentioned that it should be communicated correctly.
- In response Dr. Jehan mentioned that "yes, LTTE committed many war crimes and we all know those (i.e.: Killing several military/ police people, Attacking Sri Maha Bodhi and Dalada Maligawa,

etc. the first arrestment reported under the international law was an ex-LTTE combatant (who helped killing 15 force people) "

- Further adding to this response, it was highlighted what can we expect by the political leadership – "In these election days we could hear lot of promises which are mostly on economic development aspects and however, very less on this national issue. Economic development is important. But, the political leadership should consider solving the national issue too, otherwise, it would not be possible to achieve real development.
- In the long run, mechanisms like TJ would not just sufficient to create sustainable peace and a political solution would be needed for that.

The session was concluded after thanking the Dr. Pradeep for commissioning the survey and for all other for their active participation

A brief introduction was made to a similar project initiative by the NPC on Human Rights First Aid Centres along with the contact details of such HR first Aid Centres located in different districts. It was mentioned that People can consult these centres on any HR related issues to get help.

FORUM CONCLUSION

Concluding the workshop, the Vote of Thanks was made by V. Thusandra – the project manager, thanking all who actively contributed over the past 2 years including District coordinators, Partner Organizations, University academics and students and youths from different parts of the country, NPC project team and the management. Mr Thusandra further mentioned that it was a great learning experience to be involved in the project and each and every contribution is highly appreciated. Workshop was concluded with a round of expressions of ideas in a single word by every project participant to reflect their idea on the project, upon which the participants engaged in a written evaluation.

03

1. **University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka – Case Study 1**

24-year-old Gowritharan is a third-year students of the Faculty of Science in Jaffna University. Thanks to his participation in the NPC supported workshop on transitional justice, Gowritharan described that his knowledge in transitional justice increased from zero to about 65%.

"There are lots of conflicting narratives about transitional justice in our society. People in our district fault different groups for rights abuses, war crimes and victims' situations. We learnt how a transitional justice process can address victims' problems and find solutions." said Gowritharan

Gowritharan's fellow group member, 25-year-old Anulakshan described why it was important to counter negative and extremist narratives prevailing among the people of Jaffna through dialogues and interventions on transitional justice related issues.

"People don't know much about transitional justice. They just speak incoherently, repeating what they hear from others, read in the media or what politicians say," said Anulakshan

"People in the Jaffna district are also very frustrated because they haven't been able to find solutions to their issues. Politicians manipulate people's feelings and issues, so we need to address the victims' problems and concerns to find lasting peace. By implementing transitional justice mechanisms, we can counter extremist narratives." added Anulakshan

As their first follow up activity for disseminating knowledge and information on transitional justice, the Jaffna university student group decided to conduct a debate on the topic, "Do We See the Possibility of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka to Generate Unity among Ethnicities?" The main organizing committee consisted of 2 Sinhala and 3 Tamil students and 1 Muslim student. And they chose the Final Day of the university's Arts Week to host the debate competition since they would have a ready-made audience to witness their debate.

Gowritharan said they felt a debate would give them a platform to discuss and unpack emotion-laden ideas and views on transitional justice. On the day of the event, an audience made up of over 2000 students watched the students from both sides making their respective case in a convincing manner. And the head of the Faculty of Law who also served as the judge for their debate competition, gave a brief presentation on transitional justice to the audience.

"If we organized an awareness raising workshop, students would have heard and discussed mostly negative things. This is why we felt that through a debate competition, we would also discuss positive aspects of transitional justice which is crucial for young people to hear about." added Anulakshan

Gowritharan explained that the government's lack of progress in the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms as a key reason for the widespread prevalence of negative narratives on transitional justice in the Jaffna district.

"People want the government to implement transitional justice mechanisms. But people in our district have no confidence in the government in addressing their long-unaddressed issues," stated Gowritharan

"Tt is important to use our time and energy to develop a positive discourse by engaging with different groups and communities. In our discussions, we can explain to people about how the transitional justice processes in other countries also took a long time to resolve people's issues. We can tell them, similarly, in Sri Lanka, too, it will take time." added Gowritharan

Following this first debate, the student group then organized a debate competition in Sinhala language to involve the Sinhalese students from the Faculty of Science. The Sinhalese students debated on the topic, "Has Transitional Justice Been Established During the Post-War Era?" They invited all students studying in the Science Faculty to watch the debate.

"About 50% of each batch studying in the Science Faculty are Sinhalese. So we felt it was important to organize the debate in the Sinhala language. Similar to the Tamil debate competition, we wanted to show both negative and positive arguments relating to the topic. In that way, it is easy for students to make a difference between positive and negative narratives they come across on transitional justice." explained Anulakshan

Both Gowritharan and Anulakshan felt that the NPC's intervention to include youth in dialogue processes on transitional justice was timely and critical. Because of the project, they now have a platform to direct their local communities, including the affected, along the right path.

"We are the future of the Jaffna district. We should be leading our communities. We feel they would believe the younger generation. Similar to the way how our parents listen to us," said Gowritharan

After learning about transitional justice processes elsewhere in the world, both Gorwritharan and Anulakshan said they understand that there were no quick solutions to some of the enduring issues that Sri Lanka is contending with after thirty years of war. While helping spread that message among local people in their district through dialogue, they are determined to strengthen their involvement in the national transitional justice process leveraging the connections that the project helped establish with policy makers.

"Some mothers of missing children who were protesting against the government's lack of assistance to get information about their children have died. Youth that were imprisoned as political prisoners are now adults. People need their land to be released by the Sri Lankan security forces. We can take these messages to policy makers while highlighting the positive aspects of transitional justice to our communities." added Anulakshan.

Two faculty members from the Faculty of Law of the Jaffna University were among a group of participants that went on a Clinical Exchange study tour to the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic in October 2018. This visit was facilitated by one of NPC's project implementing partners, Legal Action Worldwide (LAW). The visiting delegation lelearned about the structure and functioning of a human rights clinic. Currently, steps are being taken by the relevant academic staff of the Jaffna Faculty of Law to establish a human rights clinic. This human rights clinic will work in close collaboration with state institutions and frameworks such as the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM), the Office on Missing Persons, the National Human Rights Commission to assist victims and family members with outstanding legal issues, which have not been addressed by state mechanisms and institutions leading the Transitional Justice process.

2. University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka - Case Study 2

When Chanika Dilhani, Sameera Sampath and A.M. Kumari, ages, 23,24 and 24, applied for a training on transitional justice, they expected it to be another academic exercise. With no prior knowledge of transitional justice and also without any expectation, the three of them joined the two-day training, drawing satisfaction from the knowledge that they were good enough to be among a group of 45 students who had been selected through a comprehensive selection process. But now they reflect on that training to be a life-changing experience made available by the Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project.

"When our group members from Padiyathalawa, Mullaitivu, Bibile and Ampara shared their bitter and devastating experiences of war, we understood why Sri Lanka needed a transitional justice process. We were able to connect their real-life experiences to the four pillars of transitional justice. Like most group members, I also had zero knowledge on transitional justice" said Chanika

Moreover, they also realized why youth should be actively involved in the national level transitional justice process.

"Youth are able to process information and situations related to war better than adults who have been through so much during the war. Adults are not ready to change their minds," explained Sampath

"But we have friends from all communities. So we are more ready to listen to the other communities' grievances and issues. And on the other hand, youth can also be easily attracted by extremist narratives. So there is a danger in not involving youth in the transitional justice process" added Sampath

Inspired by the new knowledge they gained from the workshop, together with empathy that their discussions helped generate toward their fellow group members with direct experiences of war and violence, the student group put together a one-day program on transitional justice inviting first year students and the university's academic staff to participate. The day's

activities included the performance of a drama and a rap song, the screening of a film, a presentation of basic information on transitional justice connecting both international and national contexts, and plenary discussions in between items. The event was attended by over 500 first year students.

"We wanted to give all important knowledge and information about transitional justice to our participants in simple and easy ways. That's why we used several tools for this purpose," described Sampath

"At the beginning of our workshop, we evaluated the participants' awareness of transitional justice. Then we compared that with their feedback we assessed at the end of the program, we found out about 85% mentioned their knowledge in transitional justice improved because of our activities." added Sampath

The Ruhunu University group also used their personal social media accounts to communicate information relating to their one day program among the university's student population. With the knowledge that visibility is important for attracting young students to their awareness raising program, the student group displayed a large banner about the event at the entrance to the university and also walked around in their newly made branded t-shirts.

