

## GCERF in Sri Lanka

GCERF aims to address the drivers of violent extremism in six districts in Sri Lanka through leveraging activities that **strengthen youth resilience against violent extremism**. The programme targets youth (15–29 years), through activities of youth dialogue meetings, youth PVE orientation, youth-local government dialogue meetings, interfaith camp meetings, improvement of livelihood skills and community PVE sensitisation.

## Portfolio overview as of January 2023

### Active grants

#### Helvetas Sri Lanka

2021–25 | Host organisation with 13 sub-recipients

- ❖ The sub-grants are distributed into various areas, such as increasing youth engagement with the state actors & decision-makers; enhancing critical thinking and improving interaction with students from different backgrounds; promoting youth awareness on PVE and resilience against hate speech and disinformation; and improving livelihoods opportunities for youth.



Photo: Village-level students' society meeting



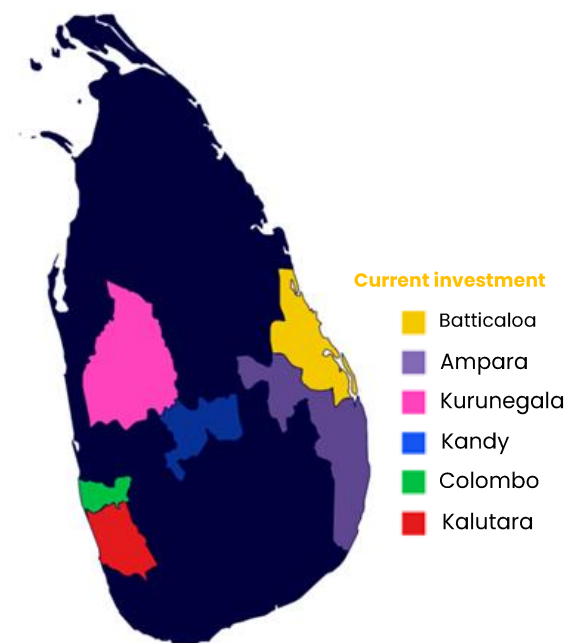
Photo: Three-days capacity-building workshop on PVE



Photo: Training for university students on leadership, critical thinking and PVE awareness



Photo: District Inter-Cultural Ceremony



Investment started: 2021  
Investment to date: USD 1.8 million  
Current investment: USD 1.8 million  
Active grants: 1

## Investment Focus

Focuses on building social cohesion in communities with limited economic opportunities and tension and promoting sense of purpose through strengthening the critical thinking of youth, improving livelihood skills and spreading positive PVE narratives.



Ampara, Batticaloa, Colombo, Kalutara, Kandy, Kurunegala



Youth (aged 15–29), women, men, girls, and boys



2021 – 2025



GCERF in Sri Lanka works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGO Secretariat, National Intelligence, and the United Nations Country Team.

## Violent Extremism in Sri Lanka: Drivers

**Ethno-religious tensions** between Sinhala, Muslim, and Tamil communities bring out a sense of marginalisation especially among the Muslim minorities.

**Misinformation and disinformation** among different groups exacerbates the religious tensions.

**Economic factors** such as unemployment act as push factors into radicalisation, especially among the youth.

**25th**

On the Global Terrorism Index 2022

## Current Programming: Systems Approach

**National:** Promoting inter-faith/ethnic understanding and strengthening social cohesion to reduce hate speech and clashes among different faith/ethnic communities which drive violent extremism. Promoting youth-led inclusivity and critical thinking initiatives intended to increase youth tolerance and sense of purpose will help achieve this end.

**Community:** Facilitating community cohesion by engaging community stakeholders (youth, women, girls, and boys) in PVE-focused dialogues, engagements, and camps with the buy-in and involvement of religious and local authorities.

**Individual:** Promoting the individual's quest for social cohesion and sense of purpose through exposing them to people of diverse backgrounds and training them in PVE, tolerance, and inclusivity.

## Key Outputs

\* October 2021 – September 2022



## Key achievements\*

September 2021 – December 2022



Peace Community Action (PCA) led the two workshops on peacebuilding. Miss Janoosa joined the initiative in Q3 2022:



*(Previous to the workshop) I never discussed deeply with youth from other ethnic communities. My culture and nature of character did not allow me to be familiar with them*



– Abdul Gafoor Fathima Janoosa

## Story of Change

Shabana (pseudonym) is a 20-year-old woman who lives with her parents in the Muslim community in Ampara District. Her family was internally displaced during the civil conflict in Sri Lanka. From that point onwards, the family feared and mistrusted other ethnic groups. Her family and her have also been perceived as possibly related to VE groups because of their religion. This background conditioned Shabana to come to incorrect assumptions about other ethnic communities outside of her own.

Shabana was selected for the program because she was identified as an active youth in the region. She was chosen as a member of the divisional youth forum for Y-change project and elected as a coordinator by youth forum members from her home Division. Even though she was initially doubtful of interacting with other communities, joining the project was a turning point in her life. She participated in the orientation and capacity workshop for divisional youth forum members.

She shared in the workshop that “it is noticeable that my skills like leadership, dealing with others without violence and creating understanding with others have improved after each session in the workshop, compared to before”. The project team acknowledged her improvement due to her involvement in the project and the excellent example she sets for her peers..



*I have changed my attitudes and thinking after joining the SAHAJEEVANA Project of SERVE, and I have learnt much from it. I have taken a personal interest and will continue to take steps that would support PVE through my actions in the future.*

– Gayeshan, participant in the Training on Preventing Hate Speech and PVE workshop. He also supported video-filming of dramas in religious places.



## GCERF's Added Value



GCERF focuses on **building institutional capacity** e.g., CSOs, and government agencies.



GCERF invests in building a **PVE-focused community of practice** with CSOs, government agencies, and experts



Communities are at the **forefront of project design and implementation**, and the programme works with existing community structures for sustainability



All project design and implementation are done in coordination with **nationally-aligned**, locally-led programmes



GCERF connects CSOs, communities, and other stakeholders with government and security actors, leading to **better coordination** and relationships



GCERF's consortium model and capacity-building approach enables us to work in **remote areas**

Find out more about becoming an investor, our work, and the collective impact we make at: [www.gcerf.org](http://www.gcerf.org)  
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**GCERF**  
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