



THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF YOUNG LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA



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THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF YOUNG LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADIC	Alcohol and Drug Information Centre
AIDs	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
APRC	All Party Representative Committee
ATI	Advanced Technical Institutes
BBS	Bodu Bala Sena
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CENWOR	Centre for Women's Research
CGTRI	Ceylon German Technical Training Institute
CJCP	Center for Justice and Crime Prevention
CS	Case studies
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSVR	Center for the study of Violence and Reconciliation
CTFRM	Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DS	Divisional Secretariats
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Divisions
ECO-V	Eco Friendly volunteers
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FPA	Family Planning Association
FRC	Family Rehabilitation Centre
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GN	Grama Seva Nildhari
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICTA	Information Communication Technology Agency
IDPs	Internally Displace People
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
IOR	Indian Ocean region
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
KIIs	Key informant interviews
LKR	Sri Lankan Rupees
LLRC	Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Committee
LTTE	Liberation Tiger of Tamil Elam
MC	Municipal Councils
MPs	Members of the Parliament
MTDIFE	Ministry of Telecommunication, Digital Infrastructure and Foreign Employment
NAITA	National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority

NAP	National Action Plan
NCoE	National Collages of Education
NDVS	National Development Volunteer Service
NEC	National Education Commission
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NIE	National Institute of Education
NP	National Party
NPA	National Peace Accord
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
NVCYE	Nepal Volunteer and Culture Youth Exchange
NYC	National Youth Corp
NYCF	National Youth Club Federation
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
NYDPF	National Youth Development Policy Framework
NYS	National Youth Survey
NYSC	National Youth Service Council
NYSO	National Youth Service Co-operative Society Ltd
ONUR	Office for National Unity and Reconciliation
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
PAC	Promoting Active Citizenship
PARCS	Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centres
PEaCE	Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere
POE	Panel of Experts
PS	Pradesiya Sabha
PSUs	Primary Sampling Units
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
PYS	Poverty and Youth Survey
RWAF	Ruhunu Wellassa Area Federation
RYS	Religious Youth Service
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEED	Social Economical & Environmental Developers
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SLIATE	Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education
SLT	Sri Lankan Tamil
SLVP	Sri Lanka Volunteer Programme
SLYP	Sri Lanka Youth Parliament
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSUs	Second Sampling Units
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TCs	Teacher Centres
TSUs	Third Sampling Units
TUE	Tamil United Front
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UC	Urban Council
UDF	Union of Democratic Front

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
Univotec	University of Vocational Technology
UNP	United National Party
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPF	Universal Peace Federation
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent Extremism
WUSC	World Unitary Service of Canada
WYC	World Youth Conference
YO	Youth Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

The surge of sudden and brutal attacks on unarmed civilians by violent extremist outfits in many parts of the world has made violent extremism (VE) a grave global concern today. In Sri Lanka, however, violent extremism, manifested in its many forms, constituted a recurring theme since the 1970s. Even ten years after the end of the armed conflict, certain factors and conditions that germinated VE in Sri Lanka remain more or less unattended. In this backdrop, the study on 'The Potential Role of Young Leaders and Volunteers in Preventing Violent Extremism in Sri Lanka' intends to present an evidence-based analysis and recommendations which encourage youth-centric policy discourse and enable youth participation in decision making processes in preventing violent extremism (PVE). This study was commissioned in September 2018 and concluded in March 2019. The Easter Sunday attacks on 21 April 2019 by a little-known Islamic extremist group that shattered a decade-long fragile peace in Sri Lanka brought home now, more than ever, the need for a national plan in preventing all forms of violent extremism and mobilize all stakeholders to tackle this challenge with strategic vision.

PURPOSE AND INTENDED USE

The purpose of this research study is to inform stakeholders and Government counterparts on actionable processes to engage young leaders in PVE as well as supporting youth-led initiatives on its prevention. The youth form almost one fourth of the population (youth bulge), which gives a window of opportunity for Sri Lanka to reap the benefits of both a demographic and a peace dividend. Furthermore, volunteerism has proven to be a meaningful avenue for young people to engage as peacebuilders. Volunteerism may therefore present an opportunity for Sri Lanka to positively transform the image of youth; often portrayed as violent actors; into committed and active citizens for peace in their communities. The survey report will offer inputs in the formulation of the 'National Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism' and help shift the present discourse from countering terrorism to that of preventing violent extremism.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a three-layered data collection approach as the overall methodology. The first-layer comprised of collecting secondary data, while the second-layer was focused on the collection of primary data from qualitative methods pertaining to the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Central Provinces. At the third-layer, data was collected through a quantitative approach comprising of an extensive field survey of 2,800 youth (15-29 years) encompassing the aforementioned four Provinces in the country.

LIMITATIONS & CHALLENGES

A couple of limitations were experienced in the research process. Firstly, too many aspects were required to be covered in the study within a six month period. Secondly, the study was expected to collect responses relating to complex and contested terms such as hierarchical order, VE, PVE etc., within a limited time of interview with the respondents. Thirdly, when youth interviewed in the field survey, particularly 15-19 years old, in some instances, their parents intervened and answered some of the sensitive questions on behalf of their children. Finally, the unexpected turn of political turmoil in October 2018, following the unconstitutional removal of the Prime Minister of the country, affected the field survey, since the field visits were being conducted during that time.

KEY FINDINGS

The majority of youth identify themselves only as 'Sri Lankan' or as 'human beings' without other divisions. However, they still consider the ethnic factor as important. Attitudes/feelings of nearly half of the youth towards other ethnic groups are friendly. Still, there is a long way to go in building inter-ethnic relations among youth and in dispelling an 'enemy image' towards other ethnic groups in the post-war context.

The majority of youth view violent extremism as the main factor that threatens political and socio-economic stability in a post-war Sri Lanka. They have a fairly good understanding of what is meant by violent extremism. Ideology plays a critical role in propelling youth towards violent extremism. To youth, revolutionary political ideology is not as attractive as in the past. A quarter of the respondent were of the belief that attraction to ideologies of violent extremism are slowly increasing amongst their peers. Exclusive ethnic nationalism and faith-based extremism are potent and should receive careful attention. But, the political and social discourse of the country is still conditioned by the phenomenon of 'countering terrorism'. In the context of growing disillusionment and frustration among youth in the post-war period, there is the possibility of a re-emergence of violent extremism in Sri Lanka. Youth radicalism, if not addressed prudently at the correct time, would become a precursor to violent extremism.

From the perspective of youth, the level of discrimination in Sri Lanka also seems to be considerable with large disparities reported between the experiences of Sinhalese (29%) and other minority groups (42-52%). Places where these discriminations are most prevalent are in education and work environments. Lack of economic and employment opportunities, corruption and misuse of power, drugs and alcohol and absence of the rule of law are main issues affecting the youth in the post-war context. They want to ensure equal access to opportunities for all and equitable distribution of resources. In their view, the three main push factors that could drive youth towards VE are (i) undemocratic governance, (ii) injustice and rejection of diversity in society and (iii) political exclusion.

The youth want a role in the political, economic and social spheres. Their yearning for recognition is deep. However, there is a widening gap between youth capabilities and opportunities. Youth representation in national, provincial and local level governing structures remains miserably low despite many calls to rectify the situation. Considerable trust deficit exists between the youth and the established political, administrative and societal leadership. In general, civil society organizations (CSO) are also not successful in winning the trust of the youth.

There is a marked vacuum of role models for the youth. Absence or inadequacy of traditional social mediators, role models and charismatic faith leaders who could earn the trust and respect of youth is well noted. The positive and negative impact of the role of media, both traditional and social, in an era of information on PVE is vital. Media should be viewed as an opportunity to utilize skills of the youth and to mobilize their energies toward PVE.

The socio-economic context underlying traditional forms of volunteerism in Sri Lanka has now changed with the advent of modern society. However, some of the threads and strands of volunteerism ingrained in Sri Lankan culture still continue. The present youth perspective of volunteerism is different from that of traditional self-help models. They view volunteerism as an opportunity for their own personality advancement and skill development. The lack of interest in volunteerism is not because youth do not like it but because their changed life style and competitive examination system make no room for it. NGOs are viewed by the youth as another source of employment, as they have failed to win over the trust and confidence as seats of volunteering. In established youth organizations, male participation is higher than female participation. Evidence shows that female participation in regular activities are improving. However, the male domination is especially evident among office bearers. The gender imbalance in the leadership of Student Unions in the University system is a good example.

One of the main constraints to promoting the true spirit of volunteerism is politicization of youth organizations and youth programs. They join youth programs and participate in youth volunteer activities to build political capital. However, the true spirit of volunteerism prevails in non-politicized areas, such as relief work in disaster situations and sport and cultural spheres.

Volunteerism has a crucial role to play in mobilizing the youth in PVE. In order to do that, a national strategic plan which identifies areas where youth volunteerism is utilized in PVE is essential. Volunteerism could give youth the recognition they crave and increase their self-esteem. By coordinating and mobilizing the youth volunteers scattered all over the island with a well-planned national plan, a youth bulwark against VE can be formed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes the following recommendations and identifies three time frames for implementation of recommendations: short-term (0 – 12 months), mid-term (1 to 4 years) and long-term (5 to 10 years). These timeframes are not 'start dates' instead the amount of time required for implementing the recommendation.

In order to include young people as partners for peace, policy makers and social leaders must view young people from a positive perspective and recognize their active and important role in peacebuilding.

- There is an urgent need for an attitude change in the older generation with regards to the youth and youth radicalism. This change must be reflected in appropriate changes in the policy-making process and in governance by taking youth-sensitive approaches.
- Radical youth should be viewed as whistle-blowers and as early warning signals of violent extremism. The difference between radicalism and subversion needs to be clearly defined.

Ensure equality of all ethnic identities as the constituent elements of Sri Lankan identity.

Mid-term interventions

- Translate equality of ethnicity into concrete policy actions in respective public policy spheres and give priority to develop ethnic affairs policy in order to make necessary administrative reforms.
- Initiate an island-wide discourse with the objective of adopting a 'Post-war National Reconciliation Charter', similar to the 'Freedom Charter of South Africa' in 1995.
- Based on the discourse, develop a roadmap for the implementation of the Post-war National Reconciliation Charter.

Initiate Inter-Ethnic Dialogue to Promote Multi-ethnicity

Short-term interventions

- Create forums for Youth to exchange views freely. Dialogue is the best way to dispel mistrust and misunderstanding. Hence, CSOs on both sides of the ethnic divide should get together to offer dialogue forums for youths.
- Launch a social media campaign island-wide to illustrate positive examples and benefits of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural youth leadership and activities that are currently being carried out at the community level.

Mid-term interventions

- Establish a 'National Multi-Cultural Museum' to highlight and promote multi-ethnic and multi-cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, by drawing lessons from the 'Kigali Genocide Museum' which played a positive role in changing the divisive mindset of the people of post-genocide Rwanda

Long-term interventions

- The link language of English needs more promotion by the State to foster inclusion across ethnicities. The State needs to invest in training and educational courses that simultaneously offer English and skills development.
- The role that education can play in promoting or dispelling ethnic bias and stereotypes of other ethnicities is critically important. Education reforms and school curriculum development are very important policy priorities for the government in the post-war context. It needs serious thinking and a systematic approach. Education practices and the national curriculum must incorporate the history of Sri Lanka's civil war and the victories achieved as a nation. Such an approach will ensure that future generations of Sri Lankan youth are aware of VE in general, as well as the challenges that exist in preventing them.

Ensure youth-Centered political reforms

Short-term interventions:

- Make sure that institutional apparatus of the state should be accessible to all youth.
- Mobilize youth to ignite new discourse on PVE and expand social and political discourse on terrorism to capture the phenomena of 'prevention of violent extremism'.
- The state should take the lead in mobilizing youth in PVE discourse and integrate other stakeholders by giving them appropriate roles to play.

Mid-term interventions:

- Promote participatory democracy and good governance in order to deflate the push and pull factors of VE.
- Ensure political space for the youth by widening democratic political space and calibrating democratic political processes, which will in turn adequately address the challenge of revolutionary political ideology linked to VE.

Decrease the gap between youth capabilities and opportunities.

Short-term interventions

- A systematic process should be adopted at the National level to review existing policies and practices relevant to youth and implement youth volunteer components as part of these existing initiatives.

Mid-term interventions

- Examine why the earlier attempts to increase youth representation in politics failed to work and guarantee a space for youth to play a positive role in politics.
- Introduce a system of social auditing in all local/provincial level development projects and youth leaders in the area should be accommodated as social auditors.

Youth Radicalization Should be addressed to prevent it from Transferring into VE

Short-term interventions

- Different pathways from youth radicalism to violent extremism should be unpacked systematically.
- Learn from negative and positive experiences of the past and trace good practices to develop a coordinated strategic plan and vision to deal with future possible scenarios of violent extremism.

Mid-term intervention

- Initiate a broader national dialogue on how to handle youth radicalism to prevent it from moving toward VE
- Political, administrative and business leadership, media, civil society organizations and faith leaders must initiate/take part in PVE discourse along with youth leaders and their opinion-makers.