"Since our target audience was youth students, it was important to brand the event and attract as many students as possible," stated Kumari

"We also used the drama as a simple format to talk about a heavy subject. Our rap song also advocated for the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms. Some of the students with direct experiences of the war, cried while sharing their past experiences with the audience." added Kumari

These three students give a lot of credit and recognition to the University's academic staff and the management for all the support they gave in the run up to the one -day program. The students said the Ruhuna university has already taken necessary steps to include transitional justice as a subject for first year students.

"It is important for university students to be aware about transitional justice and be involved in the national level process. We join the larger society after completing our education. We shape opinions and we take up positions of importance in work places and society. So our role is crucial in the implementation of transitional justice and also in building peace." stated Chanika.

Since Ruhunu University has been one of the last places where the initial training was conducted, the student group has not progressed beyond the planning stage in the conduct of follow up activities. According to Kumari, they discussed among themselves the need to organize exchange visits and information gathering initiatives to worst affected districts with an idea to creating a better understanding about transitional justice issues of affected people.

They view information sharing and gathering between the North and the South as a crucial exercise for successful implementation of the national transitional justice process.

"Lack of knowledge among people is a huge challenge to get the maximum results out of transitional justice mechanisms," explained Kumari

"Our families have extremist ideas about each other's communities. Their opinions are influenced by the media that sensationally report about transitional justice related issues, including the proceedings at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. So we have to build a positive narrative in order to make people aware why we need to implement transitional justice mechanisms." stated Kumari

In terms of the impact that the project has made on their own lives, all three students asserted that they have undergone a profound self-transformation process as a result of their involvement in dialogue processes.

"We now understand why some people still wish for the reemergence of LTTE. Why they justify the LTTE's violence. The LTTE is created in someone's heart because of the state's inability to find solutions to people's issues," described Sampath

"Politicians have extremist ideas and they are not interested in resolving people's issues. This is why youth should be involved in taking this transitional justice process forward. We can change minds. We can build a critical mass by engaging in discussions with others. Youth are a force for change" added Sampath

They consider themselves to be few lucky ones to have received an opportunity not just to improve their knowledge on transitional justice but most importantly, to share that knowledge with others and engage in dialogue processes pertinent to the national level transitional justice process.

"We are very happy to have met other students who came for the project finale three-day program. We met out university students. We can link up with them for our information collection work. Sinhala youth don't get much opportunity to interact with Tamils and Muslims. This project created that platform for us to build a wider network among all participating universities. We are looking forward to collaborating with them." stated Chanika

3. **Eastern University, Sri Lanka - Case Study 3**

24-year-old Premkumar Prikshana is an undergraduate student at the Eastern University in Batticaloa. Prikshna was among a group of forty students who were given an opportunity to learn about transitional justice by the NPC's Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project. The Eastern University was one of 12 participating universities that received numerous support and assistance measures under this project to improve their students' understanding in transitional justice as a normative framework to redress systemic rights violations. The project enabled the selected students to engage in dialogues as well as

to utilize the national level Transitional Justice process by connecting with policy makers and institutions.

At the outset, Prikashna and other selected students took part in a two-day knowledge improvement program where the group learned in-depth about transitional justice as a concept and the importance of its application - both as a framework and process - in post-war situations to ensure justice and dignity for victims, establish accountability, promote institutional reforms and work towards non-recurrence.

Soon after the workshop, Prikashna did a short volunteership to assist a local NGO that provided assistance for disabled persons. With advice from her senior lecturer who is also the project's coordinator, Prikashna met with disabled people through the NGO to give them a basic understanding about Sri Lanka's transitional justice process and guide them to seek justice and reparations for themselves and their families.

"A lot of disabled people I came across through that volunteership were very angry that they had been neglected by the state. Most of them complained that they were not receiving much support to address their issues. I always made sure to explain to them about their rights and entitlements as disabled people. Some of them became disabled due to injuries caused by the war." described Prikashna

Prikashna's friend and fellow student, Thangavel Sharmily explained how the student group utilized their learnings from the two-day workshop to share knowledge within and outside the university:

"After the two-day training program, we put together a stage drama on transitional justice. We included scenes to simplify the four pillars of transitional justice. And used an old man's character to represent people who had no idea about transitional justice and other characters explained to the old man about transitional justice and how it can be made use of to find solutions to victims' issues." Said Sharmily

The group organized their first performance during the First Year Students' Orientation. Around 1300 students were estimated to have been in the audience. The student group also conducted pre-and post-performance assessments to find out how the audience had absorbed their messages.

"Most students did not know what transitional justice was. Some of them were familiar with the words because they had heard about it from the media. The post-performance evaluation showed us that a majority of them who had no idea about transitional justice gained a basic understanding about it from our drama. So we were very happy with our effort." said Sharmily.

Encouraged by the reactions to their inaugural performance, the student group then arranged a performance to the secondary level students in Santhivali Siththivinayagar School in Oddamavadi Divisional Secretariat Division. Both Sharmily and Prakashna feel that young

people are ready to discuss about and embrace the idea of transitional justice as a mechanism to resolve difficult issues stemming from Sri Lanka's thirty-year-war.

"In our interactions, we realized that older people with many horrendous experiences of war had a lot of misunderstandings about transitional justice and they were reluctant to talk to us. Since there is a dependency culture, some of them expected us to provide material assistance to them. But younger people understood our messages better. They wanted to join with us to stage the drama in other places" added Sharmily

Prakashna and Sharmily also pointed to the lack of progress in addressing war-affected people's issues and problems as a major challenge in getting people to participate in dialogues on transitional justice. They said people they met during follow up initiatives were quick to express their dissatisfaction and despair in relation to an unavailability of information about their missing family members, lack of assistance to engage in viable income generation activities and rebuild their lives, etc.

"The old people would tell us that 'a lot happened before you were born, we need to find solutions to our problems, we don't see how you can change our situations by talking to us about transitional justice?' so it was clear that people were very frustrated since there has been very little progress in their lives ten years after the war." described Prakashna

26-year-old R.Darshan and 25-year-old S.Hayooran shared their experiences in imparting their knowledge in transitional justice among peers and local communities. Referring to their pre- and post-performance assessments, Darshana and Hayroon said their data showed that around 30% of the 1300 students that saw their drama gained a basic understanding about transitional justice. And given the gravity of rights related issues and problems that continue to challenge the lives of victims and their families, they both believe that the Sri Lankan government should implement all four pillars of transitional justice in order to establish lasting peace.

"Transitional justice mechanisms must be implemented to address war-crimes, human rights and other abuses," asserted Darshan

"Transitional justice is the foundation upon which we will be able to build lasting peace and reconciliation. This is what we learnt from the training we got from the NPC's project. Recently, a mother with a missing child approached us thinking we would be able to find information about her child. It showed us a lack of confidence people have in state institutions to get their problems resolved." added Darshan.

As part of post-training follow up, Hayroon linked up with AHAM, a local NGO, to conduct a presentation on transitional justice issues for Trincomalee district public officials. Similar to his own personal experience before the project, Hayroon said all public officials that attended the awareness raising session also had no knowledge about transitional justice.

"There were 20 participants. Some government officials and also youth from the Eastern Province were among the group. I helped them to get a basic understanding about the four pillars of transitional justice and the importance of implementing transitional justice mechanisms in Sri Lanka. We also hosted a post-presentation discussion. We are very interested in connecting with policy makers to further engage in the transitional justice process" added Hayroon

Based on their discussions with victims, local communities and youth, the Eastern University student group is currently looking at ways to conduct advocacy to bring policy makers' attention to the situation of missing persons' families, memorialization, reparations, and other enduring issues that can be resolved under the rubric of transitional justice process.

"We want to conduct an awareness raising activity targeting Pradeshiya Sabha members to discuss transitional justice issues with local level politicians. Our intention is to take those issues to national level policy makers through them" stated Darshan elaborating on the importance of connecting policy makers and victims.

"The Office on Missing Persons has not done anything to relieve the pain and suffering of the survivors. Our drama can't address everything. It can only initiate a discussion among people which is also important. We are afraid if policy makers will accept us. But we will still do what we plan to do" stated Darshan.

Darshan and Hayroon said their group members now have the necessary capacity and confidence to help the national level transitional justice process through several ways, including by collecting information about affected people, providing referral assistance to victims and their families, lobbying institutions such as the Office on Missing Persons to address outstanding issues relating to missing people and their loved ones, raising awareness on transitional justice among youth networks and local communities, and documenting affected people's issues and sharing reports with policy makers. Listening to their future plans it is clear that the project has succeeded in inspiring this group of students from the Eastern University to utilize and strengthen the national level transitional justice process by engaging in dialogue, advocacy and awareness raising efforts.

