

### 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.

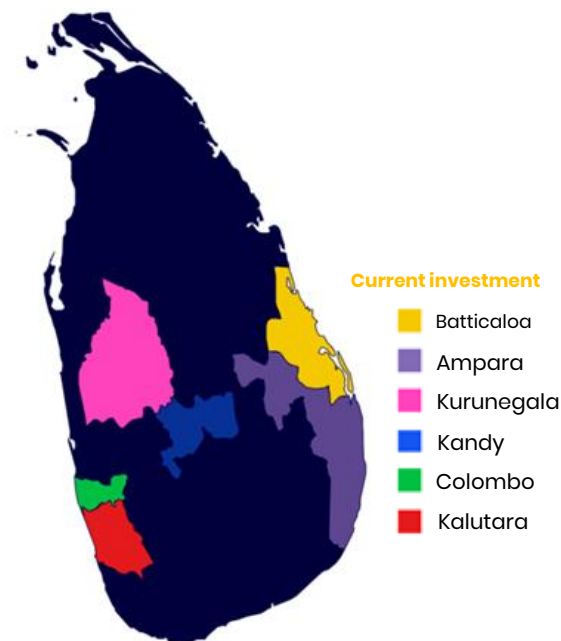
### Portfolio overview as of June 2022

#### 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



Photo: At a PVE sensitisation workshop



Photo: Participants from stakeholder consultations

### 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 and spreading positive PVE narratives.



Ampara, Batticaloa, Colombo, Kalutara, Kandy, Kurunegala



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



2021 - 2022



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 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

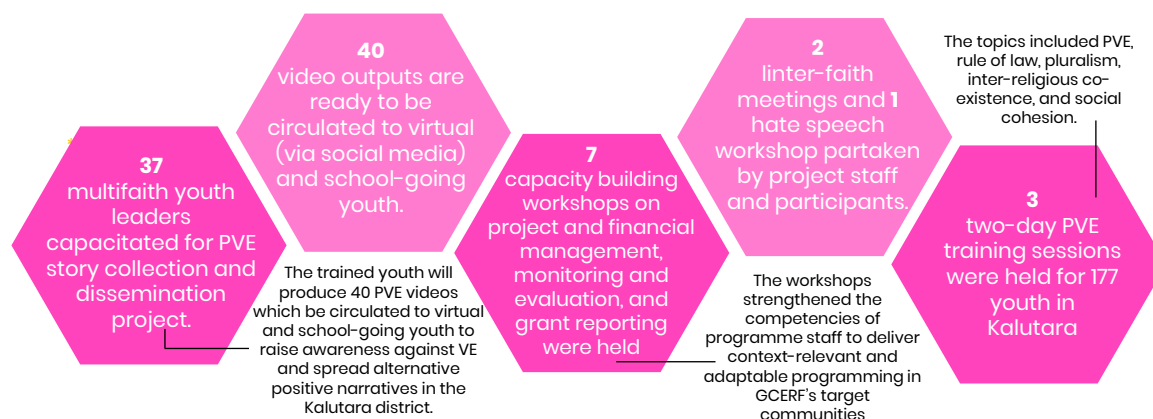
**National:** Promoting inter-faith/ethnic understanding and strengthening social cohesion to reduce hate speech and clashes among different faith/ethnic communities which drive violent extremism. Promoting youth-led inclusivity and critical thinking initiatives intended to increase youth's tolerance 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.

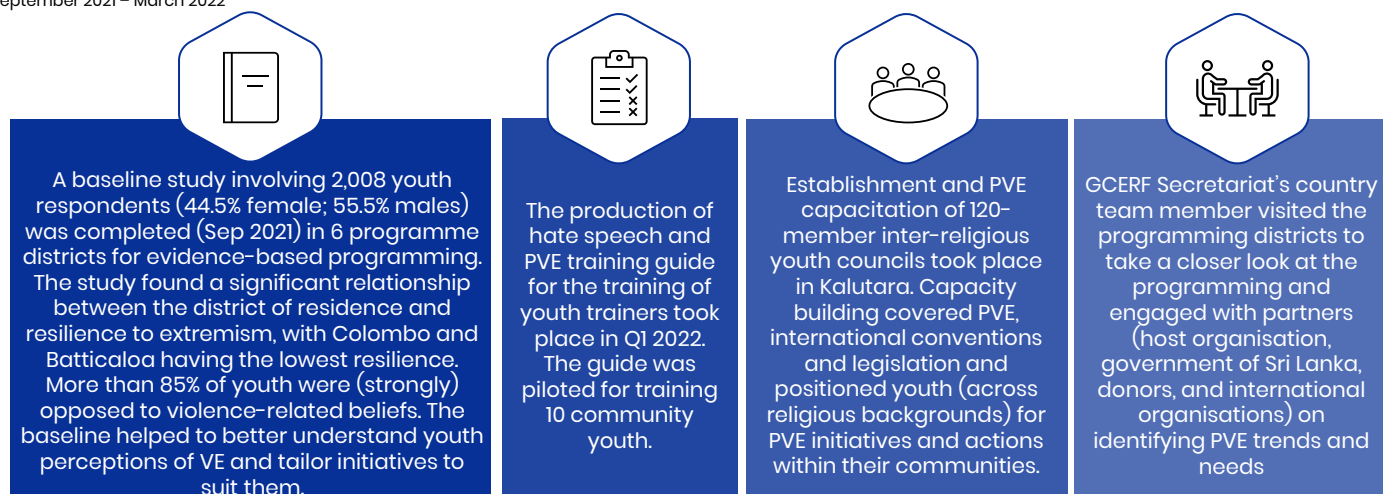
## Key Outputs

\* October 2021 – March 2022



## Key achievements\*

September 2021 – March 2022



The Asia Lanka Social Development Cooperation (ALSDC) held an interreligious dialogue<sup>1</sup> 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”

– Fazina, 26, Interreligious dialogue, Kalutara District, March 2022

## 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.

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*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



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 Outreach

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