Address Youth-Based Grievances by giving them a Priority

Mid-term interventions

- Initiate necessary steps to establish an independent Office of Youth Ombudsman with necessary powers to deal with complaints relating to discrimination in delivery of public services.
- A gender approach should be given attention to by key stakeholders, implementing actionable policies and programs to PVE that inspire youth leadership.
- Special attention must be paid to vulnerable youth, specifically to single mother-headed families and take multi-level initiatives to engage directly with them and promote their participation in the public sphere. The government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders should first directly consult these women about what exactly they need. This consultation can even be done through youth volunteer organizations.

Mobilize faith leaders and promote role models for youth

Short –term interventions

- Mobilize faith leaders against faith-based violent extremism and initiate a discourse with youth.
- Encourage faith leaders to set up ‘safe spaces’ for the youth to discuss ‘difficult’ issues with identified stakeholders by drawing appropriate lessons from ‘the Circle of Courage’ in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Mid-term interventions

- Address systematically the issue of the lack of proper role models for youth through education systems and media.

Identify Pathways from Radicalization to VE

Mid-term interventions

- Pay attention to the dual role (positive and negative) that media can play in PVE in an era of information
- Youth leadership in terms of internships and work placements should be encouraged in the media sector to counter some of the negative aspects of information dissemination that can lead to VE.
- Give young people from diverse backgrounds a platform and voice on local media to shape the narrative of PVE.

De-politicization of Youth Programmes

Mid-term interventions

- Give priority to organize, develop and implement programs by youth without any political underpinning.
- Promote and provide relevant space for female leadership in voluntary organizations.
- Change the culture of NGOs to motivate youth to get involved in NGO work without looking at them as job providers.
- Revitalize volunteerism as a tool of social progress including PVE through a well-designed program for youth leaders to acquire necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills.
- Create adequate awareness on utility of volunteerism in PVE to parents and teachers as they can play a key role to influencing the young generation towards to volunteerism.

Foster a Culture of Volunteerism

Mid-term interventions

- Re-invent the traditional norms and ethos and combine them with modern structures and cultures to promote volunteerism.
- Strengthen youth forums to attract more youth volunteers for developing better leaders. State, private sector, civil society and INGOs should work together to strengthen these platforms.
- Build a regional approach to volunteerism that is adopted by key stakeholders. Priority should be accorded to Northern and Eastern provinces by mobilizing youth to engage in volunteer activities across the country.
- Foster a culture of volunteerism, especially amongst youth in isolated communities, through exchange of volunteers.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The prevention of violent extremism is one of the most intractable challenges that we confront globally, regionally and nationally since the end of the Cold War. According to UNDP, “(S)ince the beginning of the 21st century there has been more than a nine-fold increase in the number of deaths from violent extremism and terrorism, from 3,329 in 2000 to 32,685 in 2014” (UNDP, 2015). South Asia is a region with some of the highest levels of violent extremism in the world. According to the Global Terrorism Database, over the last 15 years, South Asia experienced the most terrorist activity in the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2017). Violent extremism has been prevalent in Sri Lankan politics since its independence in 1948. The pain and destruction that Sri Lanka has been experiencing due to violent extremism in the last fifty years is immense in scale and intensity. Sri Lanka is a text-book case for the study of the transformations of discontent and radicalization into violent extremism.

The end of the war in 2009 did not mean that Sri Lanka was free from the threat of violent extremism, this was manifested painfully by the Easter Sunday Attacks of 21 April 2019 in Colombo and other cities. In two armed uprisings in the South and in the protracted ethnic conflict in the North, youth played a critical role. A correlation between youth discontent and violent extremism is well established.

1.2. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) was commissioned to undertake a research study reflecting on practical approaches to reduce factors of youth vulnerable to VE and the role of the youth in preventing VE in Sri Lanka in September 2018. The objective of this research study is to inform stakeholders and Government counterparts on actionable processes to engage young leaders and volunteers in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka, which is a timely topic, especially post Easter Sunday Attacks. The study also aims to support youth-led initiatives to prevent violent extremism through its findings and recommendations. In particular, this study aims to identify the obstacles and challenges faced by youth in peacebuilding efforts, and recommends measures at the provincial and national levels that are in line with international objectives, to create an optimal environment in which youth can play a pivotal role to prevent violent extremism in Sri Lanka. The youth in Sri Lanka are the future of the country and therefore it is important to conduct an extensive study on their potential as agents of change in preventing conflict and building peace, to ensure that the country does not see a recurrence of violence extremism.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate the current status of youth leadership and volunteerism in terms of PVE in Sri Lankan society
2. To identify the potential positive and negative factors influencing the impact of youth leadership in PVE
3. To evaluate the role of volunteerism in PVE
4. To compare global examples of youth leadership in PVE with the local context
5. To provide recommendations in line with the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250.

1.3. GLOBAL CONTEXT OF YOUTH, VOLUNTEERISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

People ascribe to multiple forms of identity in today's globalized world; including supranational, national, ethnic, religious and gender identities. The label of 'youth' as an identifier stands apart from these other forms of identity because of its transient nature. Therefore, one can only identify as being a youth for a certain period of time. The social context of when one identifies with this transitory period of life is crucial to understanding the role of youth in violent extremism. "As a microcosm of wider society, young people are diverse, sometimes divided and anything but homogenous" (The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018). Therefore, in order to ascertain the role of youth in preventing violent extremism, it is first necessary to understand youth themselves, specific to the local context and in recognition of the aforementioned identifiers and societal externalities that shape the way young people act. The nuanced differences in views and interests between the age cohorts of young people (15-19, 20-24 and 25-29) must also be a secondary factor of consideration when studying this demographic.

In a global context, the youth have been generalized as either victims or perpetrators of violent extremism. Attributions of victimhood stem from the fact that violent extremism can disrupt youth living conditions, which have a secondary effect of curbing the youth population from gaining access to a normal livelihood (shelter, education and employment). For those youth already trapped by poverty, the incidents of violent extremism may have a greater impact on their security. "In 2016, an estimated 408 million youth (aged 15–29) resided in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence. This means that at least one in four young people are affected by violence or armed conflict in some way" (The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018).

The stereotyping of young people as 'victims' or 'perpetrators' of violent extremism and the engendering of these terms; young males as violent offenders and young women as helpless victims needs to be addressed. When looking at the sources of violent extremism and the prevention of violent extremism in relation to youth, the aforementioned stereotypes need to be countered by bringing youth into the discussion and giving them a voice to represent their own identity, understandings, knowledge, and experiences. This approach would allow for sound policy responses that does not suppress the legitimate participation of youth in finding innovative solutions to an issue that overwhelmingly encompasses them as a demographic.

A commonly held view is of "education and employment as stand-alone solutions to the problem of youth participation in violence or recruitment into violent extremism" (The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018). Though these solutions are crucial in a context specific environment, it is also important to consider global modes of youth empowerment such as encouraging community leadership through volunteerism. Volunteerism is still a recent phenomenon and is mainly seen as a social mode of exercise. However, if applied in the right context, it can be a transformative tool in allowing youth to address and even prevent violent extremism. "Youth contribute over 35 billion dollars per year in volunteer hours and are more likely than any other age group to have volunteered informally in the past years" (Guzman, 2006). "Volunteering is also associated with a 27 percent higher chance of employment, and the effect is especially strong for those without a high school diploma or those who live in rural areas" (National and Community Services, 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider volunteerism as a form of empowering youth to take up positive socio-political change rather than to succumb to expressions of violence or extremism. This is especially true in States where the political channels are monopolized by elites and modes of expression for young people are rigid and unyielding to reform.

While conceptualizing youth, violent extremism and volunteerism in a global context, it is important to note the active role of the United Nations in this regard. The UN Security Council passed a landmark Resolution which considered youth as fundamental in the international peace and security arena.

Resolution 2250² promotes a new narrative of young people with regards to peace and security, “whereby States are urged to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making institutions and mechanisms at all levels of Government, for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to prevent violent extremism” (UNSCR 2250, 2015).

Further to Resolution 2250, Resolution 2419³ was adopted last year by the UNSC. This Resolution reaffirmed and built upon the commitments of 2250; mainly “to urge relevant Government and non-state actors such as Civil Society Organizations to increase inclusive representation of youth in the discussion on conflict prevention and resolution. The Resolution also urged the UN Secretary General and his Special Envoys to take into account the views of youth pertinent to the maintenance of peace and security at the UN level itself and in wider international discussions” (UNSCR 2419, 2018).

The United Nations also commissioned a progress study on the implementation of UNSCR 2250, which found that “many young people are frustrated by the tendency of their Governments and international actors to treat youth as a problem to be solved, instead of as partners for peace” (The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018). The progress study recommended that this core problem be addressed in order to benefit from and support young people’s contributions to peace and to realize the potential of 1.8 billion young people globally. “In the progress study, Governments and international actors are called upon to undergo a seismic shift and recognize young people as ‘the missing peace’” (The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018).

1.4. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Sri Lanka, as the lead agency, together with UN Volunteers and UN Women, in collaboration with the Government of Sri Lanka, are delivering a two and half year project on the ‘Participation of Youth and Women in the Peacebuilding Process’. This research study on ‘The potential role of young leaders and volunteers in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka’ is being carried out under the Governance pillar of the Peacebuilding Priority Plan and is supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF).

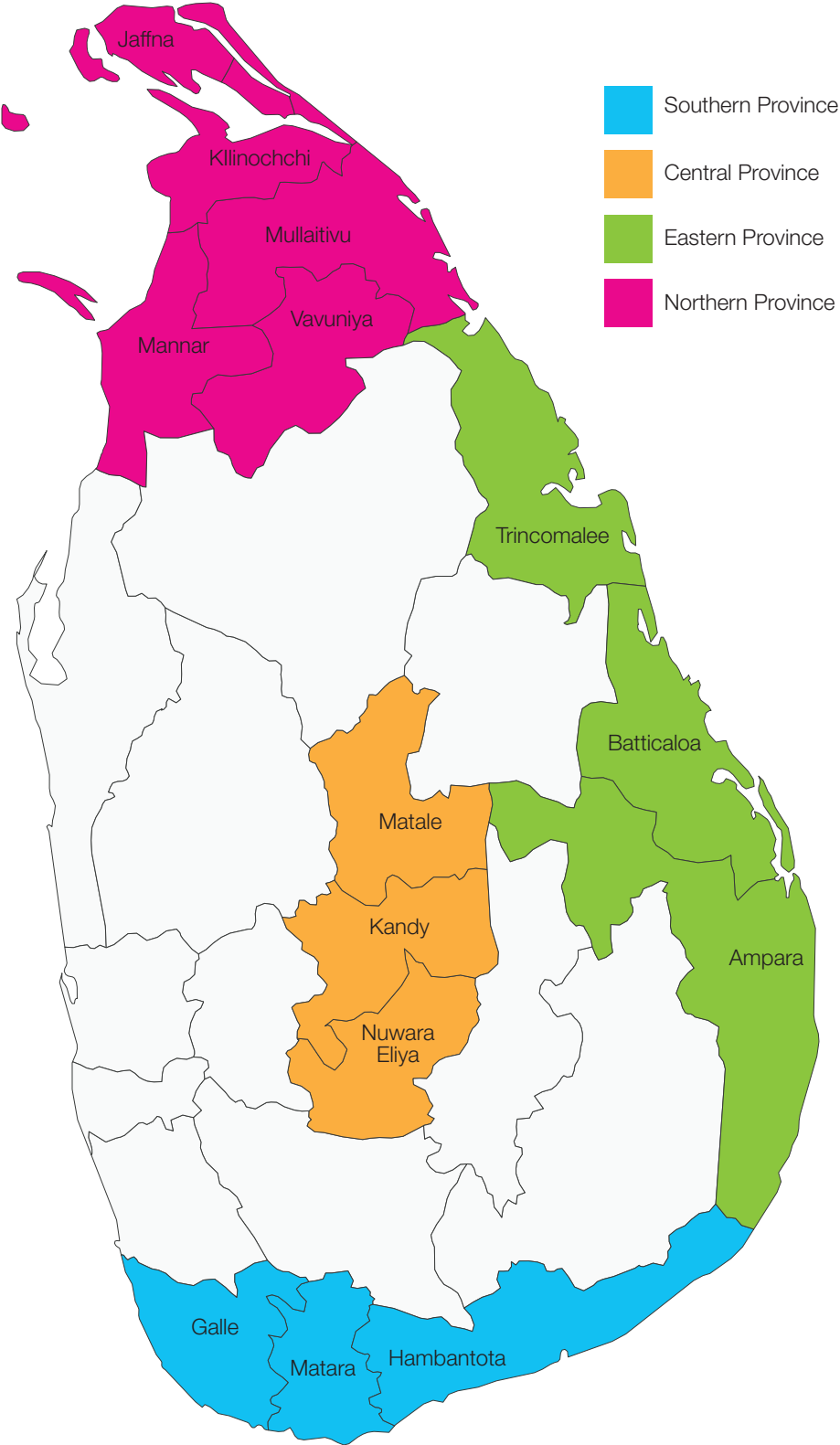
As Sri Lanka approaches ten years since the end of the protracted conflict in 2009, it is important that the role of young people is recognized in preventing violent extremism. The youth form almost one fourth of the population in Sri Lanka at the end of the war in 2009, which gives a window of opportunity for Sri Lanka to reap the benefits of both a demographic and a peace dividend. Furthermore, volunteerism has proven to be a meaningful avenue for young people to engage in as peacebuilders. Volunteerism may therefore present an opportunity for Sri Lanka to positively transform the image of youth portrayed as violent actors into committed and active citizens for peace.