4. **South Eastern University of Sri Lanka - Case Study 4**

23-year-old A.M.Ojiskhan is a third year student of the Faculty of Arts in South Eastern University, Oluvil. Ojiskhan is one of 35 students from the South Eastern University who received training assistance from the Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project to improve their knowledge in transitional justice. Little did he know when he applied for a training program with no idea of what he was going to learn, that this training would also enable him to achieve one of his dreams.

"I had no idea what transitional justice meant," stated Ojiskhan

"I learnt about people's right to information, right to justice, war crimes, transitional justice issues of war-affected people, etc. At the end of the training program, they asked us 'how can you take the key messages you learnt in the training program to the people' and I expressed my wish to do a short film."

Ojiskhan had no previous experience or knowledge in film-making. Making a movie was one of his dreams. Together with Ojiskhan, other students in the group had also shared their ideas on creative and effective ways to generate a dialogue on transitional justice.

"I was so happy when they selected my idea to be supported under the NPC's project. We formed a core group that was going to be working with me on the short film. Our team consisted of two Sinhalese girls, two Muslim girls, one Tamil boy and one Muslim boy. I developed a storyline and then we held several rounds of discussions based on that storyline"

Ojiskhan explained the process that they followed for script development since they needed to make sure that their film did not cause further harm to the victims and survivors of war. He consulted and discussed with his core team on the draft script that was written by a friend. Ojiskhan said the draft script went through several rounds of changes until everyone was happy. In consulting his team, according to Ojiskhan, he wanted his group members to take ownership of this rare opportunity that they had been given.

"Before I developed the draft script, I consulted three people to listen to their experiences of war. One of them was a Tamil student from the Jaffna university. Then I interviewed a Tamil boy from my own area, Sammanthurai. I also spoke to a Tamil youth from Vavuniya who had taken refuge in Chettikulam displacement camp following the final phase of the war. So some scenes of the film have been based on these three youth's experiences" said Ojiskhan

Odam (boat) is the title of their short film. The film's scenes are woven around a man playing the character of a survivor whose father died in shelling while fleeing the fighting in their village. The main character's young children, according to Ojiskhan, represent the post-war era. And the main character's transition from war to peace, in spite of his painful and life-altering experiences of war, is symbolized by a scene in which he took a toy gun that his child was playing with and handed him a pen instead.

After completing all pre- and post-production work of the short film, Ojikshan found out that he could have the first screening of *Odam* at the Youth Champions event, the three-day project finale event that brought together all university students and youth leaders who had been part of Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka for over 18 months or so.

"I wanted to organize a premier at the South Eastern university. There are over 5000 students studying in my university," said Ojiskhan

"But I was delighted to screen *Odam* at the Youth Champions event held in Colombo in April 2019. That audience consisted of youth who came from 22 districts in Sri Lanka.I would not

have been able to find a more representative audience than that for the premier" added Ojiskhan

Ojiskhan is aware that their work has just begun in terms of creating a dialogue on transitional justice using *Odam* as a tool to bring people together for dialogue processes. Apart from a screening at the university, Ojiskhan also wants to team up with the District Secretariat Office in Ampara to organize screenings for public officials and other appropriate audiences. He also wants to create a wider discussion on transitional justice by opening a dedicated Facebook page for *Odam.*

"I will organize screenings together with my core team. We are planning to combine information sharing sessions with the screening of the film to discuss about difficult issues of transitional justice that victims and survivors are requesting the government to find solutions to."

Ojiskhan's is student group believes that the short film will serve as a good platform to draw other young people to engage in dialogues with them about transitional justice. According to Ojiskhan, it is crucial to tap into youthful energy in helping address unresolved, critical issues which constrain the lives of war-affected people in their area even a decade since the war ended.

"Young people are active listeners. They also have a lot of energy to take action, if guided properly, to address transitional justice related issues in their communities," stated Ojiskhan

"Young people are also more willing to work for peace compared to older people who show reluctance to compromise their views and beliefs for lasting peace and reconciliation. So I believe it is crucial to engage young people in transitional justice and this project has been able to inspire a group of us to do just that"

5. **Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka – Case Study 5**

Sachini Malka, Pravardini Menike and Kalitha Nashath, ages, 24, 24 and 22 are third year students at the Sabaragamuwa University. When these three friends applied for a training program on transitional justice, they had absolutely no idea what this phrase meant, let alone the crucial link between transitional justice and post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation. More than a year since then, all three of them are now discussing and debating about transitional justice and related issues in numerous private and public forums while organizing awareness raising activities to increase other youth's understanding of this widely misunderstood framework. Sachini, Pravardini and Kalitha are among a 45-student group that was provided with knowledge and capacity development assistance by the NPC's project, Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka.

"We learnt in-depth about how Sri Lanka's war affected all communities, what transitional justice means, its four pillars, why transitional justice is crucial after war and violence to serve

justice for victims and prevent a recurrence of another war. Everything was new information and my understanding about transitional justice has improved vastly" said Sachini

At the end of their initial training program, all students were requested to make an action plan outlining how they intended to share their newly gained knowledge with other students and youth within outside the university. As their first follow up activity, the group organized a one-day program that consisted of the staging of a short drama, a presentation, a quiz competition, a painting session and a plenary discussion on transitional justice. The idea was, Pravardini said, to use different and creative formats to encourage discussion about the difficult topic of transitional justice among students that represented different ethno-religious groups.

"Since we represent ethnic and religious communities that were differently affected by Sri Lanka's war, we wanted to create space for everyone to discuss and get involved in our one-day program. We publicized about the program by distributing over 800 leaflets around the campus. About 400 students joined our activities throughout the day. "Pravardini added

Youth from some of the worst-affected districts such as Mullaitivu and Batticaloa had shared their devastating and harrowing experiences of war with the audience. Sachini describes that the painful recollection of experiences of war by some Tamil students served as an eye opener to a lot of students in the audience, including their own group members, into the deep psychological wounds that the war had inflicted in their fellow students.

Kalitha is a young Muslim woman from the Batticaloa district. She considers it is important for youth to give leadership to local level efforts to assist victims and affected families to get their problems addressed. She has already begun to do so back in her village community by guiding victims to connect with public officials and government institutions that are responsible for implementing different components of the national transitional justice process.

"Youth have a responsibility to be involved in national and local level transitional justice mechanisms," described Kalitha

"Youth are generally very positive. They are able to communicate and convey right messages to their local communities. They have the agency to mobilize people. And on the other hand, it is also easy to make youth understand about complex and difficult aspects of transitional justice. So our engagement is crucial if we are to see successful outcomes." added Kalitha

Positive feedback from audience members at the conclusion of their one-day program pointed to the effectiveness of message delivery strategies and formats they utilized. Since that program, members of the youth group are said to be approached by fellow students expressing their wish to join future activities.

"We also think it is important for us to create awareness about transitional justice among adults, including youth who have failed to get into the university education system. Adults have fears that they carry on from war time. They have to be given accurate information about transitional justice." added Sachini

They appreciate the direct links that they have been able to establish with officials of the Office on Missing Persons and the Secretariat for Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM) under the Prime Minister's office who participated at the first training program.

"We discussed with officials from OMP and SCRM about our plans. They answered all the questions we directed at them during the training program" said Pravardini

"They also assured us that we could communicate our communities' issues directly to the relevant officials in their offices. The training gave us confidence to connect with policy makers and officials for bringing attention to transitional justice related issues." added Pravardini

The project brought together 45 students who themselves represented different ethnic and religious communities. And for a majority of students in the group, it turned out to be a first time experience to discuss very sensitive, contested ideas and issues within their own group.

"This was a good opportunity for us to discuss serious issues with other students in our group. It was the first time I took part in something like this. And most of the other students, too, had no previous experience in being trained together or discussing sensitive issues with students from other ethnic and religious communities." added Sachini

The project has groomed a committed group of young students who are now leading their own efforts to build a positive discourse on transitional justice while launching actions to help victims seeking redress for their protracted and unresolved issues.

6. Youth Leaders Mobilize Grassroots' Support for Transitional Justice

Mary Dinishiya – Jaffna district

29-year-old Mary Dinishiya is a resident of Point Pedro, in Jaffna. After completing an external degree in Sociology, Dinishiya took up a volunteer job with SOND (Social Organizations' Network for Development), a local NGO network that provides numerous assistance and services to war-affected communities. Dinishiya now works as a field officer at SOND, which also collaborated with NPC to implement its Youth and Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka project by coordinating youth leaders' empowerment activities in the Jaffna district. Dinishiya is one of 400 youth leaders across the country that took part in training and capacity development to organize dialogue sessions and create awareness on transitional justice.

