

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's 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 August 2023

Active grants

Helvetas Sri Lanka

2021-25 | Host organization with 13 sub-recipients

- ❖ The sub-grants are distributed into various areas, such as at increasing youth engagement with 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: Capacity Building Workshop on 'Digital Literacy'



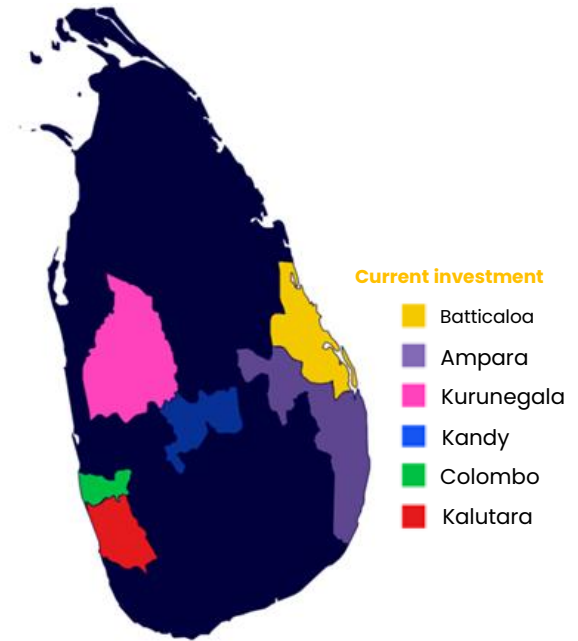
Photo: Billboard displayed at public space with message on PVE/Social Cohesion



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



Photo: Exchange Programme among different faith groups



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 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.

29th

On the Global Terrorism Index 2023

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

* January 2023 – July 2023



Key achievements*

January 2023 – July 2023



Ashani was a longstanding member-turned-facilitator of the youth forum of Uhana led by the Peace Community Action (PCA):

(Previous to the workshop) Mostly I avoided talking with other ethnic people even though I had chance to. However, I had an opportunity to join this programme and gained much knowledge on self-transformation and the impact of violent extremism, which turned my life upside down. My parents are surprised by the positive changes. I hope to transfer the knowledge I gained to my friends, youth and community in my village through whatever avenues available”.

– Ashani

Story of Change

Kaushalya, a college student in Digana, Kandy, began her journey as a reserved individual, rarely stepping into the spotlight. Growing up in Digana – A district marked by past religious conflicts where communities comprising of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians seldom intertwined – Her involvement in school activities was limited. Despite awareness of efforts promoting peace and harmony, she remained disinterested, insulated in her perceptions. Kaushalya remembers, **"I vaguely remember the racist incidents that took place around me, as a result I avoided any sort of interaction with other religious communities other than my own."**

However, in 2022, Kaushalya's perspective transformed when she was introduced to the EMPOWER Project by a teacher. Engaging in debates, sharing beliefs while exploring Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), she ventured into a realm of diverse ethno-religious backgrounds, narrating, **"It was a wonderful experience, and I made many friends. I now believe that problems can be solved without violence and will do my best to teach others about it."**

With newfound courage and insight, Kaushalya shattered her shell. She embraced collaboration, participating in Co-existence clubs, contributing to community events, and bridging divides. Her growth was recognized, and she proudly shares, **"As a result of my newfound confidence and critical thinking, I was recently selected to the school prefect board."** Her transformation, from a reserved observer to a proactive change-maker, stands as a testament to the remarkable impact of the EMPOWER Project.



"Look at the people who have come to this house... We spent days and months working with the youth teaching them coexistence and harmony, and you can see the results. I don't feel alone, my house is full of children and adults of all races and religions. When I came home yesterday, these people had completed all that had to be done for the funeral house! We have done our work well".

- Suresh, a Peacebuilding Skill Training Facilitator of the EMPOWER Project, found solace in the local youths coming together regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity to support him during his wife's funeral.



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
contact.srilanka@gcerf.org



GCERF
Geneva, Switzerland