This research study also looks to augment The National Youth Policy of Sri Lanka (2014), which points out the lack of opportunities for interaction among youth of different communities due to language, religion and sex segregation in educational institutions and other constraints. The study identifies the discernible gaps in the establishment and implementation of current national policies relating to youth in the context of sustainable peace and preventing violent extremism. It also strives to support national, subnational institutions and other partners to take an integrated, evidence-based approach in examining the potential role for youth in Sri Lanka. The research was conducted in the study locations of the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Central Provinces of Sri Lanka as these were the specific areas demarcated by UNFPA in implementing the project (Figure 1.1).

2. Adopted by the Security Council at its 7573rd meeting, on 9 December 2015

3. Adopted by the Security Council at its 8277th meeting, on 6 June 2018

Figure 1.1: Map of District and Province Study Locations of the Project



CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

This chapter will trace the history of violent extremism in Sri Lanka, placing it in the relevant theoretical framework and in a socio-political context of post-independence development. This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, attention will be on identifying the main element of the on-going analytical discourse on violent extremism and youth radicalism. In the second part, the context of three eruptions of violent extremism in Sri Lanka will be examined from a broad politico-historical perspective. The evolving post-war socio-political context in which the present youth dynamics, relating to preventing violent extremism, are to be located and will be traced in the end.

2.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Violent extremism is a constantly evolving, multifaceted phenomenon. The definition of violent extremism adopted by USAID is considered the most satisfactory and the present study adopts that definition. It defines violent extremism as “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives” (USAID, 2011). The difficulty one faces in this regard is whether violent extremism is merely a synonym for terrorism. The difference precisely lies in the perspective, however, ‘violent extremism’ is considered to be a more inclusive and broader term than ‘terrorism’ (Glazzard & Zeuthen, 2016).

The two components of the term ‘violent extremism’ and their meanings are important. The term ‘violence’ is precisely defined. Violence is a property of force. When force is intended to hurt, damage or kill/destroy someone/something the outcome is violence. On the other hand, extremism is a relative subject and is context dependent. Extremism in one context may not be extremism in another context. At the same time, any opposing ideology can easily be labeled as extremism. Extremism and violence often go hand in hand and the combination of the two transforms both into a destructive force.

Violent extremism is always propelled by a particular ideology, overtly or covertly. These ideologies are diverse, yet have two common features that can be found inherent to all extremist ideologies; first, glorifying the supremacy of a particular group or faith, and second, opposing diversity and an inclusive society. The ideologies that justify, motivate and support violent extremism “vary from religious fundamentalism to separatism, xenophobia and radical nationalism” (UNDP, 2017). As Randi Borum explains, “extremist belief that justifies violence is one possible pathway into terrorism involvement” (Borum, 2011). However, it is important to note that ideologies do not exist and function in a vacuum. The ideologies that justify violence become attractive to vulnerable sectors in the context of particular socio-political conditions. Hence, the role of the ideology must be analyzed in tracing the related socio-political factors that drive individuals toward violent extremism.

The prevailing stereotypical images and perceptions pertaining to violent extremism have more or less been conditioned by the practices of some internationally noted terrorist groups. However, it is not possible to generalize them by putting all forms of violent extremism into one basket. In understanding, predicting and preventing violent extremism, it is necessary to identify different types and patterns. As far as the agents of violent extremism are considered, four broad categories can be identified—nationalist, religious, secessionist and Communist. In terms of form, insurgency and sectarian violence are the two manifestations of violent extremism. In order to understand the diversity of violent extremism, these separations are useful but sometimes they need to be considered together as they take place in the same geographical space. Sri Lanka is a case in point.

Terrorism and violent extremism are often used as interchangeable terms. In the terminology of terrorism, to meet the challenge, emphasis is on counter-terrorism through increased security mechanisms. In conceptualizations of violent extremism, the focus would be on its prevention by defusing its drivers by taking necessary initiatives in the political, social and economic spheres. The counter-terrorism measures that have been followed since 9/11 have failed to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Hence, the UN Secretary General remarked, “There is a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism” (UN General Assembly resolution, A/RES/70/254). Hence, UNDP promotes a development approach to the prevention of violent extremism. It emphasizes “Experiences in both development and peacebuilding show that an increase in the level of inclusion and tolerance in communities can lead to both better governance of diversity, and to societies better inoculated against violent extremism. Tolerance for diversity and intercultural understanding are also at the heart of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, on building peaceful, just and inclusive societies” (UNDP, 2017).

In many cases, radicalization serves as a pathway to violent extremism. However, all those who hold radical ideas do not engage in terrorism and those who engage in terrorism are not necessarily radicals. Radicalism can have many positive aspects as well. Some radical movements promote social progress and mobilize pressure on authorities, compelling them to take necessary social, political and economic reforms. The emergence of radical tendencies signifies some deficiency in society, which calls for serious attention. Nevertheless, some weak states who do not want to take necessary reforms tend to equate every radical movement as terrorism. When those who are in power use force to freeze social and political change by suppressing radical movements and voices, radicalism gets transformed into violent extremism. No one is born as a violent extremist. They are made by circumstances and fueled by various drivers in motion.

From the perspective of prevention, four aspects of the entire process should be taken into account: roots and factors of discontent; drivers of transformation of dissent towards violent extremism; the practices of violent extremism; and different responses. There are broad factors that facilitate the shift from radicalization into violent extremism. Exclusion and discrimination, in terms of particular identity or social base, contribute as a major drive. Each individual’s path from radicalization to violent extremism can be unique. Whatever may be the factors and conditions that give birth to violent extremism, nothing can justify it.

2.2 SRI LANKAN CONTEXT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Even though Sri Lanka was intensely affected by many forms of violent extremism, it was considered one of the most stable countries in Asia at the time of its Independence in 1948. During the first two decades after independence, Sri Lanka had been cited as a shining illustration for Parliamentary democracy in a plural society. However, there were two main challenges the new State faced: firstly, to guide and direct the post-colonial State-formation and nation-building, to ensure the democratic embrace of the multi-ethnic social order and, secondly, to pursue policies and strategies to guide the economy towards ensuring the equitable distribution of development/economic benefits to the people at large. There was a strong belief that political democracy and liberal norms would provide the necessary institutional and ideological basis for a stable multi-ethnic polity.

Having ended the long years of colonial subjugation and subordination, the independence in 1948 raised a new hope among people that a wide political space would be opened up for increased participation in the political decision-making process. The electoral process, linked with Parliamentary democracy and universal suffrage, contributed to mobilize politically a section of the population that was not involved in the power play before. However, these wider cohorts were not satisfied with only playing a marginal role,

while being excluded from real political and economic power. How to broaden the democratic political structures and processes to accommodate those who come forward with social and political aspirations towards the decision-making process remained a fundamental challenge in post-independent Sri Lanka. In hindsight, after 70 years, it is clear that Sri Lanka failed to effectively address these challenges. This failure has created objective conditions for violent extremism to emerge in the country.

The first armed challenge to the Sri Lankan State linked with violent extremism emerged in 1971, mainly from the Sinhalese youth. Crises and divisions of the Left gave birth to several youth revolutionary groups in the late 1960s. In the process, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) led by Rohana Wijeweera evolved as the main political group, dedicated to violence in order to capture State power. The outcome was the 1971 youth uprising. On the night of the 5th of April, 1971, 93 police stations in the country were simultaneously attacked. Yet, the JVP could not sustain its military action for long and the uprising was crushed by military force. When the uprising was over, there were 17,953 people in custody, 11,748 were arrested and 6,205 had surrendered (Keerawella, 2009). Some visible features of the 1971 insurgency should be noted. Primarily, it was not a spontaneous or unorganized uprising like food riots, ethnic riots, single-issue peasant agitations or student riots. It was an uprising launched by an organization operating underground for nearly six years with a definite aim of capturing State power. During these years a large number of followers were indoctrinated through systematic lectures and training camps. The second distinctive feature of the movement was its youth character. The uprising was carried out mainly by the youth. After the uprising, 86.6 percent of those who were arrested and 96 percent of those who surrendered to the State authorities were between 16-32 years of age (Obeysekere, 1974). Thirdly, it challenged the Government that came to power less than a year before, securing an unprecedented number of seats at the general elections held in 1970. The governing coalition included two main Left Parties whose leaders held ministerial posts.

The youth in the armed uprising of 1971 directed their anger not only against the existing socio-economic structure but also against the established political leadership of the country. Furthermore, they rejected the existing means and avenues to lodge their protests. Demolishing the picture of political and social stability, the 1971 youth uprising brought two fundamental questions to the forefront in political analysis: why did these youth reject the democratic Parliamentary political practices and adopt the strategy of the armed capture of power and why were the established Left parties not able to absorb these social forces that came forward to challenge institutions of power and authority?

The failure of consecutive regimes to offer viable solutions to the growing socio-economic problems and oligarchic nature of political parties explains why politically aspirant youth resorted to alternative courses of action. They observed that the grip of a small group of people at the center of political power, who were socially and economically connected to each other, had not been loosened. In a society affected by rapid social change and continuous political mobilization, political parties need to have a mechanism to absorb new elements into the system. Once the legitimacy of the political system is in question, the entry of new political forces sets the conditions for political instability.

The first republican Constitution in 1972 represented the first native Constitution for Sri Lanka. The Constitution making discourse and procedure further alienated the North and East Tamil bloc from the main political body of the country. The frustration of the Tamil community in the early 1970s were over key issues such as – devolution of power to regional-level units, the recognition of Tamil language rights, and the allocation of State resources and educational and employment opportunities. It was especially the introduction of language-based standardization and the district quota system in the selection of students to the universities that served to alienate the Tamil population. By the end of the United Front Government in 1977, the socio-political conditions were ready for a paradigm shift in the politics of the North. The change of name, the Tamil United Front (TUF) to the Tamil United Liberation Front in 1976 was indicative of this shift. At the time when the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) put forward the demand for a separate State in May 1976, many believed that it was a mere bargaining chip for more regional

autonomy. Even in the late 1970s, Tamil youth groups who advocated an armed struggle to achieve Tamil Eelam constituted a marginal element in the politics of the North and their influence was limited only to a thin layer of Tamil society. The power and influence of these groups increased rapidly in the period between 1977-1983. A clear shift from radicalization to violent extremism took place in the Northern Political space during this period.

The turning point was the ethnic riots in July 1983, triggered by the killing of 13 security personnel in the North. In the same year the elected leaders of the TULF, the main Tamil opposition party at the time, left Parliament after the 6th Amendment to the Constitution, leaving room for the youth groups, who vowed violent extremism, to assume leadership in the North. The military campaign of the Tamil militant groups at that time consisted of five main components: the war of attrition, land mine warfare in the North and East, staging direct attacks on security establishments, attacking Sinhalese villages to demarcate the margins and the planting of bombs in Colombo.

The protracted conflict in the North, linked with the violent extremism of militant political projects and Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict, fueled a second youth uprising in the South in the latter part of the 1980s. Violent extremism manifested more intensely during the second uprising led by the JVP in the South, where the youth played a key role. Broadly speaking, four types of interrelated revolts were embodied in the crisis. Firstly, the student revolt, associated with the crisis of education, constituted the main element. The crisis in higher education institutions spread to schools very quickly. The radicalization of school students began after their participation in the protest against the Education White Paper of 1981 (Keerawella, 2009). Secondly, increasing frustration and unrest of marginalized youth elements, created by prolonged unemployment, set the socio-economic conditions for youth radicalism. The widening income gap and class polarization, due to the new economic order of the open economic package, made the JVP ideology more attractive to the younger generation of rural poor. Thirdly, the Southern militancy embodied the discontent with State-sponsored political violence and State manipulation of the electoral political process. Finally, the Sinhalese nationalist reaction to developments in the North was organized by the JVP to develop a mass protest movement. It was really the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987 that provided the breakthrough to the second JVP uprising.

The actions carried out by the JVP and its front organizations during the period of the second uprising provides a clear example of the vicious cycle of political, economic and societal insecurity, violent extremism and counter-violence. Mass mobilization of people on to the streets in protest, mainly against the Indo-Lanka Accord and the IPKF, constituted the first category. The actions taken to paralyze the system such as hartals, the stoppage of transport services, curfews, and the closing of business establishments constituted the second element. These were presented as peoples' actions but, in reality, terror and coercion were applied to get people to participate in the actions imposed by the JVP. The third element was the brutal assassination of 'traitors'. The threat posed by the JVP undermined the security of the society at large and that of the unarmed individuals in civil society. The second JVP uprising highlighted a key lesson: nothing can justify violent extremism.

After 1990, LTTE terrorism and counter-terrorism on the part of the Government once again became the main element of the conflict architecture in Sri Lanka. The emergence of the LTTE is closely related to the structural crisis of the post-colonial State, as a result of the State's failure to win over the consent of all ethnic identities by constitutional, political and other non-coercive means. The Political driving force of the LTTE was Tamil nationalism. Its every move was justified in terms of 'Tamil national aspirations'. At the same time, there was a dialectical relationship between Tamil and Sinhalese nationalism in post-independence Sri Lanka. The failure of the earlier attempts on the part of Tamil political forces to come to a constitutional compromise from 1948 to 1972 paved the way for the militant brand of Tamil nationalism after the mid-1970s.