In the Jaffna district alone, the project trained 45 youth leaders and activists and out of whom, five youth were provided further training in facilitation. Dinishiya was one of the facilitators.

"When SOND selected me for a training on transitional justice, I was clueless about what transitional justice meant," explained Dinishiya

"But after learning in-depth about the concept of transitional justice, its four pillars, I realized its value for Sri Lanka in addressing war-affected people's issues. All the root causes that led

to the thirty-year war are still there. It is crucial to remove those root causes to build peace and promote reconciliation. So transitional justice process is very important for Sri Lanka." added Dinishiya

As a field officer, Dinishiya is required to travel across the district. Since she meets rural communities on regular basis, Dinishiya makes use of those interactions to hold discussion sessions with community groups. After their training, the Jaffna youth leaders' group conducted 50 Training- of- Trainers (ToT) activities in the Jaffna district for other youth, building their knowledge and capacity to conduct awareness raising activities on transitional justice.

"We went to the grassroots level in groups of five and conducted three-hour dialogue sessions with community groups. We distributed leaflets with information on transitional justice. In those discussions, the issue of missing persons kept coming up. People showed resentment and despair at lack of support from the state to resolve their issues. We were often required to divert attention to non-recurrence while appreciating their patience and resilience." stated Dinishiya

Dinishiya also has direct links to district and divisional level public administration officials. After organizing several three-hour dialogue sessions with public officials to discuss transitional justice related issues, Dinishiya realized the need to close a wide gap in awareness on transitional justice among public officials.

"We have to organize more awareness raising sessions to improve the public officials' understanding on transitional justice," said Dinishiya

"They are reluctant to engage with us to discuss transitional justice related issues. Their lack of knowledge on this topic will also derail our plans for the district. This is a big challenge we are facing at the moment."

Dinishiya said their entire group is motivated and inspired to continue and expand on dialogue and awareness raising activities by connecting with other recognized and widespread youth networks such as the National Youth Services Council (NYSC). Links with NYSC, according to Dinishiya, will open up communication channels to communicate affected people's issues to policy makers.

Banuka Lanka Edirisinghe – Kurunegala district

26-year-old Banuka Lanka Edirisinghe and his team of 25 youth leaders from the Kurunegala district formed a youth network, "Heart Beat" linking all youth activists who took part in transitional justice focused trainings conducted by youth leaders. Youth members of the Heart Beat network has already carried out a series of initiatives to raise the district's people's awareness on transitional justice.

"The idea to form a youth network originated during our own training program conducted by NPC. My knowledge of transitional justice before that training was zero," added Banuka describing how he benefited from the training assistance on transitional justice provided by NPC.

"Our group members suggested sharing information on transitional justice among youth through a Facebook page and messaging each other via WhatsApp. But some of us expressed that we needed to use creative means to attract youth and keep their interest in our activities. So that's how we decided to form Heart Beat."

Banuka and other youth leaders periodically organize hikes and sight-seeing trips to draw young people to join their Heart Beat network. And during each trip, they allocate time and space to hold dialogues with the participants to enhance their understanding about transitional justice and inspire them to mobilize other youth to work for peace and reconciliation.

"Our network consists of youth from all three communities. We work as a team. Our network has grown to 100 members within few months. Lack of awareness about transitional justice is a big challenge we face in getting youth involved in our activities. That's why we use fun and adventure activities to keep youth interested in our work." stated Banuka

The Heart Beat youth network organizes social welfare activities such as distribution of schooling materials to resource poor schools and represent their network in other peacebuilding and social welfare events taking place in the district. Banuka says each event and a meeting creates a new opportunity for them to share information about transitional justice and their youth network.

"We have made improvements at community level by raising people's awareness on transitional justice. Youth want to join our network. Since we have youth leaders who are trilingual, our outreach activities attract youth from all three communities into our network." said Banuka

The Heart Beat youth network also interfaces with the NPC supported Kurunegala District Inter-Religious Committee (DIRC) in conducting dialogues with different ethnic and religious groups. With assistance from DIRC's religious leaders, the network held discussions with Sinhala and Muslim community representatives in an effort to prevent further attacks on Muslims after a smoke bomb was thrown into mosque during the February 2018 anti-Muslim attacks in Digana. Banuka believes their discussions with local community members also helped to prevent further such attacks against Muslims.

"We are planning to go to Jaffna on a cultural exchange visit. We also want to understand transitional justice related issues faced by people living in Jaffna. We will bring that information and make our policy makers and politicians aware of those issues. We have

prepared a list of questions that we will find answers to during our discussions with Jaffna youth and others." added Banuka

Milanka Gajamanna – Badulla

35-year-old Milanka Gajamanna has over a decade's experience in peacebuilding. He currently works with Future In Our Hands (FIOH), a local NGO implementing peacebuilding focused activities in Baddula. Milanka was among 40 youth leaders that received knowledge enhancement support form NPC's Youth and Transitional Justice project to conduct awareness and build a positive discourse to counter misinformation and extremist narratives about Sri Lanka's transitional justice mechanisms and institutions.

"After our training, we provided training to another 40 youth to give them a sound understanding about transitional justice," said Milanka

Explaining why they decided to work with the plantation sector youth, Milanka said "We focused our activities on the plantation sector youth. They are a difficult segment to attract because they leave for employment immediately after leaving school. Some of them expect us to give money and other resources to get involved in peacebuilding activities. And the language is also a big barrier, so they are an isolated group and we felt it was important to have them joined our activities."

The Badulla youth leaders' group then organized two separate discussion rounds with religious leaders and Pradeshiya Sabha politicians. They reached out to religious leaders through NPC's Badulla District Inter-Religious Committee (DIRC) religious leaders.

"Religious leaders influence public opinion. People listen to religious leaders," said Milanka

Elaborating on why their group identified religious leaders as a key segment to engage with, Milanka said "If we get religious leaders to discuss positively about transitional justice to their respective followers, people will change their misconceived and extremist ideas about transitional justice. We believe if religious leaders intervene, we will be able to achieve the results we expect from our efforts."

Badulla youth leaders also held a dialogue session with 35 Pradeshiya Sabha members in the district. As a result of their effort, some of the councilors that spoke very negatively about transitional justice at the beginning of their dialogue, subsequently changed their mind after listening to youth leaders' experience and information sharing presentations.

"In order to address transitional justice issues and change people's attitude towards inter-ethnic reconciliation, we need to create a "peace culture." said Milanka

"So our activities on transitional justice start from talking about the need to create a culture of peace in our society. Then it is easy to develop the discussion further and deliver all key messages in an effective way. If we start off a dialogue with the topic of transitional justice

itself, people won't understand and also those who understand have misperceptions about it." added Milanka

Milanka and other youth leaders from the Badulla district plan to organize exposure visits to war-affected areas to make their youth members better understand about war-related trauma and issues of survivors and victims. They believe bonds that emerge through exchange visits and experience sharing endeavors will be strong enough to endure numerous challenges and upheavals.

"Nobody can destroy the bonds that we forge through exchange visits, I know this from my years of peacebuilding experience. This is why we will give priority to exchange visits to hold dialogues between different youth groups. Youth find it easy to work with their peers unlike religious leaders and public officials who don't generally like to engage in transitional justice related discussions." stated Milanka

Piyumal Athukorala – Matara district

26-year-old-Piyumal Athukorala wears many hats: He is a program coordinator at the Community Development Centre, a local NGO in Matara; plays the role of team leader for all ONUR (Office for National Unity and Reconciliation) implemented activities; and serves as a district coordinator for the National Youth Services Club (NYSC). Piyumal underwent a six - month peacebuilding facilitator training as part of NPC's Religions to Reconcile project. Despite his varied experiences in peacebuilding, Piyumal, similar to a majority of youth leaders that trained along with him, had no prior knowledge about transitional justice.

"The three day-training helped me a lot to get a basic understanding about transitional justice. After that training, I kept reading books, magazines, newspaper articles to improve my knowledge," said Piyumal

All thirty leaders that received knowledge enhancement training subsequently divided themselves into smaller groups and conducted Training of Trainers (ToT) for another thirty youth. Piyumal joined with three other youth leaders – two female and one male- to organize their first ToT initiative.

"We selected thirty youth that came from universities, voluntary organizations, youth clubs, local NGOs, and so on. We organized different activities to simplify different principles and the four pillars of transitional justice," said Piyumal

Piyumal and his small group also organized a dialogue session between 20 youth club representatives and 20 students from the Matara Open University. The idea, Piyumal said, was to give a safe space for youth to find out, clarify, debate and discuss all issues and concerns they had about the national transitional justice process and mechanisms.

