

GCERF in Sri Lanka

GCERF aims to address the drivers of violent extremism in six districts in Sri Lanka through leveraging activities that **strengthen communities**' **social cohesion and youth's sense of purpose**. The programme targets youth (15-29 years), including women, girls, men, and boys through activities of youth engagement/dialogue meetings, youth PVE orientation/idea-sharing fora, youth-local government dialogue meetings, interfaith camp meetings, and community PVE sensitisation.

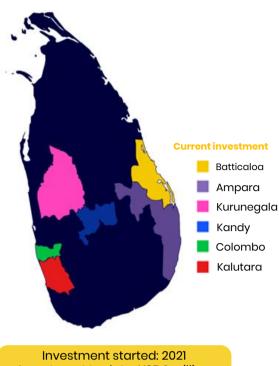
Portfolio overview as of June 2022 Active grants

Helvetas Sri Lanka

- 2021-22 | Host organization with 8 sub-recipients

 Supporting youth's capacity to mobilise and think critically
- The sub-recipients include established organisations that focus on strengthening youth's inclusivity and diversity at the community level, building intra-community trust, gender lobbying and advocacy, training young people in

conflict resolution and management, and career guidance for the youth and industry visits for exposure.



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



Photo: At a PVE sensitisation workshop



Photo: A religious leader at interreligious dialogue



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 and spreading positive PVE narratives.

Investment Focus



Ampara, Batticaloa, Colombo, Kalutara, Kandy, Kurunegala



Youth (aged 15-29) , women, men, girls, and



2021 - 2022



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



Photo: At a PVE sensitisation workshop



Photo: Participants from stakeholder consultations

Violent Extremism in Sri Lanka: Drivers

Ethno-religious
tensions between
Sinhala, Muslim, and
Tamil communities
bring out a sense of
marginalization
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 radicalization, 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's 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.

project and financial

management,

monitoring and

grant reporting

Key Outputs

* October 2021 – March 2022

multifaith youth leaders capacitated for PVE story collection and dissemination project.

video outputs are ready to be circulated to virtual (via social media) and school-going

The trained youth will produce 40 PVE videos which be circulated to virtual and school-going youth to raise awareness against VE and spread alternative positive narratives in the Kalutara district.

Inter-faith
meetings and 1
hate speech
workshop partaken
by project staff

The workshops strengthened the competencies of programme staff to deliver context-relevant and adaptable programming in GCERF's target communities

The topics included PVE, rule of law, pluralism, inter-religious coexistence, and social cohesion.

two-day PVE training sessions were held for 177 youth in Kalutara

Key achievements

September 2021 – March 2022



A baseline study involving 2,008 youth respondents (44.5% female; 55.5% males) was completed (Sep 2021) in 6 programme districts for evidence-based programming. The study found a significant relationship between the district of residence and resilience to extremism, with Colombo and Batticaloa having the lowest resilience. More than 85% of youth were (strongly) opposed to violence-related beliefs. The baseline helped to better understand youth perceptions of VE and tailor initiatives to suit them.



The production of hate speech and PVE training guide for the training of youth trainers took place in Q1 2022.
The guide was piloted for training 10 community youth.



Establishment and PVE capacitation of 120-member inter-religious youth councils took place in Kalutara. Capacity building covered PVE, international conventions and legislation and positioned youth (across religious backgrounds) for PVE initiatives and actions within their communities.



GCERF Secretariat's country team member visited the programming districts to take a closer look at the programming and engaged with partners (host organisation, government of Sri Lanka, donors, and international organisations) on identifying PVE trends and needs

The Asia Lanka Social Development Cooperation (ALSDC) held an interreligious dialogue1 for youth and religious leaders in the Kalutara district in Q1 2022:



As a Muslim girl, I've never been to a Buddhist temple because I fear being chased out. At the dialogue, I asked whether I could visit a Buddhist temple. The Buddhist clergy reassured me that no one is ever turned away and that I could visit their temples to observe their way of worship. I look forward to such a visit soon"



Story of Change

I am Prabodha Nimali (pseudonym), a 27-year-old female from Moratuwa, Colombo District. Hate speech and extremist narratives are common in my community which put youth at risk of violent extremism and radicalisation. I participated in a residential training programme series (GCERF-funded) on "Preventing Hate Speech and Violent Extremism" in January this year. I was able to learn and gain an understanding of PVE and how it contributes to maintaining coexistence in society. I also learnt about hate speech and how it spreads, especially through social media.

In fact, before joining the meetings, I had witnessed many incidents of hate speech on social media but I either cared very little about them or misunderstood how they fueled violence and impacted society.

But after this training, organised by SERVE, when I saw hate speech on social media, I immediately reported it to the appropriate authorities as I now have a better understanding of the impact it has on society.

I also understand that as a young woman I have to engage in productive activity for the good of society to thwart the negative consequences of hate speech from impinging. Now that the programme has ended, I thought of promoting the lessons learned myself - educating and sensitising my friends about hate speech and the prevention of violence.

To that end, I've already conducted training for five young people, with support and guidance from SERVE. The training was positively received, and I was glad to have the participants' feedback. I have agreed with SERVE to extend it to more youth to make them aware of topics like hate speech and violent extremism. That is my next goal.



Photo: Participants of the pluralism, interreligious coexistence, and social cohesion training in Kalutara

As religious leaders, it [the interreligious dialogue] gave us the opportunity to understand the youth's mindset and thinking on religious differences. We, religious leaders, encourage you to carry on with such small-group interreligious engagements in this dialogue setup.

- Religious leader, Interreligious Dialogue, Kalutara District, March 2022

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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

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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







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