The LTTE alternative was a more overt, mono-ethnic state within multi-ethnic Sri Lanka; which manifested itself as a terrorist outfit. It had not been able to change this disposition, symbolized by the cyanide capsule, until its demise. However, the terrorism that the LTTE mastered had a definite political context and it used terror as a political tool. The ultimate objective of the use of terror was to achieve a separate State for Tamil people in Sri Lanka. The relentless killing of Tamil political opponents and an over-reliance on arms and military strategy, rather than social forces and political strategy, and the ruthless suppression of 'other' voices in Tamil society watered down the moral justification of their struggle. As a result, the terrorist face of the LTTE, rather than the liberation fighters, came to the forefront with the passage of time.

POST-WAR CONTEXT

At the end of the war, with the outright military defeat of the LTTE, Sri Lanka stood at a critical historic juncture in May 2009. There were many opportunities and possibilities, along with many problems and challenges. The main challenge that remained before the Government was how to transform the hard-fought military victory over the LTTE into a foundation for durable peace and ethnic reconciliation; transforming the 'negative peace' into a 'positive peace'.

The existing theoretical literature on post-conflict peacebuilding concentrates mainly on situations where conflicts are brought to a close, either as a result of a negotiated political settlement among the parties to the conflict or as an outcome of an externally engineered peace arrangement. In both cases the direction and processes of post-conflict peacebuilding are pre-determined by the peace settlement. The scenario of ending the war as a result of the outright military defeat of the LTTE is quite different and it poses many challenges and dilemmas for post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding. Despite profound solace on the part of the people for the termination of the war that brought enormous pain and destruction for years; there was also a pervasive war-triumphalism in society.

The complex and multi-dimensional post-war reconciliation and peacebuilding process demanded systematic and concurrent steps at three levels. The first level of steps included the resettlement of Internally Displaced People (IDPs), reconstruction and rehabilitation. In the face of the influx of IDPs during the last few days of the war, the first urgent priority was to setup safe gathering centers. It had to be soon followed by a transitional step of establishing welfare centers to accommodate them and to ensure the provision of day-to-day basic needs and other facilities to avoid a humanitarian crisis. In addition, the Government had to attend to the reinstallation of basic infrastructure facilities, which were heavily damaged due to the intense fighting. Furthermore, clearing landmines remained a time-consuming task as the area had been densely mined.

Simultaneously, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction programs also began. After the flushing out of the LTTE from the East, the Government launched 'Negenahira Navodaya'. In June 2009, the Sri Lankan Government launched the 'Triple R' program named Uthuru Wasanthaya that covered the North (Keerawella, 2010). A Presidential Task Force was established to coordinate all the Government Ministries and agencies, international agencies, inter-Governmental organizations and non-Governmental organizations. The main emphasis in the post-war rebuilding and reconstruction in Uthuru Wasanthaya was on physical infrastructure development, building roads, bridges, schools, energy grids, telecommunication, etc. Over a period of three years, eleven large bridges were completed with a total of 2,538 meters in the North and East. As a result of these large-scale infrastructure development projects, including townships, the physical appearance of the region changed rapidly since the end of the war (Keerawella, 2013).

Within a span of 15 months, the number of IDPs in welfare centers were reduced from 297,000 to 18,000 (Peiris, 2011:11-12). As the Peacebuilding Context Assessment observed "The firm end of military combat in 2009, and the fact that it has not resumed since then, is itself a significant milestone,

and one that created the necessary pre-conditions for the deeper processes of peacebuilding” (De Mel and Venugopal, 2016). However, the success of post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction cannot be measured only in terms of the construction of new roads, bridges and buildings. Rather, the rehabilitation and reconstruction should have been carried out in a way which facilitated the process of reconciliation. After years of ethnic divide, winning the hearts and minds of the people was the crux of reconciliation, in which winning over the youth should have been a priority. In infrastructure development projects under Uthuru Wasanthaya, the local people and their political leadership remained only as spectators with no role to play. They appeared to be imposed from the top of the Governance structures, mainly from Colombo. Ideally, the people of the area must own the reconstruction process. Even if it was not possible at the beginning in view of the ground situation, there should have been a clear roadmap to transfer the ownership of the process to the people in the region once it was set in motion. The voting pattern of the people in the North and the East at the 2015 presidential election underscored the need to reconfigure the post-war peacebuilding from a human, rather than physical, infrastructure focused approach.

The second level of initiatives required in post-war peacebuilding were the steps to be taken in the direction of finding a long-term solution to the ethnic problem. This was an invariable, multi-dimensional process with political, economic, socio-cultural and institutional aspects, aimed at building an inclusive polity. The point of departure in that direction, and also the central element of it, was the Constitutional reforms needed to facilitate inclusion of those who remained outside of power and authority and to check authoritarian and majoritarian tendencies. The initiative of the Mahinda Rajapaksa Government to achieve a consensus among different political forces on Constitutional revisions was reflected in the All-Party Representative Committee (APRC) appointed in 2006. The APRC, carried out deliberations on Constitutional reforms for three years and presented its interim proposal to President Mahinda Rajapaksa in February 2009. The APRC of 2006-09 could have served as a useful starting point and template for renewed deliberations for State reforms as it generated widespread acceptance in society (De Mel and Venugopal, 2016). Unfortunately, the process did not continue after 2009.

Another important issue needing to be addressed in the post-war context was how to forge an organic relationship between the State and the Sri Lankan Tamil people. The alienation of the Tamils from the structures of power and governance created conducive conditions for violent extremism to emerge. The perceived ‘enemy’ image of the Sri Lankan State and its institutional apparatus, that the LTTE purported, could not be wiped out overnight. In civil conflict, both parties believe that the character and behavior of the adversary is the main cause of war and justify one’s actions vis-vis the other. Thus, to create ethnic harmony and national unity, it is necessary to eradicate this mindset.

On 15 May 2010, the eight-member Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)⁵ was formally appointed with the mandate to “inquire and report within six months on the following matters that may have taken place during the period between February 21, 2002 and May 19, 2009” (Government of Sri Lanka, 2011). The mandate, timing and the composition of the Commission were partly responsible for this lukewarm response. Notably, the Commission had no youth representation. However, within its limits the LLRC produced a report with a set of important recommendations. The Government’s mild response to the recommendations of the LLRC and its failure to present a roadmap for its implementation created an impression that the Government was not interested in executing the recommendations.

5. Members of the Commission include Mr. C.R de Silva (Chair), Dr. Rohan Perera, Prof. M.T. Jiffry, Prof. Karunatatna Hangawatta, C. Chanmugam, H.M.G.S. Palihakkara, M. Ramanathanand M.P. Paranagama.

Essentially, the third level of initiatives required to place post-war peacebuilding on a sustainable footing were governance reforms to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. In order to be viable and effective, devolution of power should be accompanied by broader democratic political reforms. In this context, the people in general and the youth in particular expected that the new political space opened up at the conclusion of the war would be used to initiate governance reforms.

International allegations of committing war crimes during the last stage of the war and the Sri Lankan Government's reaction to it dominated the political discourse. The Government response to the UNHRC resolution was two-fold. First, Sri Lanka diplomatically drifted towards the forces that could balance political and economic pressure from the West. China became the main shield that could be counted on for the protection vis-à-vis any Resolution against Sri Lanka at the UN Security Council. In this context, Sri Lanka's relations with China acquired a renewed politico-strategic significance. As a result, Sri Lanka's geopolitical position evolved considerably. Secondly, a campaign was carried out on the domestic front claiming that the UN and the West were against the regime for defeating the LTTE and the Tamil diaspora behind them. In this context, the ruling Government at the time re-discovered a new mission to protect the motherland. The main task of the State was to identify and counter internal and external enemies who are waiting for an opportunity to destroy the country. In this regard, it pushed Sri Lanka towards a 'national security State' and thereby curtailed and narrowed the range of public debate on political and economic issues. It also created an environment for ultra-Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist groups to raise their heads. The recurrence of ethnic riots in the post-war situation further highlighted the need for a broad vision and program of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

REGIME CHANGE IN 2015 AND IT'S AFTERMATH

Five years after the end of the armed conflict, a demand for political change by the people was gradually in motion. In light of corruption and nepotism, the slogan of 'good governance' became attractive to the public, especially to the youth. The demands for accountability and transparency in public affairs came to the forefront for this reason. It is also very important to note the role played by social media at the time, which aimed at counter-balancing the pro-establishment public media. New media technology was utilized through social media, which became more user-friendly and available to a larger section of the society, especially young people. The political change in 2015 also highlighted the fact that the euphoria of military victory against the LTTE could not subsume peoples' impulses for democracy and good governance.

The process of Constitutional reforms of the National Unity Government commenced with the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, passed on April 28th 2015 (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2015). The Amendment imposed a two-term maximum limit for the presidency while reducing the presidential term from six to five years. The President could no longer dissolve Parliament until the expiration of four and a half years of its term, unless he was requested to do so by a resolution of a two-thirds majority of Parliament. The strongest feature of the 19th Amendment as far as the de-politicization framework was concerned, was the establishment of a Constitutional Council and other independent commissions covering key areas in public affairs. In order to consider drafting a new Constitution, Parliament met for the first time as a Constitutional Assembly in April 2016 (Constitutional Assembly of Sri Lanka, 2016).

Deviating from the stance of the previous regime vis-à-vis the UNHRC resolution on Sri Lanka, the National Unity Government came forward to co-sponsor the Resolution 30/1, titled 'Promoting Reconciliation and Accountability in Sri Lanka' on the 1st of October 2015 (UNHRC, 2015). One of the first moves taken by the National Unity Government was to set up the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) in March 2015, as an administrative arm to execute a multi-pronged approach to achieving national unity and reconciliation (Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation, 2015). A further positive step taken by the National Unity Government was the Right to Information Act. Having gone through a long gestation period, it was finally operationalized in February 2017.

The approach of the National Unity Government, regarding the process of reconciliation, took into account four broad areas: Truth seeking; Right to Justice; Reparation and; Non-recurrence. In this regard, an 11 member “Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms” (CTFRM) was appointed on 26.01.2016 with the objective of conducting nation-wide public consultations to ascertain the opinion of stakeholders on institutions and processes for transitional justice (CTFRM, 2016). It was mandated to inform the design of the mechanisms for truth seeking, justice and reparations. By the time CTFRM completed its final report in November 2016, the earlier enthusiasm of the Government had faded away. Another initiative was the Office of the Missing Persons Act, which was passed in Parliament in August 2016. However, the Commission was only established in March 2018.

A key grievance of the people of the North under the new regime is the continued occupation of public and private lands by the Army. It was the main demand raised by the Tamil political leaders in the Parliament. The slow process in releasing back their land sullied their hopes for a new beginning. In January 2019, over 1202.88 acres of public and private lands in the Northern Province were released to the legitimate owners (Daily News, 2019). Arguably this initiative was too late as it was only enacted 10 years after the conclusion of the war and, in addition, the timing of the release coincided with up-coming elections in the country. The current government also witnessed the perforation of anti-Muslim riots in Digana, in the Kandy District, which proved that a small incident could generate a large ethnic fire in the absence of trust and confidence within a multiethnic social fabric.

Due to overall disappointments from a socio-economic perspective, frustration and disillusionment are growing once again amongst the youth. After three and a half years, the Government launched two flagship economic development programs, ‘Enterprise Sri Lanka’ and ‘Gamperaliya’ in mid-2018 (Daily News, 2019). The aims of the Enterprise Sri Lanka program include supporting the SME sector, which has been recognized as the driving force of economic development, as well as the farmers and agro-based companies who are engaging in small scale subsistence agriculture and commercial scale agriculture. In addition, the ‘Arabuma loan scheme’ was introduced to encourage young graduates to enter into the economic development process by setting up their innovative business ideas by providing a cash flow-based loan at a zero-interest rate with a full Government guarantee (EDB Sri Lanka, 2018). The second initiative - ‘Gamperaliya’ - was presented as the key rapid rural development program (RRDP). The declared objective of the program is to identify the needs of the public at the rural level and to prioritize the fulfillment of such needs to strengthen rural economies and make a change in the quality of life for rural people. The fact that the economic grievances of rural youth and their frustration set objective conditions for violent extremism underscores the significance of these two programs. However, the impact of these economic initiatives and the impetus they would infuse in the rural economy and the empowerment of the youth are yet to be seen.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

3.1. THREE-LAYERED DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

A three-layered data collection approach was adopted as the overall methodology of the research study. The first-layer of data collection comprised of collecting secondary data, while the second-layer was for the collection of primary data from qualitative⁶ methods pertaining to the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Central Provinces. This included focus group discussions, case studies and key informant interviews, the latter of which was conducted at the provincial and national level. At the third-layer, information was collected through a quantitative⁷ method comprising of a large scale field survey of youth covering the aforementioned four Provinces of the country. The following section describes in detail the above stated three layers.

3.1.1 FIRST-LAYER: SECONDARY DATA

In this layer, a sizable amount of data was extracted from the 2012 Population and Housing Census of Sri Lanka. In addition, a desk review was conducted relating to national and sub-national policies, (such as mapping youth policies, conflict analysis of Sri Lanka, and youth participation in politics and leadership roles). This information was collected through various secondary sources in order to capture the incidence of vulnerability as well as the potential of the current Sri Lankan youth demographic. Published as well as unpublished research reports including United Nations country reports, articles and statistics particularly related to youth violent extremism were also reviewed, in order to assess the risks and challenges faced by youth in Sri Lanka.