Women in fishing villages are a marginalized group in the Matara district and they often get left behind by social and peacebuilding interventions. Piyumal and his group members visited

Kapugama in Dondra Head to engage in a discussion with 25 women leaders from nearby fishing villagers.

"I also did not know anything about transitional justice. We knew that the chances for women in fishing villages to be informed about transitional were rare. This was the main reason why organized a dialogue with women leaders in Dondra Head," said Piyumal

Describing further about their message delivery approach, Piyumal added "We also try to simplify our conversations with groups like them so that everyone can understand."

Piyumal says they are forced to contend with challenges stemming from the combined impact of grassroots people's lack of awareness and false narratives spread by extremist nationalist groups. Misinformation has given rise to confusion among people, including youth that often question the relevance of a national level transitional justice process for Sri Lanka.

"People ask us 'is transitional justice the most burning issue in this country?' and then we explain to them why Sri Lanka has to implement a transitional justice process by emphasizing on the need for non-recurrence of another war," said Piyumal

"We also explain to them about the different pillars of transitional justice and local and international institutions that are involved in supporting transitional justice processes in post-war countries." stated Piyumal.

Piyumal is well aware of the dichotomous role that youth in any society play as agents of violence and agents of peace. Referring to Sri Lankan youth's involvement in two Marxist ideology-inspired rebellions in the South and also in the thirty-year war, Piyumal said that the youth's participation in transitional justice and peacebuilding is critical. They are making plans to expand on their outreach and awareness activities by connecting with youth in the Open University system. Piyumal and his small group has initiated discussions to connect with Open Universities across the island where over 40,000 youth students are following different degrees and training courses.

"Open University students come from all ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds. We have formed a youth network called "Seven Walls." We will network with students in Open Universities through our network. We have planned to start with the Open university in Matara." said Piyumal

Apart from youth, they also want to work with women, religious leaders, CBO representatives, and public officials. They have planned to organize "heal the past build the future" dialogue sessions in each Divisional Secretariat Division with 40 participants made up of youth activists and representatives from those different segments. Piyumal says his links with ONUR will be used to connect with public officials and policy makers and invite them to local level dialogue forums.

"Building links with transitional justice institutions and policy makers is very important. They are very distant and removed from the people at local level," described Piyumal

"People have to be provided with accurate information about transitional justice. This is why we have identified dialogue sessions at grassroots level to bring all the important groups together." added Piyumal

4. Youth Recommendations for Government, Victims, Media, Civil Societies and United Nations

Recommendations for the Effective Implementation of Transitional Justice, Peace and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka with a focus on victims

These recommendations are a collation of recommendations by representative students from 11 state universities and youth from 21 districts who participated in a consultation on the way forward for reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

In a plural society in which there is ethnic, religious and other diversities, it is necessary to give equal opportunity and status to all constituent groups. Accordingly, these recommendations represent the changes that are necessary for the unification of Sri Lanka.

Recommendations to Victims

Building empathy

Victims should organize themselves as a collective – across communities and regions- and raise their voice in order to get attention to their problems from the state

Victims can share their stories, and act as role models to those from own community as well as different ethnic communities as well as regions, while using different vehicles such as media and publications to share among wider communities

Victims should not give photos and private information to the media or any other party other than recognized institutions which are in charge of providing services to victims

Finding justice

Victims should provide accurate information about their situations to relevant state institutions and not be afraid to since there is a Witness Protection Act that is enforceable

Victims should be aware of laws and acts available to redress injustice

Victims should exert pressure on the government to enact public litigation to enable family members, relations or friends to appear on behalf of victims

Emphasis should be given to a victim-centered approach rather than punitive action aimed at rights violators.

Reparations and re-integration

Victims should be aware of which institutions they are able to access in order to get their services and rights related concerns addressed.

Victims should be capacitated to get assistance using Right to Information Act and victims should use social media to encourage others to get information about RTI

1

The disabled and widows should be encouraged and assisted to enter marriage/remarry, by providing necessary material and psycho-social support.

Victims should seek and engage in self-employment

Victims should participate in rehabilitation related assistance programs and collect information and documents pertinent to loss of property

Healing

Victims should be able to practice their own religions which will assist in their healing and be able to participate in religious festivals of other religions with an aim to promote healing and reconciliation

Victims should seek counselling and other assistance to heal own psychological wounds and also to help other victims in their healing process

Victims should come together through arts and culture related activities promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation

Recommendations to UN

Dispelling misconceptions

The UN should utilise social media to dispel the perception that it is targeting war heroes for punishment and nourishing NGOs

UN should explain rationale underlying the need for a hybrid court system, while removing the misconceptions through use of social media

UN should launch information campaigns through the media on Transitional Justice and reconciliation

UN should work towards a youth-led process for ground level awareness creation about Transitional Justice and reconciliation

UN should provide an avenue to enable youth to make direct recommendations and appeals on transitional justice and other issues

Building knowledge

UN should work with the government to introduce Transitional Justice and related themes through the school curriculum so that the processes are viewed as mechanisms for transition

Working with the detractors

UN should provide international exposure visits for legislators especially those who have a negative attitude towards reconciliation.

2

Ensuring accountability

UN to encourage Sri Lanka to include its commitment to reconciliation in the constitution in the same manner that the UN talks about peace in the world UN should continue to focus on Transitional Justice and related issues in Sri Lanka

UN should be impartial by pressuring Sri Lanka to keep to the implementation time line

When providing aid to Sri Lanka, the UN should make it conditional on the promotion of reconciliation

UN should ensure that resources meant for victim communities should reach them and not others

Sustainable peace

UN should pressurise the government to address poverty issues as they at the root of conflict harnessing the energies of youth

UN should encourage education reforms focused on poverty alleviation bringing in knowledge from the world

Recommendations to Government

Mobilising youth

Government should legislate for a youth quota of 25 percent for parliament

Government should mobilise the National Youth Services Council's youth network to support the transitional justice process

Actionalising transition

Government should strengthen existing transitional justice mechanisms and speed up process of criminal prosecution

Government should provide security to those who wish to participate in Transitional Justice mechanisms

Government should establish the Office for Reparations and strengthen the Office for Missing Persons

Government should publish information that is already available about missing persons

Government should take measures to educate government officials and politicians and get them to act to support the transitional justice process

Energising the environment for change

Government should amend the constitution and existing laws and mechanisms to suit present needs

3

Government should repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act

Government should enact enabling legislation for international conventions such as ICCPR signed by the Sri Lankan state

Government should strengthen anti-hate speech laws to punish those who engage in hate speech

Government should devise means to deal with violations of Code of Ethics relating to members of legislative bodies.

Government should pass legislation to make private sector also liable for punishment for human rights violations

Government should educate people about Right to Information Act and strengthen the mechanism

Engaging with the public

Government should constantly inform the general public about the progress of the Transitional Justice process and future actions

Government should work to obtain support of the media for positive focus on reconciliation

Sustaining change

Government should teach history in schools without taking sides between the different ethnic communities

Government should include Peace and Reconciliation into school and university syllabi

Government should not favour any religion or ethnic community in giving benefits

Government should put up name boards and print government forms in all three languages

The work of Reconciliation officers within government structures needs to be publicized to general public and to government officials

Government should recruit only those who are committed to reconciliation to jobs in that field within the government

Government should enhance accountability of state officers in relation to the reconciliation and the transitional justice process.

Government should create positions similar to the Divisional level Buddhist Affairs Officer who deals with issues relating to Buddhists for other religions also

Re-engineering social change

Government should incentivise inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriages.

As there is a nexus between poverty and receptivity to reconciliation issues, the government should run programs to deal with poverty.

4

Government should work in collaboration with NGOs on reconciliation.

Government should make it compulsory for all to learn both Sinhala and Tamil.

Recommendations to media

Amplifying the voice for truth

Develop a youth social media network through this engagement.

Building support for transition

Use media to create awareness on relevant state institutions enframed within the transition process, on the legal framework and the policies of the government.

Use different media to discuss the plight of families of missing such as street dramas, dramas and discussion forums and use comics and posters as a medium of information sharing on understanding transitional justice

Broadcast stories of war victims through the media and share lists of missing persons through the media.

Sustaining reconciliation

Regional level activities for reconciliation should be telecast/communicated in both languages.

Media should telecast programmes based on peace and reconciliation in a creative manner

Information in media should be impartial and based on facts and figures.

Have a dedicated page on peace and reconciliation in newspapers

Building awareness within media

Journalists need to be educated on peace and reconciliation and given exposure to the suffering of war affected people in their own locations.

Media schools need Transitional justice educational programmes and TJ programmes need to target schools.

Ethical and accountable conduct

Media should behave in a responsible manner when there is conflict and restrictions should be imposed. There should be media freedom but along with a functioning code of conduct for media through development of a set of media ethics and code of conduct and ensure its implementation.

There should be a State mechanism to ensure media accountability, to restrict racist and divisive newspapers and other media channels and ensure that the media is responsible and sensitive in the use of language.

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Pass new laws that restrict or relate to hate speech, stop broadcasting news based on ethnicity or religion

Open discussions on media between victims and government officials should only be done keeping in mind need to protect privacy.

Recommendations to Civil Society

Building trust and advocating for change

Civil society should engage in advocacy and appeals to increase awareness through interviews, writing articles for information and education, conducting art exhibitions, dialogue through visual arts, debates, competitions, animations, case studies and research

Civil society should organise awareness programmes for youth/farmers/entrepreneurs/businessmen to create awareness at grass root level, engage in school activities, and raise awareness for government officials through leadership training.

Civil society should organise exchange visits between mixed ethnic/religious groups, cultural events, inter-faith events, camps

Civil society should identify activities for youth, such as stage drama, street drama, short films, exchange programmes, nature travel and sports events

Helping victims

Civil society should provide Legal Aid to victims access redress

Civil society should build the capacity of communities to support victims and bring change

Sustaining structures for change

Civil society should seek the establishment of a network on reconciliation with a centre at national level and with community based conflict mitigation

Civil society should be active as members of steering groups, inter religious groups, university clubs, and collect funds for civil societies

Civil society can provide youth leadership training and skills development and establish youth language clubs where both languages are taught

6

Recommendations to Youth

Creating the environment for transition

Youth from different communities should mobilize themselves and implement different activities to serve as role models in peacebuilding and reconciliation promotion

Youth should organize exchange programs and visits between different communities/villages

Youth should organize as networks using social media and utilize social media platforms to promote peace and reconciliation. Youth must also inculcate self-discipline in youth in the use of social media.

Youth should carry out programs at village level to create awareness on transitional justice. On account of their recognition in their own areas university students should be used to share correct perspectives on the Transitional Justice and reconciliation processes.

Youth should build networks and help victims and also spread counter narratives to address extremist ideologies

Youth should use street drama etc to build community support for reconciliation and organise youth camps with exhibitions, musical shows and forum theatre, and engage in exchange programs and cultural exchanges.

Helping victims

Youth should engage in activities to provide victim support

Youth should create links between victims and the National Youth Services Council media unit to encourage victims to engage in art and culture activities

Youth should connect with NGOs/aid organizations to implement projects that assist victims to improve their economic situation, religious clergy to join in and enable psychological healing

Holding the state accountable

Youth should be informed of the current state of the reconciliation process

Youth should be capacitated to monitor state action

Youth should develop networks on reconciliation at provincial and national level

Youth should organize themselves and exert pressure on the government to implement peacebuilding and reconciliation programs and also to provide assistance to victims

Youth should pressurise the government through public petitions

Youth should be active in facilitating social media updates, voice messages, clips, WhatsApp, Facebook, petitions, pickets to create awareness and build support.

7

5. LAW Workshops with University of Jaffna Law Department

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LAW Workshops with University of Jaffna Law Department

Following initial consultative meetings, LAW staff took part in two workshops with the University

of Jaffna Law Department on 24 and 30 May 2019. Unfortunately, due to student strikes over the

arrest and detention of fellow students under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, LAW was unable

to provide the planned workshop with students on the workings of Harvard International Human

Rights Clinic, and on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (as a thematic focus of Jaffna's clinic).

During the weeks of 20 and 27 May, LAW staff also held a series of consultative meetings with

Jaffna department one-on-one or in small groups to discuss issues such as the format of draft

curricula and the utility and availability of proposed course materials.

Clinic Design Workshop

The first workshop involved the entire Jaffna Law Department as well as LAW staff members

Jessica Stober (Programme Manager in Sri Lanka) and Conor Hartnett (Legal Fellow and alumnus

of the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic). The meeting began with a discussion of the

structure and general activities of the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic, led by Hartnett.

The discussion focused on project development at Harvard and the role of clinicians as an

intermediate managerial level between students and faculty.

2

University of Jaffna faculty and LAW staff discussing the division of academic credits between courses

Subsequent to this discussion, the Jaffna team began to brainstorm ways to bring in project

managers to the clinic in an economical way; they concluded that it would be possible to assign

local attorneys working *pro bono* on the projects the with the status of visiting law faculty

members. It was also concluded that, at least in the short term, the project development process at

the Jaffna clinic would need to be more top-down than at the Harvard clinic (where clinicians

propose and develop their own project ideas).

The second half of the discussion focused entirely on the design of clinical courses and the division

of credit hours. The group agreed that it will be necessary to provide students with a foundational

course teaching knowledge and skills necessary for clinical work. The group determined that this

course, designated Clinical Legal Education I (CLE I), will be a lecture course that will cover skills such as legal drafting and advocacy as well as theory related to public interest litigation and human rights. Subsequent courses (designated Clinical Legal Education II, etc.) will conform more closely with Harvard's practice-based model. In those courses, students will work on public interest and

3

human rights projects under the close supervision of a licensed attorney, conducting legal research, writing and advocacy.

The last issue addressed in the first meeting was the division of credit hours between the various clinical courses. Although Harvard allows law students to take as many as fifteen clinical practice credits, as well as four clinical seminar credits, the Jaffna law department observed that the clinical program at Jaffna would be unlikely to be approved unless the maximum number of credits devoted to clinical courses (including both the lecture course and practice courses) remained below ten. LAW staff and the Jaffna department discussed various distributions of credit hours before deciding that a three-credit foundational lecture course followed by three two-credit practice courses (over three successive semesters) would be the optimal arrangement.

Clinic Content Workshop

The second workshop, which involved the Jaffna law department and Conor Hartnett, focused on clinical hours, learning objectives, student evaluation, and the content of the foundational course, CLE I. The group agreed to slight modifications of the planned learning objectives (adding an emphasis on non-litigation drafting and advocacy) and decided to consolidate the clinical courses into a longer course (either a three-semester six-credit course or a two-semester four-credit course followed by a specialised one-semester two-credit course for advanced clinical students). With respect to evaluation, the group decided to adapt Harvard's model, which focuses on student participation (25%) and grading of student work products (75%) with attention paid to improvement over the course of the term.

The group came prepared with ideas for the content of CLE I (the Jaffna department with course readings on legal theory and Hartnett with readings on PIL in Sri Lanka and South Asia generally), and it was agreed that all of the proposed content could be fit into the curriculum. The Jaffna department stated that they would begin working on the curriculum relating to document drafting

and advocacy.

The meeting ended with a discussion of next steps. The Jaffna faculty stated that they will continue to develop the curriculum and will submit their proposal to the university's Curriculum Planning Committee within the following weeks. They also stated that they will consult with local and national legal industry actors. LAW will continue to coordinate with Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic and will begin collaborating with Harvard Law School Advocates for Human Rights (a student practice organisation) to determine the extent to which Harvard students can support the work of the clinic at the University of Jaffna. The Jaffna law department expect that the Clinical Legal Education Programme will be fully incorporated into the University's LLB curriculum by September 2020.

4

The University of Jaffna law department and LAW staff

Structure of the Clinical Legal Education Programme

The clinic is set to begin in late July 2019 with 1) the foundational lecture course (CLE I) and 2) an uncredited pilot clinical practice course which will be open to interested fourth-year students. CLE I will be a prerequisite course for further clinical work. It will be a three to four-credit course and will cover: 1) the practice of public interest litigation; 2) theories of law; 3) writing and advocacy skills relating to litigation; 4) writing and advocacy skills relating to non-litigation advocacy; and 5) professionalism. Students will be evaluated based on a final exam.

Following CLE I, students will have the option of enrolling in CLE II, which will be a pure practice course. Depending on an imminent joint decision between the law department and the University of Jaffna Curriculum Panning Committee, clinical practice component of the program will take the form of either a single six-credit course lasting three consecutive semesters

5

(designated CLE II) or a series of two-credit courses (CLEs II, III, and IV) offered in succession over three consecutive semesters. Students will be evaluated based on a combination of participation (25%) and their work products (75%), with improvement taken into account. These practice courses will center on clinical projects relating to the rights of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and enforced disappearance. Students will work collaboratively,

usually in small groups, under the supervision of Jaffna law department and local attorneys with experience in public interest litigation. The specifics of work assignments and studentdepartment coordination will be informed by the experience of the uncredited pilot clinical project.