The review of secondary data⁸ highlighted that the role of youth as leaders and volunteers in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka was an under-researched area in the existing literature. There have been many studies conducted on violent extremism and conflict in Sri Lanka as well as on the development of the potential of the Sri Lankan youth in general, but there have been hardly any studies done in the national context to directly link youth activism and leadership to the prevention of violent extremism. Furthermore, the existing literature on Sri Lankan volunteerism was also scant and more research had to be drawn from UN documents and international research to explore this concept through a national lens.

3.1.2 SECOND-LAYER: PRIMARY DATA COLLECTED FROM QUALITATIVE METHODS

The second-layer of the study was comprised of a number of data collection methods:(i) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); (ii) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and (iii) Case Studies (CS).

6. All references in this chapter to the qualitative research component encompass the conduction of Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and Case Studies from the Southern, Eastern, Northern and Central Provinces respectively.

7. All references in this chapter to the quantitative research component encompass the conduction of the field survey of 2800 sample youth between ages 15-29 across the four provinces (Southern, Eastern, Northern and Central Provinces).

8. The list of references for the review of secondary data can be found in the 'References' sub-section of this report, specifically references for Chapter 1, 2,4, 5 and 6.

Focus Group Discussions:

The research team conducted a total of 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) encompassing 224 participants from the Southern, Northern, Eastern and Central Provinces in Sri Lanka. The participants of the FGDs were from various sectors of society and were not confined to youth groups. Thus, participants ranged from Government sector representatives, religious leaders, private sector groups, youth volunteer groups, NGOs and members from law enforcement. The age range of the participants varied from 18-70 and the gender ratio of the participants were 61 percent male and 39 percent female overall. However, there were significant age and gender variations of FGD participants in terms of the different study locations.

Table 3.1: Number of focus group discussions (FGD) and participants by Province

Province/District		FGD	Number of Participants	Gender Breakup
Central	Kandy Nuwara Eliya Matale	06	96	18 (M-07/ F-11)
				13 (M -09/ F-04)
				15 (M -08/ F-07)
				20 (M -07/ F-13)
				14 (M -04/ F-10)
				16 (M -11/ F-05)
Southern	Galle Matara Hambanthota	04	55	22 (M -11/ F-11)
				07 (M -05/ F-02)
				14 (M -10/ F-04)
				12 (M -10/ F-02)
Eastern	Batticaloa Ampara Trincomalee	03	41	14 (M -14/ F-0)
				15 (M -13/ F-02)
				12 (M -10/ F-02)
Northern	Kilinochchi Mullaitivu Vavuniya	02	32	17 (M -10/ F-07)
				15 (M -08/ F-07)
Total		15	224	224

Given that the questions asked during the FGDs often reflected sensitive issues relating to terrorism and violent extremism in the country and the likelihood of it occurring again, the research team observed that participants felt more comfortable in expressing their views openly if they perceived other members of the group to be sharing similar experiences. The discussion often started with general issues that were familiar to the participants. When the participants felt more relaxed, the moderator guided the discussion to the more sensitive issues. The issues discussed in each group were standardized with a prepared list of questions pertaining to knowledge and understanding of violent extremism, the potential role of youth leadership and the capacity and attitudes towards volunteerism. However, the researchers often changed the trajectory or the nature of the questions depending on the responses elicited from the participants. Summarized information on participants of each FGD is presented in Table 3.1. The duration for each FGD was about two hours and a detailed FGD interview schedule was used. A list of questions forwarded to participants of FGDs is presented in Appendix 1.

Key Informant Interviews:

A total of 45 key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out at the provincial and national level with individuals who either were engaged in activities related to youth, violent activities, preventing violent extremism, leadership building, volunteerism and/or had knowledge or experience in these identified areas. The age range of KIIs was from 25-68. The KIIs tended to be skewed towards the older generation because this demographic had the adequate knowledge and expertise on the subject matter and usually informants in the decision making structures tended to be captured by an older demographic. This highlights the fact that key informants in Sri Lanka across most sectors tend to be from a middle-aged or elderly demographic and the youth clearly have not attained positions as key informants due to the age-bias imbued into the current structures.

Table 3.2: Number of key informant interviews (KII) by Province

Province/District		Number of KII	Gender Breakup
Central	Kandy Nuwara Eliya Matale	08	08 (M- 06/ F- 02)
Southern	Galle Matara Hambanthota	08	08 (M- 06/ F- 02)
Eastern	Batticaloa Ampara Trincomalee	08	08 (M- 08/F-0)
Northern	Kilinochchi Mullaitivu Vavuniya	10	10 (M- 08/ F- 02)
Other	Colombo	11	11 (M- 09/ F- 02)
Total		45	45 (M- 37/ F- 08)

The gender ratios were 86 percent male and 13 percent female. This too illustrates a deeper societal issue of expertise in this subject matter being exclusive to the male demographic both at the provincial and national level. Since the key informants were knowledgeable on the subject, these interviews were intended to gather detailed information on their attitudes, perceptions, involvement and contribution in regard to the potential of youth in preventing violent extremism.

Case Studies:

Case study interviews elicited the kind of information that the informant felt was too private to talk openly in a group. This can be established from the nature of the case study interviewees who were often from marginalized and ostracized segments of society. The research team conducted 17 case studies ranging from youth activists/leaders, youth volunteers and university students to individuals engaged in poverty and conflict induced incidences leading to violence and violent extremism such as sex workers, youth insurrectionists, rehabilitated terrorists as well as those engaged in the prevention of violent extremism as part of volunteer groups and NGOs. The age range of the case study participants were from 20–50 and the gender ratio was approximately 70 percent male and 29 percent female. No attempt was made to tape the interviews in order to avoid respondents being uncomfortable.

Table 3.3: Number of case studies by Province

Province/District		No. of Case Studies	Gender Breakup
Central	Kandy Nuwara Eliya Matale	06	06 (M- 04/F- 02)
Southern	Galle Matara Hambanthota	06	06 (M- 04/F- 02)
Eastern	Batticaloa Ampara Trincomalee	02	02 (M- 02)
Northern	Kilinochchi Mullaitivu Vavuniya	13	03 (M- 02/F- 01)
Total		17	17 (M- 10/F- 07)

At a given single time two members of the research team sat with each respondent, one conducted the interview and the other took notes. In order to build rapport with the respondents, interviews were mostly conducted in places chosen by the respondents. Table 3.3 shows the picture of case studies from the four Provinces.

3.1.3 THIRD LAYER: PRIMARY DATA COLLECTED FROM QUANTITATIVE METHOD

In this layer, primary data was collected by conducting a large-scale field survey in the selected four Provinces of Sri Lanka. A detailed breakdown of the total sample population in comparison to the Province population can be found in Appendix 2.

The survey was implemented with the prime objective of collecting information on various attitudes and perceptions of the current youth demographic on violent extremism and its prevention as well as the potential capacity of young leaders and volunteers to emerge from this demographic to prevent violent extremism in the future.

Field Survey:

A large volume of data was collected from 2,800 sample youth between the ages of 15-29 years by focusing on different configurations of each group in the four Provinces of Sri Lanka; namely Southern, Central, Northern and Eastern¹⁰. The field survey was carried out during the period of November to December 2018.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used as the sample design in which the four above mentioned Provinces were selected in keeping with the research design and objectives. Within each Province, all districts were included in the sample. 42 Divisional Secretariat divisions of the four Provinces were selected out of 162 Divisional Secretariats divisions, based on variables such as ethnic composition and Urban/Rural/Estate sector divisions. These configurations were extracted from data produced by the Department of Census and Statistics, which can be found in more detail in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4. To meet the key requirements of collecting high quality, reliable and comparable data, the survey used probability sampling methods to identify respondents in each selected Province.

10. The four provinces were proposed by the UNFPA as study locations.

At the first stage, the (Pre-selected) sampling involved the selection of Divisional Secretariats (DS) divisions based on the aforementioned ethnic composition and sectors. Then the primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected as three DS divisions of each district. Each selected DS division was based on ethnic composition and the number of respondents were allocated accordingly.

At the second stage, the (Pre-selected) sampling frame comprised the list of Grama Seva Niladhari (GN) divisions in each selected PSUs and this was chosen as second sampling units (SSUs). At this stage too SSUs were based on ethnic composition and sector data.

At the third stage, the sampling frame was the list of youths in each selected SSUs and this comprised the third sampling units (TSUs). At this stage each randomly-chosen sampling point for youth was selected using a random-walk technique. Enumerators were assigned a starting location and provided with instructions on the random walking rules – e.g., which direction to start, on which side of the streets to walk and which crossroads to take. The youth sample was also selected by enumerators in the GN representing the Urban/Rural/Estate sectors and the different composition of ethnic groups, sex, age groups (15-19, 20-24 and 25-29).

At the fourth stage, during the enumerator's visits to the sector households, youth respondents from each household were selected depending on their eligibility.

3.2. QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

The researchers of the study developed and finalized the survey¹¹ together. Initially the questionnaire was developed in English. Prior to pre-testing, the questionnaire was translated into Sinhalese and Tamil by the research team and only these two versions were used in the field. Pre-testing was conducted during a workshop with 26 enumerators who were trained on how to carry out the survey in the field and also gave feedback on issues pertaining to the questions in the survey. This was taken as a pilot survey and based on the enumerator's responses, several questions were modified, some new questions were included and some of the questions were removed. The youth respondents were interviewed in the field in either Sinhalese or Tamil depending on their language capabilities.

Structure of the Questionnaire

As illustrated below, the final questionnaire consists of 08 sections. A copy of the questionnaire used for the field survey is presented in Appendix 5

Section 1: Demographic and socio-economic information

Section 2: Identity and self-identification

Section 3: Violence / violent extremism

Section 4: Sources of violent extremism in Sri Lanka

Section 5: Preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka

Section 6: Role of youth in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka

Section 7: Youth volunteerism in Sri Lanka

Section 8: Opportunities, problems and barriers in the prevention of violent extremism in Sri Lanka

11. Survey and Questionnaire are used interchangeably in this study.

Enumerator Training

Comprehensive training sessions were undertaken by the research consultants to train the 26 enumerators. One provincial consultant was assigned per Province to monitor the enumerator team in that particular Province. The topics covered in the training sessions included explanations of the survey objectives, confidentiality of information and voluntary participation, explanations of the sensitivities associated with the study, research design and scope as well as context of the study, research ethics, concepts and terminology of youth, volunteerism and violent extremism, pre-testing of questionnaire and quantitative as well as qualitative data collection tools/methods, data entry methods, and a debriefing discussion after feedback from the enumerators. During the training sessions, the techniques required to minimize under-reporting of issues pertaining to violent extremism were covered. Sampling guidance was issued for this survey and followed by all enumerators participating in the survey.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study were primarily identified during the de-briefing sessions of 26 enumerators who conducted the quantitative field survey and accompanied the field consultants to their respective Provinces when conducting the qualitative field research. The experience and observations of the field consultants who engaged in the qualitative data collection process and supervision of quantitative data collection of the four Provinces have also been incorporated into this section.

Circumstantial Limitations:

The researchers faced certain context-driven challenges of collecting the qualitative and quantitative data, pertaining to the timing in which the data collection phase was initiated. During the period when data was collected from November – December 2018, the political crisis due to change of Premiership continued to unfold¹². As a result, conducting the field survey became a significant challenge. The sensitive questions pertaining to the civil war, ethnic, religious and national questions asked in the survey were interpreted by respondents as having political connotations, and they were often afraid or hesitant to respond. This was true across the four Provinces as social unrest leading to violent extremism has been prevalent in different forms. This was also a challenge for researchers when conducting Key Informant Interviews in the national level. All Government policy makers/influencers approached for interviews declined due to the politically sensitive timing.

Broader political and social internalities constituted limitations for the researchers. The existence of ethnic enclaves, especially in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, without that much interaction with others severely constrained their responses to the questions relating to inter-ethnic engagements.

Cultural factors were also a limitation due to the race/ethnicity of the enumerators often influencing how respondents would answer the field survey. For example, if the enumerator was from a Sinhalese ethnicity (majoritarian), ethnic minorities in the Southern Province would change their answer to be in line with a Sinhalese perspective of the question. In addition, female respondents for the survey were often curtailed from participating by their parents if the enumerators were male. Some parents actively answered the survey instead of their children, thereby skewing the responses. The language barrier was also highlighted as a challenge between Sinhalese enumerators and ethnic minorities who could not participate and were skeptical of participating for this reason. This was predominately a challenge in the Southern Province as in the other Provinces, Tamil enumerators were utilized. Religious/caste identities were also a factor in the Eastern and Northern Provinces where enumerators of certain religions/castes were often perceived as unwelcoming and intruders into the study locations that were predominated by differing religions/castes.

12. On the 26th of October 2018, Sri Lanka was plunged into political turmoil and a situation of the Constitutional legitimacy of the President's actions, whereby he removed the incumbent Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament, calling for general elections to be held.

Methodological Limitations:

The quantitative research method has its inherent limitations in grasping feelings and emotions. That is why this research attempted to qualify quantitative data with qualitative data pertaining to feelings and attitudes. The sample size of 2,800 youth for the survey was also too large for 26 enumerators to cover and administer. The length of the survey also impacted the reliability of the data collected as respondents often became disinterested in completing the survey.