As LAW's partnership agreement with the National Peace Council ended on 31st May 2019, the opening of the clinic will occur outside of the implementation period. It is noteworthy that at the project conception phase, it was envisaged that the clinic would be outside of the law degree curriculum. It was planned as a volunteer clinic where a small number of students would gain practical legal experience through extra-curriculum projects. However, following the study tour to Harvard International Human Rights Clinic, Jaffna law department adopted the much more ambitious plan of creating a clinic as part of the law degree that approximately 30 students per year can elect in a course that will carry credit. Hence, the clinic will reach a greater number of students and will be inherently sustainable, availing a clinical education to law students of Jaffna University well into the future – a significant achievement.

6. Project Brief

Building National Ownership of the Reconciliation Process
#SLYouth4TJ

In any post-conflict situation, a purposefully directed and carefully considered process of transition is an important element of building lasting peace and meaningful reconciliation. The process takes into account the anguish of all victims, irrespective of religion or ethnicity and seeks continuity on the basis of truth, justice and change.

Unfortunately, there is very little knowledge amongst most sectors of society regarding the transitional justice process that Sri Lanka has embarked upon in its search for peace that binds the country together. The transitional justice process has been distorted to mean that it is about punishment and not about justice. This has made it easy for nationalists on both sides of the ethnic divide to

discredit the process and seek to generate mass opposition to it and use it for their narrow political objectives.

Youth Engagement with Transitional Justice for Long-lasting Peace in Sri Lanka is a unique effort led by the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka that created space for young men and women to understand and support the process of transition that Sri Lanka needs. This initiative seeks to mobilize the energies and idealism of youth in favor of a cause that aims to vindicate the rights of victims of the country's protracted ethnic conflict, to bring justice and closure to them, and to lay the foundations for a peaceful and reconciled Sri Lanka.

Over a period of 18 months, the project provided a range of training and mentoring opportunities to over 540 students from 12 universities[2] and another 400 grassroots level youth activists and leaders in 21 districts[3], building their capacity and confidence to engage in dialogue processes and to connect and consult with their peers and also with policy makers and be internal mediators.

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

The National Peace Council received funding support from the UN Peace Building Fund under its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) to promote gender-responsive and inclusive peacebuilding in Sri Lanka by enhancing the positive role that youth can play in the country's post-war peacebuilding and reconciliation processes as a key driving force. The project was implemented in collaboration with Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) in engagement with Harvard International Human Rights Clinic and the state universities of Sri Lanka. The project worked in close collaboration with the Secretariat for Reconciliation Mechanism (SCRM) under the Prime Minister's office and the University Grants Commission to

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[2] University of Colombo, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, University of Kelaniya, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of Ruhuna, University of Peradeniya, University of Uva Wellassa, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, University of Jaffna, Eastern University, Sri Lanka and South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

[3] Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee, Kurunegala, Puttalam, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Moneragala and Ratnapura

connect with students of the 12 participating universities and policy makers who are leading transitional justice and reconciliation related institutions and initiatives.

Inclusion of Youth in National Level Dialogues on Transitional Justice

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

Setting a Precedent for Future Engagements with State Institutions
Representatives from the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM) and the Office on Missing Persons took part in most training activities setting a precedent for future engagements with these two important state institutions leveraging their mutual understanding and relationships.

Assisting Youth Efforts to Broaden the Discourse on Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Among Peers
After taking part in project supported knowledge and capacity enhancement workshops, the students conceptualised and conducted follow-up activities in 21 districts, broadening the discourse on transitional justice and reconciliation among their peers. A drama developed by the student group of the Eastern University was staged during a recent freshers' induction program involving over 700 students who came from across Sri Lanka. Another major follow-up activity was the Jaffna University's debate competition, "Do We See the Possibility of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka to Generate Unity among Ethnicities?" which was attended by over 2000 students who took part in the university's art week programme. Production of a short film by South Eastern University, an opinion survey video made by University of Kelaniya students, and organization of a Transitional Justice Day by the University of Ruhuna and One day Transitional

Justice Campaign by Sabaragamuwa University were also among follow-up activities carried out by the participating university students.

Study Tour to Harvard and Establishment of Human Rights Clinic

Another key component of the project was a Clinical Exchange study tour to the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic in October 2018. Five participants from Jaffna, Colombo and Eastern universities took part in this study tour and learned about the structure and functioning of a human rights clinic. The University of Jaffna is currently in the process of establishing a legal clinic to assist victims and family members with legal issues whose search for justice and closure continues.

7. Updated Frequently Asked Questions on TJ in Sri Lanka

1. DO POLITICAL INFLUENCES DELAY THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS FROM REACHING THE PEOPLE?

The transitional justice process (filing action over criminal offences/reparation/institutional reforms and finding the truth) has commenced at various levels following the war. Therefore, the transitional justice process is taking place in the society despite absence of the word Transitional justice. If it is to happen at the required pace and the quality, the political will and the public support is essential. The shortcomings in the political determination of the government, unfair demonstrations of the opposition as well as the lack of public influence due to absence of awareness among the people have resulted in the Transitional Justice process not moving as expected.

Further, as the politicians of the major political parties often aim power, they fear that their vote base will be threatened if they act on minority rights.

2. IS THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE CONCEPT A PROCESS AIMED AT ACHIEVING THE NARROW OBJECTIVES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS?

Transitional Justice Concept is not something that was created by the Non-Government Organisations.It has always been a process that sought to deliver justice to the people aggrieved by every conflict. But since governments have failed to implement it at the required pace and quality non-government organizations exert pressure on governments to deliver on them and educate the public on its importance.

Further, since the non-government organisations are not concerned about the vote base as the political parties they do not use popular rhetoric of the politicians but discuss the non-popular yet essential topics fearlessly.

3. WHY HAS IT TAKEN SUCH A LONG TIME AFTER THE WAR TO INTRODUCE THIS CONCEPT?

As mentioned in the above answers, components of Transitional justice got off the ground after the conclusion, of the war. But even after five years, the Civil Society realized that the government was adopting a lackadaisical approach in relation to its implementation. Particularly given the factors such as the indifference of the government towards the implementation of the recommendations of the L.L.R.C. the Civil Society brought forward the discourse on the need of the Transitional justice process.

Moreover, due to the polarization of Sri Lankans as Sinhalese and Tamils, it takes a fairly longer period to initiate a discourse over a theme of this type.

4. ISNT MEMORIALISATIION A PAINFUL EXPERINCE? WHY SHOULD A BURIED PAST BE EXHUMED?

Recalling the past is indeed a painful experience. However, without knowing what exactly happened in the past, it is difficult to walk towards the future. Absence of knowledge on what exactly happened in the past will result in the

society moving forward with suspicion. Memorialization, therefore is essential to alleviate such suspicion.

As the loved ones of both parties involved in the war as well as those not have disappeared, it is important to get to the process of knowing the truth, if justice is to be meted out to them.

5. DOES THE GOVERNMENT INCREASE TAXES TO RAISE FUNDS REQUIRED TO PAY COMPENSATION? SHOULD THE ENTIRE POPULATION ENDURE ITS CONSEQUENCES?

We should not forget the fact that it is a section of our own population that is affected. As citizens, the onus is on all of us to elevate them to the level of good citizens. Once they are empowered, they can contribute to the development of the country. Therefore, paying compensation is not just an act of charity but an investment on a community of good citizens. Moreover, when we formulate a proper compensation or reparation policy the United Nations and the foreign countries will come forward to our assistance. The Indian Housing scheme that is in progress is a classic example.

Further, the concept of reparation does not always imply a financial grant. There are symbolic means of reparation too that do not involve the payment of money. For example, giving priority to the family members of the deceased persons in the activities of the government.

5. ARE THE LAWS PREVAILING IN SRI LANKA SUFFICIENT TO PUNISH THE CRIMINALS?

According to our constitution, punishments with retrospective effect can be enforced only at very limited circumstances. Therefore, the law that existed during that time too should deal with crimes committed during the war. However new laws can be introduced for speedy delivery of justice such as expediting criminal investigations and trials.

In addition to that, laws should be formulated to make the higher officials accountable for allowing crimes to take place by giving orders or by permitting

or allowing them to happen if the military or other armed groups have perpetrated any crimes.