Furthermore, violent extremism caused due to the civil war was only captured in the experiences of respondents between the ages of 25-29. Many of the “youth” sample aged between 15 - 24 had no direct experiences of violent extremism to draw from. Therefore their experiences formed secondary accounts. In addition, the objective of volunteerism and voluntary organizations as a method of preventing violent extremism in the country was shown to have no bearing in the current context. This is because volunteerism is seen in the country as a social mode of exercise that is monopolized by political factors and not by the youth. Most respondents did not see volunteerism as a method of mobilizing youth in the country to prevent violent extremism. The methodology had no way of accounting for this outcome before conducting the field research.

3.4. ANALYSIS

The quantitative data was analyzed by using EXCEL and SPSS software packages. The analysis used univariate and bivariate techniques. Graphs, tables and maps were produced to present the various quantitative findings. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis focusing on the main themes of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and the objectives of the study. Narratives, specific excerpts and detailed case studies were used to supplement attitudes, knowledge and behaviors pertinent to the quantitative analysis. In the analysis component of this study, quantitative data was often complemented by the qualitative data, thereby using a triangulation approach.

3.5. STUDY SAMPLE

Altogether 2,800 youth respondents participated in providing information for the questionnaire that was administered in the study locations. The survey covered four Provinces of the country; the Southern and Central Provinces were each represented by 868 respondents while the Eastern and Northern Provinces were represented by 616 and 448 respondents respectively (Figure 3.1). The forthcoming sections describe the basic demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the youth interviewed.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of respondents by Province

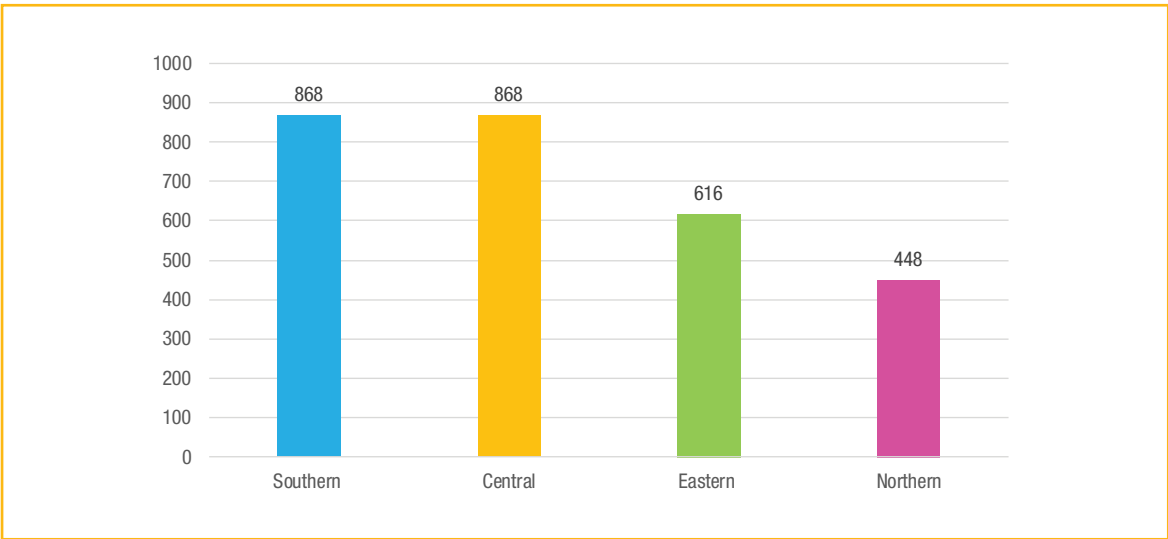


Table 3.4 presents the distribution of 2,800 respondents by age, sex and marital status. Of the total sample 52 percent and 48 percent were males and females respectively - in numerical terms there were 1,444 males and 1,356 females.

Table 3.4: Demographic characteristics of respondents in the survey

Variable	Percentage	Number ¹³
Age		
15-19	29.1	816
20-24	39.6	1108
25-29	31.3	876
Sex		
Male	51.6	1444
Female	48.4	1356
Marital status		
Single	76.4	2139
Married	22.3	626
Divorced/Separated	1.0	25
Widowed	0.3	10
Total	100	2,800

40 percent of respondents were in the age category of 20-24, while 31 percent and 29 percent were in the 25-29 and 15-19 age categories. Civil status of respondents indicated that three quarters of them were single while only 22 percent were currently married. Significantly small percentages (2 percent) of the total respondents were either divorced/separated or widowed (Table 3.4).

Distribution of respondents by selected socio-economic characteristics is presented in table 3.5. The table captures the diversity of Sri Lankan society. The sample data from the survey showed that over 50 percent of the respondents were Sinhalese and approximately 24 percent and 9 percent were Sri Lankan Tamil and up country Tamil¹⁴ respectively. A little more than 16 percent were Moor, and less than 1 percent represented the other categories, namely Malay and Burgher. As of the survey data, 48 percent of the respondents were Buddhist and 28 percent were Hindu. Of the other religious groups, 17 percent were followers of Islam, 7 percent were of Catholic and other forms of Christianity respectively.

As illustrated by the field survey data, a large proportion of respondents had attained high educational qualifications, which is perhaps an indicator of the Sri Lankan welfare policy of free education, practiced continually by successive Governments. More than three-quarters of the respondents (84 percent) received an education up to or above a high school level (GCE O/L or A/L) indicating that they had reached the threshold level of education. In fact 8 percent of the respondents indicated that they were receiving a tertiary level of education, attending university or other higher educational institutions, while the same proportion had attained graduate/postgraduate or an equivalent professional level of education. Of the total youth surveyed, only about 1 percent had never attained any form of educational qualification (Table 3.5).

13. This number is the aggregate of how many youth were surveyed for a particular response. It is also known as a basic frequency.

14. Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka are Tamil people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, also known as up-country Tamils. The terminology "up-country Tamils" will be used in this study.

Table 3.5: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the survey

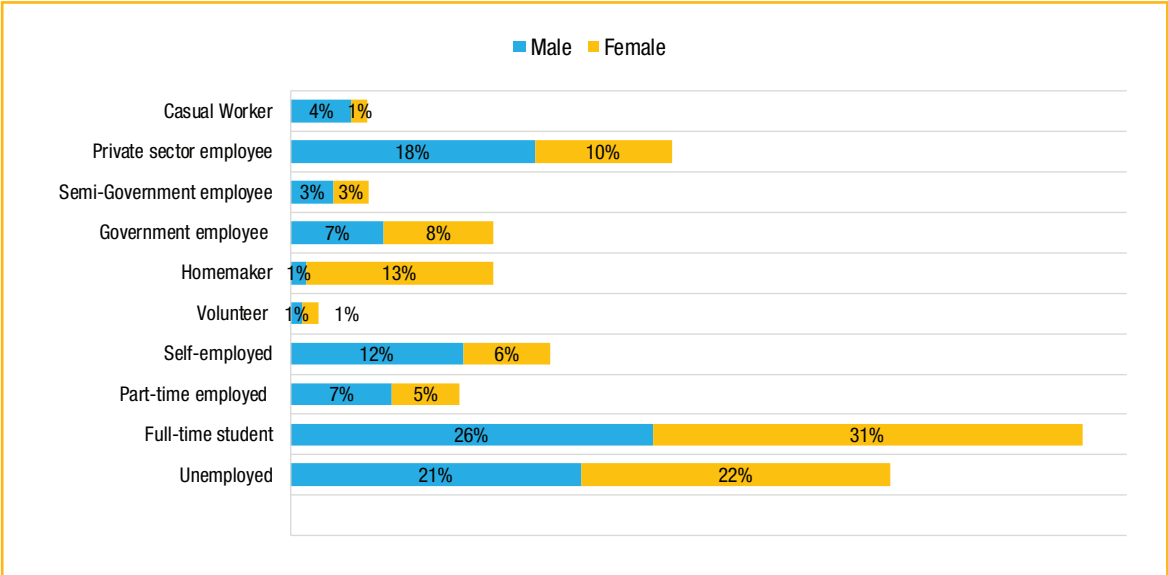
Variable	Percentage	Number ¹⁵
Ethnicity		
Sinhalese	50.1	1403
Sri Lankan Tamil	24.4	682
Up country Tamil	8.7	243
Sri Lankan Moor	16.2	453
Malay	0.4	12
Burgher	0.2	7
Religion		
Buddhism	47.7	1335
Hinduism	28.4	795
Islam	16.7	468
Christianity/Catholicism	7.2	202
Highest educational qualification attained		
No formal education	1.0	21
Primary School (1-5)	1.0	30
Middle School (6-9)	12.4	348
High School (10-13)	52.8	1481
Diploma/Certificate Course	16.9	473
Undergraduate	7.6	213
Graduate	6.0	167
Post graduate/ Professional	1.8	51
Other	0.5	16
Respondent's main activity		
Full-time Student	28.3	793
Unemployed	21.6	602
Volunteer	1.0	28
Part-time employed	6.0	170
Self-employed	9.4	263
Government/ Semi-Government	10.0	281
Private Sector	13.8	385
Casual worker	2.9	80
House maker	7.0	198
Total	100.0	2,800

The indicators for the status of the youth surveyed showed that a large proportion of them were employed; 14 percent were employed in the private sector, while 10 percent were employed in the Government or semi-Government sectors respectively. The data also showed that 9 percent of youth were reported to be self-employed and another 6 percent were part-time workers. It is important to note that of the total respondents, over 22 percent were unemployed. This suggests that the youth in Sri Lanka, though attaining high educational qualifications face the challenge of attaining employment even with such qualifications. In comparison, 28 percent of the study population was shown to be in full-time education, including high school, university or other educational institutes; while another 7 percent were house-makers.

15. This number is the aggregate of how many youth were surveyed for a particular response.

Thus, the labor force participation rate of the study population was estimated to be 63 percent, while the unemployment rate was estimated as high as 34 percent. The high rate of unemployment among the youth suggests that their entry into the labor force is quite recent and the avenues for absorption of their labor to the economy, is still inadequate. Approximately 66 percent of those in the labor force were employed (1,179 youth) while 34 percent (602 youth) were unemployed.

Figure 3.2: Distribution of respondents by sex and their main activity



From the above Figure 3.2 we can see that, of the total female respondents, 31 and 22 percent were reported to be full-time students and unemployed respectively. Among the male respondents interestingly, the corresponding figures were lower than that of the female respondents. Particularly, among the male respondents only 26 percent were reported to be fulltime students (Figure 3.2).

In contrast to the above pattern, among the male respondents, 12 percent were declared as self-employed while only 6 percent of female respondents did the same. Male respondents were more concentrated in the employment categories of casual workers and private sector workers than that of their female counterparts. However, in the Government and Semi-Government sectors hardly any gender difference could be noticed. Of the total study sample of 2800, only 28 respondents were identified as volunteers; this represents 1 percent of the sample. This figure indicates the under-development of the volunteer sector in Sri Lankan society. Although it was the smallest main activity category reported in the study population, there was no gender difference noticed in the volunteer category.

CHAPTER 4: YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

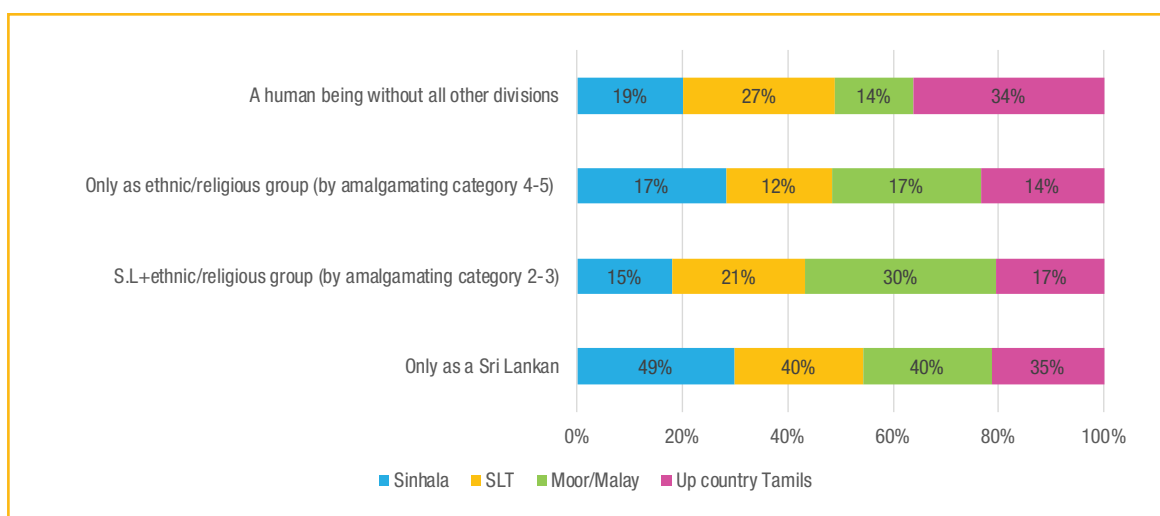
4.1. CONTEXT OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The youth are a valuable resource for any country and they are most often seen as a symbol for hope, change and regeneration. In Sri Lanka also, the youth are a critical segment of the country's development and investing in their potential can make a huge difference in Sri Lanka's achievements in sustaining peace. In the light of Sri Lanka's past experience in violent extremism and the critical role that youth had played, youth are often seen as a problem rather than an asset. This Chapter intends to profile youth, examine youth leadership and the possible role they can play in preventing violent extremism. It begins by tracing the youth's perception of their identity. It will then proceed to examine young people's knowledge, experience, understanding and attitudes towards violent extremism. Given the Sri Lankan context, this section will use the variables of ethnic identity, regional locations (Province) and gender identity to analyze the data.