7. IS A PROPER METHODOLOGY AVAILABLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF FINANCIAL COMPENSATION? IS IT HAPPENING THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT OR WILL THE COMMISSION MONGERS THRIVE ON THEM WITHOUT ALLOWING THEM TO REACH THE VICTIMS?

The office of Reparation Act no.34 of 2018 that seeks to device a proper methodology to pay financial compensation to persons affected by the war has been passed by the Parliament. In terms of that Act the Office of Reparation will make relevant Reparation policies and guidelines for the purpose of individual and collective reparation and recommend them to the Cabinet of Ministers. This process will reduce the instances of funds allocated for reparation being misappropriated.

However, the possibility for corruption to take place within the reparation process cannot be ruled out and at such instances the provisions of the Criminal law and Bribery Act relating to offences involving public property can be made use of to punish the culprits.

8. IN THE EFFORTS TO ALLIGN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WITH RECONCILIATION CAN THE WAR HEROES WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES FOR THE COUNTRY AND THE TERRORISTS WHO DIED FOR TERRORISM BE CONSIDERED THE SAME?

In the transitional Justice process, military personnel are not found fault for the attacks launched by them in the war. They are accused only of the crimes committed outside the confines of war. For example, the military personnel cannot be accused of assassinating the armed rivals by means of their weapons. But if they have assassinated civilians, assassinated arrested persons, committed rapes or abducted persons for taking ransom they should be charged. But any person other than that of a military personnel who has committed a murder will be considered as having committed a crime and be dealt with according to the

law (unless pardoned).Therefore the acts of the formal military personnel and the other persons will not be treated the same. Formal military personnel enjoy legal cover over their official activities. If they commit crimes outside of the said official activities, they will be charged.

As transitional justice is a globally accepted concept and our security forces are engaged in the Peace Keeping Missions of the United Nations, those accused of specific offences need to be dealt with if we are to prevent ourselves from being grossly accused of crimes.

9. AS TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IS A FOREIGN PROCESS IS IT SUITABLE FOR OUR COUNTRY? ISNT A HOME-GROWN CONCEPT MORE SUITABLE FOR THIS COUNTRY?

The word and the structure of Transitional justice is a foreign concept.it presents a process with four parts (filing action against criminal offences/finding the truth/reparation/institutional reforms). These four parts are fair by any country. But the manner those four components should be implemented varies from country to country. Therefore, when implementing the components of Transitional Justice, we must take into consideration the culture and regional identities of the country.

10. SINCE THE WAR HAS ENDED AT PRESENT WHAT IS THE NEED OF A CONCEPT OF THIS NATURE?

Even though the war has ended, still there is no reconciliation. The undesirable consequences of the war still linger in the society both in the north and in the south. Therefore, in order to build sustainable peace, those who have faced with injustices in the past should be delivered justice to.

Further, transitional justice is a concept that is relevant to the transitional period and until sustainable peace dawns in Sri Lanka and the transitional period ends this discourse will continue.

11. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE IN THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE?

In the process of Transitional Justice, the Security Forces have a special role to play which include,

-To hand over the hitherto carried out civil duties to the Police and other administrative arms of the government and concentrate only on military duties;

-To remove the officers in the commanding ranks who engaged in wrongful conduct during the war from such responsibilities;

-If the military officers are found to have committed crimes by going out of their normal duties filing action against them;

-If officers in the higher ranks have given unlawful orders to the officers in the lower ranks and if those lower ranking officers have carried them out in the form of commission of crimes, the higher-ranking offices should be liable to be sued on grounds of the offence of giving unlawful orders.

12. DO MINORITIES GET THE PRIORITY IN THE PROCESS OF REPARATION?

In the process of reparation, compensation and other reliefs are provided based on the damage caused and not on the basis of ethnicity or religion. The Office will prepare the policy relating to reparation and compensation for Reparation and upon the receipt of the approval of the cabinet of Ministers, it will be implemented. Priority will be given to the communities that were affected the most by the war.

13. WILL THE REHABILITATED L.T.T.E. CADRES BE PUNISHED WITHION THWE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS?

Under Criminal Prosecution, which is one of the components of the Transitional justice process, prosecutions will be done against crimes committed during the war. Unless pardoned on a special policy decision of the government, all those who have committed crimes should be prosecuted. Rehabilitating and releasing the Ex-L.T.T. E cadres means that they have been pardoned for being L.T.T.E cadres only. If there is evidence that they have committed any specific crimes, action should be filed against them.

14. ARE ONLY WAR HEROES AND SINHALESE PEOPLE ACCUSED IN THIS SYSTEM?

Under the Transitional Justice process, all those who have committed crimes should be charged and prosecuted. The ethnicity does not matter there. The L.T.T.E members and the organization itself stand accused of using children in the war (as child soldiers), attacking places of religious worship, attacking civilian targets and assassinating civilians.

15. WILL JUSTICE BE METED OUT TO THE PERSONS WHO WENT MISSING IN 1971, 1981 AND 1989 BY THIS MECHANISM?

Under the establishment of the Transitional Justice mechanism, the Office of the Missing Persons Act no.14 of 2016 has been passed by the parliament subsequent to which the Office of the Missing Persons has been set up. Article 10(2) of the Act provides that the office has powers to investigate about disappearances irrespective of time limits. Yet, according to section 12 of the Act, priority can be given to the following.

Incidents of disappearances of persons that took place recently.

Incidents for which there already is important evidence.

Incidents of importance to the public according to the opinion of the Office of the Missing Persons.

16. IS WEAKENING THE STRENGTH OF THE SECURITY FORCES THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS MECHANISM?

The government handles the Transitional Justice process. Therefore, a government will never weaken the strength of the security forces. The objective of this mechanism is to build sustainable peace. Moreover, as the accusations presently levelled against the security forces are investigated in to, they have the opportunity to identify the officers who have erred and take steps such as removing them from the security forces or relieving them of the responsible positions they hold so that the security forces can absolve themselves of the accusations levelled against them in general.

If this process is followed properly, the security forces will be able to absolve themselves of the charges levelled against them in general and they will be able to identify the wrong doers clearly. That will provide more opportunities for the talents of the forces.

17. WILL THERE BE POLITICAL INFLUENCES FROM THE PAST OR PRESENT GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROCESS OF IMPOSING PUNISHMENTS?

In the Transitional Justice process, there is no system of imposing punishment but a process of prosecution or accountability. Punishments will be determined only after the charges are proved by the relevant criminal court. When a person is found guilty by a court, it cannot be assumed that there will be political influences over the punishments being imposed, as it will amount to Contempt of Court. However, Presidential pardon can be granted to a person found guilty by a court.

18. IS TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE A FOREIGN CONSPIRACY?

Transitional Justice is not a foreign conspiracy. It is because the Human Rights Council of the United Nations takes interest in the Transitional justice process of sri Lanka and has passed resolutions in that regard that certain individuals call it an international conspiracy. Accordingly, even though the Transitional justice process cannot be considered a foreign conspiracy, many countries and the Human Rights Council of the United Nations as well as the European Union are concerned about it.

19. CAN THE JUSTICE THAT IS NOT DELIVERED THROUGH THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF SRI LANKA BE EXPECTED THROUGH TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE?

Transitional Justice process too should happen through the Legal system of Sri Lanka. Particularly, As Sri Lanka has not signed the Rome Statute there is very little space for cases to be filed in the International court. It should not be forgotten that strengthening the existing legal system, introducing legal amendments to minimize the shortcomings, enacting new laws and introducing special laws are an integral part of Transitional Justice.

20. IS THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL FORCING THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE ON US?

After the conclusion of the war, the government of Sri Lanka began reparation and Institutional reforms, which are parts of Transitional Justice. It must be admitted that the government took certain measures in regard to Finding the Truth and Criminal Prosecution, which are the other two parts of Transitional justice, only after the adoption of resolutions by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Since our country too is a member state of the United Nations, we, as a country are bound to implement the recommendations and agreements of the Human Rights Council, which is an arm of the U.N.and without a justifiable reason we cannot overrule such recommendations.

21. SINCE ERRORS AND CRIMES HAVE BEEN COMMITTED BY BOTH PARTIES, WOULDN'T REVISITING THE PAST MEMORIES LEAD TO THE DISRUPTION OF RECONCILIATION? IS THERE SPACE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE FOR BUILDING RECONCILIATION THROUGH FORGIVING CERTAIN INCIDENTS?

Forgiving is a part of criminal prosecution which comes under the Transitional Justice process. It has been successfully experimented by South Africa. Even for forgiving, finding the truth and apologizing for that should happen. However, even though certain obstacles for reconciliation may crop up by dealing with the past, it is an essential component for sustainable reconciliation.