4.1.1. IDENTITY

The first part of this section covers the identity of youth in Sri Lanka. It encompasses aspects such as religion, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, age and the employment status of youth, which are key characteristics in the formation of one's identity.

Figure 4.1: Percentage distribution showing respondent's self-identification by ethnicity¹⁶



In all figures/tables where ethnic identity is a variable, S.L.T stands for Sri Lankan Tamil; Up country Tamils are also known as Indian Tamils and Moor and Malay ethnicities have been amalgamated because they are similar in ethnic identities. In most figures/tables where ethnicity is identified as a variable, Burghers as an ethnicity were exempted due to their proportionality being of too low a significance for evaluative purposes.

16. All Tables and Figures presented in this chapter showing percentages/percentage distribution are rounded to equal a 100. The original data is specific to one decimal place. Therefore, if the data presented here is tallied it may equal 99 or 101 due to rounding purposes.

More than 50 percent of respondents, irrespective of ethnic divide identify themselves either as ‘human beings’ without all other divisions or only as a ‘Sri Lankan’. This is a very positive observation. Figure 4.1 also illustrates respondent’s self-identification according to their ethnic identities. (See Figure 4.1)

Table 4.1: Percentage of importance of ethnicity in youth identity

Q. If someone identifies themselves in terms of ethnicity and/or religion, please identify how important you consider this to be	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/ Malay	Up country Tamils
Very important	15	25	26	12
Important	35	35	33	37
Not important	32	24	23	32
Should not be a factor+ do not know	18	17	18	19
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents ¹⁷	1403	682	453	243

Supporting the aforementioned prevalence ascribed to ethnic and religious identities, Table 4.1 shows how important youth feel it is to identify themselves in terms of ethnicity and/or religion. 25 percent of Sri Lankan Tamils and 26 percent of Moors have indicated that it is very important to identify themselves by ethnic/religious identities.

Inter-Ethnic Feelings and Interactions

The following tables and excerpts¹⁸ illustrate inter-ethnic feelings and relationships amongst the current Sri Lankan youth population. The tables highlight the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamil perspectives because the data indicates divisions and animosity between these two ethnicities in particular.

Table 4.2: Percentages showing inter-ethnic feelings (Sinhalese)

Sinhalese feeling towards the other ethnic groups						
Sinhalese						
Q. Please describe your feelings towards the following ethnic groups in Sri Lanka	Very friendly/ friendly	Ambivalence	Distant	Animosity	Total	Number of Respondents
SLT	45	38	13	5	100	1403
Upcountry Tamils	27	43	23	8	100	1403
Moor/ Malay	31	36	22	11	100	1403

The majority of Sinhalese youth either feel ambivalent, distant or have a sense of animosity towards Sri Lankan Tamils (Table 4.2). These feelings are also shared with the other two ethnic groups, as only 27 percent and 31 percent of the Sinhalese have a very friendly/friendly relationship with the Up-Country Tamils and Moor/Malays respectively. This highlights the fact that the Sinhalese, who are the largest ethnic group in the country, to a large extent do not exhibit a sense of friendship with other minority ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

17. The Number of Respondents (N) is not given as a percentage but as a basic frequency representing how many youth were surveyed for that particular response.

18. All excerpts given in chapter 4 have been taken from Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted at the national and provincial level as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Case Studies conducted at the provincial level. Consent of the interviewees was obtained to use their information (including profile descriptors) in this research study for the KIIs conducted at the national level. In the case of KIIs, FGDs and Case Studies conducted at the provincial level, pseudonyms have been given but all other profile descriptors remain accurate and true.

Table 4.3: Percentages showing inter-ethnic feelings (Sri Lankan Tamil)

SLTs feeling towards the other ethnic groups						
SLT						
Q. Please describe your feelings towards the following ethnic groups in Sri Lanka	Very friendly/friendly	Ambivalence	Distant	Animosity	Total	Number of Respondents
Sinhalese	54	21	20	5	100	682
Upcountry Tamils	59	13	25	3	100	682
Moor/ Malay	57	24	14	6	100	682

Compared to the Sinhalese respondents, more of the Sri Lankan Tamil’s have indicated feelings of friendship with other ethnic groups, suggesting that they are less rigid in developing inter-ethnic relationships and interactions. However, between 13-25 percent of both the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils have indicated ‘distant’ feelings with other ethnic groups.

“There has been a misconception between Sinhalese and Tamil youth which is not a positive sign for Sri Lanka where we strive for reconciliation, peace and development. These misunderstandings are reflected in national level sports, cultural programs and educational and other youth-centric programs which emanate in the form of minor disputes on and off. Therefore, there is a need to establish networks amongst the youth from all ethnic groups to ensure solidarity and unity. Public officials, the youth ministry, political actors and the general community should all come together for this cause”

Name: A. Nirmalan, Male, Age: 28
 Ethnicity: Tamil, Religion: Hindu
 Province/District: Northern Province – Jaffna

Table 4.4: Percentages showing respondents’ perception of a hierarchical ethnic order in Sri Lanka

Q. Do you think that a hierarchical order of ethnicity exists in Sri Lanka?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/ Malay	Up country Tamils
Yes	50	49	51	36
No	31	27	22	35
Don’t know	19	24	27	29
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1403	682	453	243

The majority of the ethnic groups in our sample believe that there is a hierarchical order of ethnicity in Sri Lanka (Table 4.4). This is important to note as it shows that there is no sense of ethnic equality in the country and a majority/ minority complex exists. This is true even among the Sinhalese (majority) population, of which 50 percent believe this hierarchical order is in existence. This suggests that deep-seated divides exist even amongst the youth on perceptions of an equal Sri Lankan society.

Discrimination

Table 4.5: Percentages showing experiences of uncomfortable situations by ethnicity

Q. How often do you confront situations where you are uncomfortable due to your ethnicity, religion, language, gender, class?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Often	5	12	11	9
Sometimes	35	35	40	43
Rarely	36	38	32	34
Never	23	16	16	13
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1403	682	453	243

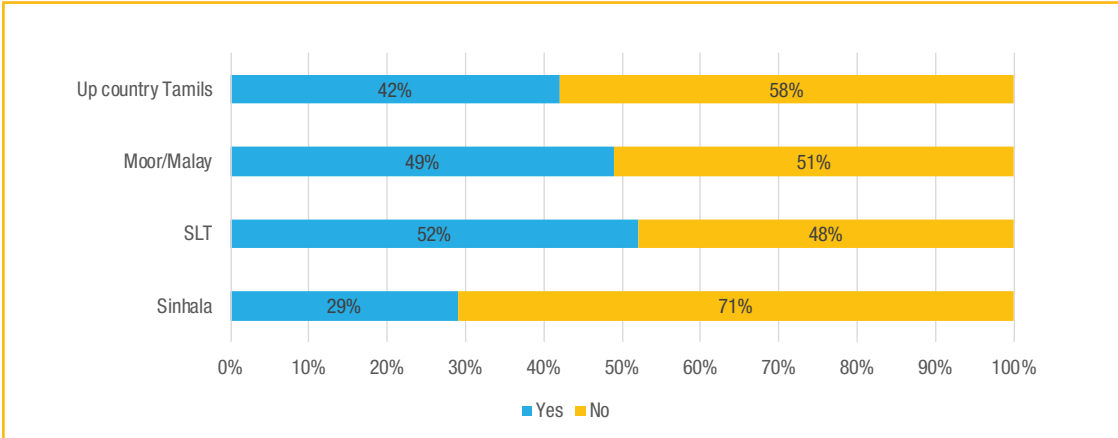
This question has two components. One is with regard to the respondents' experiences of uncomfortable situations by ethnicity (Table 4.5) and another indicating which factor the discomfort was mainly caused by (Table 4.6). Table 4.5 shows high levels of discomfort across ethnicities occurring 'sometimes'. Between 5-12 percent of all ethnicities also state that they confront uncomfortable situations 'often'. Such instances may lead this group of youth to form identities that are insecure and marginalized.

Table 4.6: Percentages showing factors which caused uncomfortable experiences given by ethnicity

Q. If you experienced uncomfortable situations in Sri Lanka, which factor was it mainly due to?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Ethnicity	23	25	24	20
Religion	1	13	23	9
Language	45	33	24	28
Culture	14	18	20	21
Gender	7	5	5	10
Class	17	6	4	11
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1109	573	368	183

Across the four ethnicities, language has been the most common factor that caused discomfort (Table 4.6). It may be construed from the data that the Tamil and Moor/Malay ethnic groups feel uncomfortable because of a lack of fluency in the Sinhalese language; whereas the Sinhalese may face a language barrier in terms of not being fluent with the English language. This points to a larger problem, where the official languages of the State are Sinhalese and Tamil, but there is not enough promotion of the link language of English to foster inclusion across the ethnicities. In addition, 25 percent of Sri Lankan Tamils, 24 percent of Moor/Malays and 20 percent of Up Country Tamils respectively indicated feeling uncomfortable due to their ethnic identities. This corresponds with previous analysis indicating ethnic divides amongst the Sri Lankan youth population.

Figure 4.2: Percentage distribution showing levels of discrimination in Sri Lanka in terms of ethnicity



The level of discrimination in Sri Lanka by ethnicity is considerable from the perspective of the youth. It is clear from Figure 4.2 that the majority of Sri Lankan Tamils (52 percent) have indicated that they experience discrimination. Almost half of the other ethnic minorities have also indicated that they have experienced discrimination. Whereas, from the Sinhalese respondents, only 29 percent have said they faced discrimination and 71 percent have said they have not.

Table 4.7: Percentages showing situational experience of discrimination in Sri Lanka in terms of ethnicity

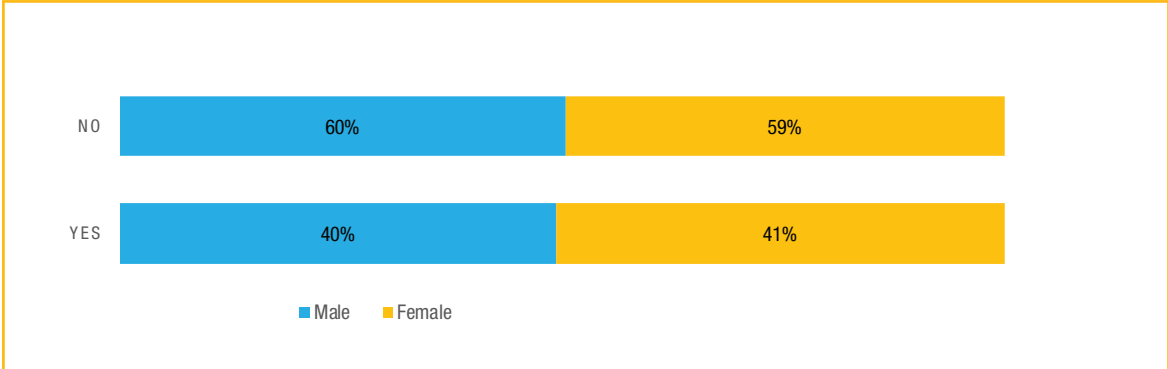
Q. If you said yes to the previous question (Do you think you have been discriminated against in Sri Lanka), in which situations/ places has it occurred?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/ Malay	Up country Tamils
School/ Educational institutions	27	25	39	25
At public offices / workplaces	26	31	29	41
At private establishments	15	9	7	8
At public/social events/festivals/meetings etc.	24	17	14	23
In Police stations and courts	8	18	11	5
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	434	374	245	106

The majority of discrimination, for respondents from all four ethnic groups, takes place mainly within schools and public offices/workplaces. This indicates that discrimination does not only take place at the social level, but mostly occurs in formal institutions, meaning that individuals face discrimination on a systemic level.

4.1.2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VE

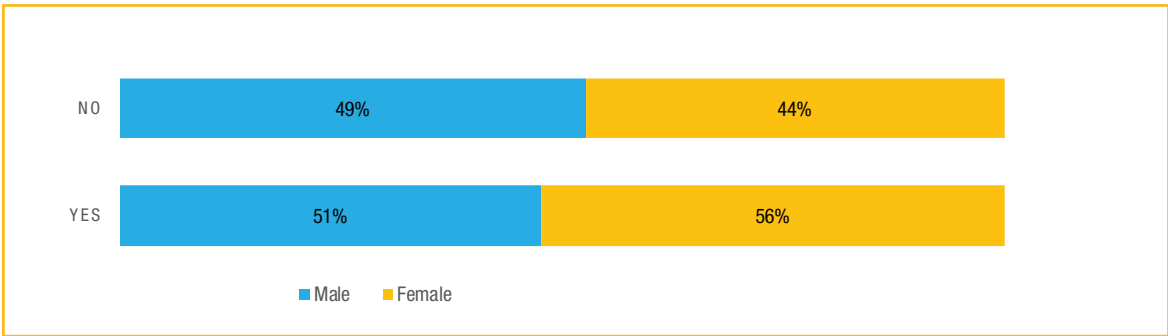
This section discusses the attitudes of youth towards Violent Extremism (VE). It explores the role of gender in violent extremism, the types of manifestations of violent extremism in Sri Lanka, outbursts of violent extremism since the end of the armed conflict, factors leading to youth feeling more free, and also looks at the general perception of ‘youth’ from the perspectives of those aged 15-29 in the four Provinces.

Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution showing youth opinions on gender differences of radicalization



It is clear from the figure that 60 percent of the male correspondents and 59 percent of female correspondents have stated that there isn't a gendered form of radicalization into violent extremism. This may reflect upon the limited understanding of gender narratives with regards to violent extremism by both sexes in the local context or it may point to the fact that the drivers of violent extremism in Sri Lanka are equally applicable to both young males and young females.

Figure 4.4: Percentage distribution of gender considerations when designing programs to address Violent Extremism



What can also be analyzed from Figure 4.4 is that a larger percentage of females feel that gender should be considered when designing programs to address violent extremism. With regard to those who say gender should not be considered, the males have a higher percentage. This highlights a tacit understanding by female youth that their pathways to radicalization may be met with a gendered approach to address such issues. This can be highlighted as a recommendation and outcome of this research study.

Table 4.8: Percentages showing youth perceptions of manifestations of VE in Sri Lanka in terms of ethnicity

Q. As a youth, do you see the manifestation of VE in SL mainly as:	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
against the Government	23	18	17	25
by the Government	14	17	10	15
against ethnic minorities	18	41	39	22
by the ethnic minorities	24	9	15	23
against religious minorities	12	12	16	11
by the religious minorities	8	2	4	5
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1305	646	428	218

The Table shows that the highest percentage of Sinhalese respondents (24 percent) think that violent extremism is mainly manifested by the ethnic minorities. On the other hand, the highest percentage of the Sri Lankan Tamils (41 percent) and Moor/Malays (39 percent) believe that violent extremism is mainly manifested against the ethnic minorities. Therefore, there is a directly contrasting ethnic perception of the manifestations of VE. This indicates that there is an intrinsic problem with ethnicity in Sri Lankan society where the nature of violent extremism is contextualized in an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ nexus.

Table 4.9: Percentages showing youth perceptions on the sources of VE in Sri Lanka since the end of the war

Q. According to your view, outbursts of violent extremism in the country since the end of the war were caused by:	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Xenophobia propagated By ethno-political entrepreneurs for narrow political ends	22	15	17	12
Failure to build trust and confidence among ethnic groups	31	26	22	23
Reaction to extremist narrations and networks through social media and devices of information technology	15	15	20	19
Reaction to extremist tendencies allegedly emanating amongst particular communities	12	18	18	22
Failure of the state to take appropriate action at the proper time	15	21	18	23
National repercussions of global trends	4	5	5	2
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1397	657	444	232

22 percent of Sinhalese think xenophobia, propagated by ethno-political entrepreneurs for narrow political ends, is the main reason for outbursts of VE since the end of the war. Most importantly, the majority of all ethnic groups in the sample, have stated that the failure to build trust and confidence among ethnic groups is the main reason for outbursts of VE in Sri Lanka. This highlights the fact that attitudes towards the sources of violent extremism are distinctly ethnocentric.

It was noticed that there is a fear among many Muslim respondents about the future of their youth population, since the Government and political forces are highly motivating violence against Muslims in the post-war era. They noted that the Government authorities have failed to control the violence intensified by radical nationalist forces against Muslims in the recent years. If it continues, this may induce many Muslim youth toward extremism and religious violence in order to save their community.

This excerpt was taken from the report of the KILs conducted in the Eastern Province. It corroborates a sense of fear amongst the Moor/Malays due to the Government’s lack of ability to curb VE against them as an ethnic minority.

Table 4.10: Percentages showing youth perceptions on important factors that would make individuals feel more free

Q. What is the most important thing that is missing in Sri Lanka that would make you feel more free?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Equal access to opportunities for all	20	26	25	26
Equitable distribution of resources	24	17	17	22
The ability to live without violence and fear	17	16	21	7
The ability to make my own life choices without being subjected to any discrimination against me	17	13	16	27
The opportunity to partake in the political process	7	11	6	6
The freedom to protest against authority	6	12	6	9
The freedom of live and work anywhere	9	5	10	4
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1403	682	453	243

More than 20 percent of all ethnic minority groups have stated that the most important thing missing in Sri Lanka is equal access to opportunities for all; while the majority of Sinhalese youth have indicated that it is the lack of equitable distribution of resources (Table 4.10). This suggests that instrumental factors such as equal access to economic opportunities and equitable distribution of resources are fundamental to alleviating ethnic grievances and inter-ethnic rivalries.

Table 4.11: Percentages showing youth considerations on the general perception of their cohort in society in terms of ethnicity

Q. What do you consider the general perception of youth in Sri Lankan society to be?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Future of the country	34	46	40	36
Drivers of peace and national unity	13	12	11	11
Energetic, technologically savvy and progressive generation	19	19	20	19
Victims of the mistakes of the older generation	11	10	14	14
A restless and frustrated group	10	7	8	9
A force that can be easily manipulated for political ends	12	6	7	10
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1390	661	449	237

More than 30 percent of all four ethnic groups believe that society considers them to be the future of the country and around 19 percent think that society upholds them as an energetic, technologically savvy and a progressive generation. However, quite a few respondents indicated that the general perception of youth in society was associated with being victims of the mistakes made by the older generation. It can then be ascertained that the current youth are aware of the ethnocentric narratives handed down to them from the older generation but it also signifies their attitudes as being a driving force for change in relation to countering such narratives. It is also important to note that between 7-10 percent of youth from each ethnic group have indicated that they consider the general perception of their cohort to be a restless and frustrated group in society. This highlights a risk factor, as such negative perceptions form a small pocket of youth's attitudes.

4.1.3. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN VE

This section discusses the knowledge and experiences of youth in relation to the domestic context of violent extremism. It elaborates on how youth understand violent extremism, their experiences of any violent incidents, and it indicates what their expectations of the post war conditions are, as well as if they have been met.

Table 4.12: Percentages showing youth understanding about VE in terms of ethnicity

Q. What is your understanding about VE in general?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/ Malay	Up country Tamils
Advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence	43	39	33	32
Violence directed against the state and state agencies by non- state actors	20	22	19	13
Violence directed against the community/ individuals by non- state actors	11	13	16	14
Violent actions carried out by the state exceeding its legal Limits	10	11	12	18
Violent actions carried out by the youth against state Repression	8	8	10	13
A criminal and/or anti-social activity	5	5	7	8
An act of terrorism	1	1	2	2
A generic feature in every human society	1	1	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1402	677	451	243

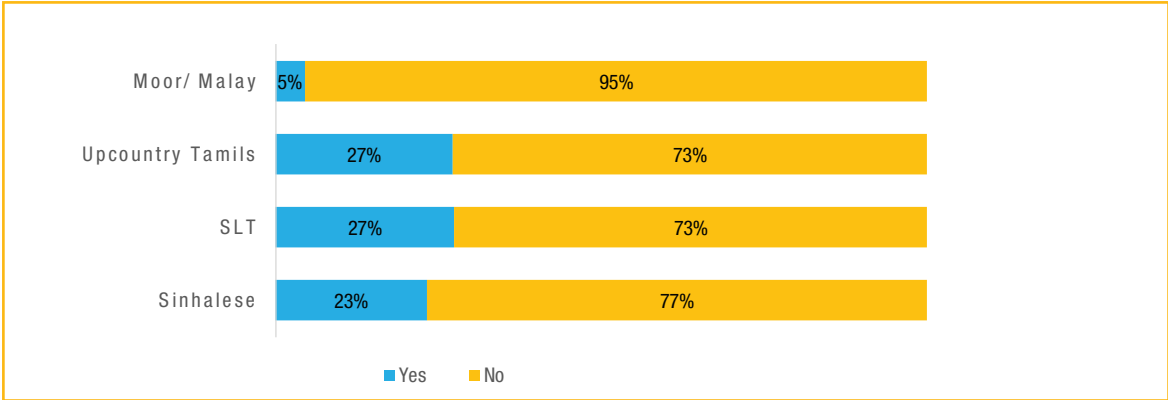
32 - 43 percent of all four ethnicities believe that violent extremism means “advocating, engaging in, preparing or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence”. This indicates that the majority of respondents may feel that some form of ideologically motivated violent extremism can be justified.

However, it is also important to note that 20 percent of the Sinhalese, 22 percent of Sri Lankan Tamils and 19 percent of Moors have stated that violent extremism constitutes violence directed against the State and State agencies by non-state actors. This signifies that violent extremism as construed by respondents is representative of the LTTE’s struggle against the Central Government. Thus, the frame of reference for the current youth cohort in relation to their understanding of violent extremism is mainly the events of the civil war.

“I was deeply inspired by the ideologies, vision and mission of the struggle. I was impressed by the charismatic leadership, which largely attracted my entry to this organization, as well as the well-disciplined and structured organizational set up and their cause for establishing a Tamil homeland and Eelam were some other factors that pushed me to join”. He further noted that all this happened because of the discriminatory treatment and suppression by the Sri Lankan Government. If they ensured the equality of Tamils in all aspects since the independence of Sri Lanka, there would not have been a civil war in this country.”

Name: Ms. K. Navamani , Female, Age: 38,
Position Title: Director of Education – Vavuniya District, Northern Province

Figure 4.5: Percentages showing direct experiences of youth in violent incidents by ethnicity



A considerable percentage of respondents (between 73-95 percent) from each ethnic group have no direct experiences in any violent incidents (Figure 4.5). This is because most of the youth in the 15-29 age group were either not born during the peak of the armed conflict or were too young to understand the full extent of what was happening before its end in 2009. Therefore, this suggests that most of the current youth’s understanding of violent extremism stems from indirect experiences passed down by the older generation. The data indicates that such inter-generational narratives are highly ethnocentric and divisive; thereby shaping youth’s perceptions to be as polarized as their predecessors.

Table 4.13: Percentages showing youth perceptions of post-war expectations in terms of ethnicity

Q. To what extent have your expectations of the post-war conditions been met?	Sinhalese	S.L.T	Moor/Malay	Up country Tamils
Fully	8	5	14	6
To a large extent	27	12	27	11
To some extent	38	49	47	50
Very little	17	23	10	28
Not at all	10	10	2	5
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1403	682	453	243

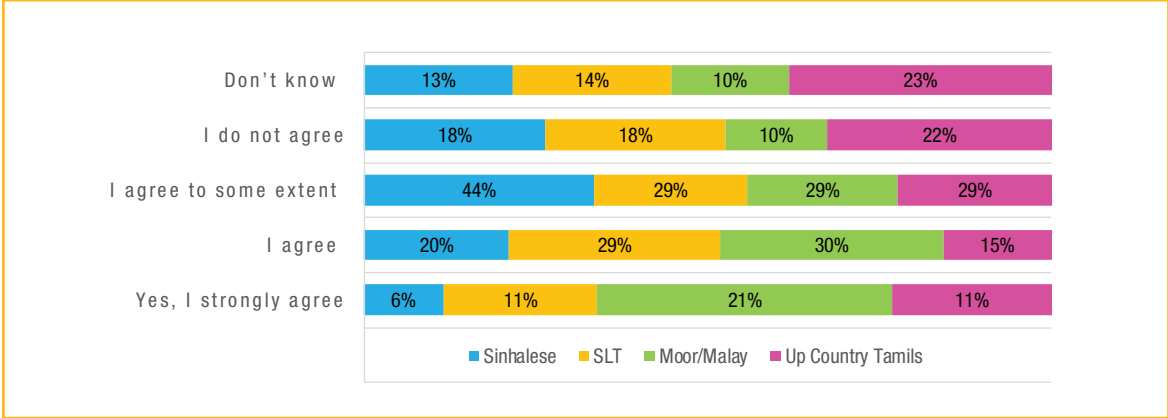
The majority of all groups claim that their post-war expectations have only been met to some extent (Table 4.13). Thus, the Table reflects that in post-war Sri Lanka, successive Governments have not been able to completely fulfill peoples’ expectations. This can especially be seen amongst minority ethnic groups, as 23 percent of Sri Lankan Tamils and 28 percent of Upcountry Tamils say that very little expectations have been met in their point of view. This poses as a potential risk factor and catalyst for youth violent extremism in the future.

4.2. PATHWAYS FROM RADICALISM TO VE

This section intends to provide a comprehensive account on push and pull factors of youth violent extremism in the post-war context of Sri Lanka. As the literature suggests, in most cases, push and pull factors are interconnected. Push factors are conditions faced by a person that pushes them away from mainstream society and causes them to be more susceptible to violent extremism or radicalization. Push factors provide feelings of alienation or perceived injustices. In contrast, pull factors draw the individual towards the acceptance of violent extremism with positive incentives. This study indicates that there has been very limited knowledge acquisition with regards to examining the propensity of youth violent extremism in post-war Sri Lanka. Thus, the following section provides an analysis of the crucial push and pull factors that need immediate attention and intervention of the Government and like-minded agencies

in curbing youth radicalization into violent extremism. This section also looks at medium to long term factors which may lay foundations for violent extremism to crop up in the future.

Figure 4.6: Percentage distribution showing violent extremism as the main factor that threatens socio-economic and political stability in the post-war context in terms of ethnicity

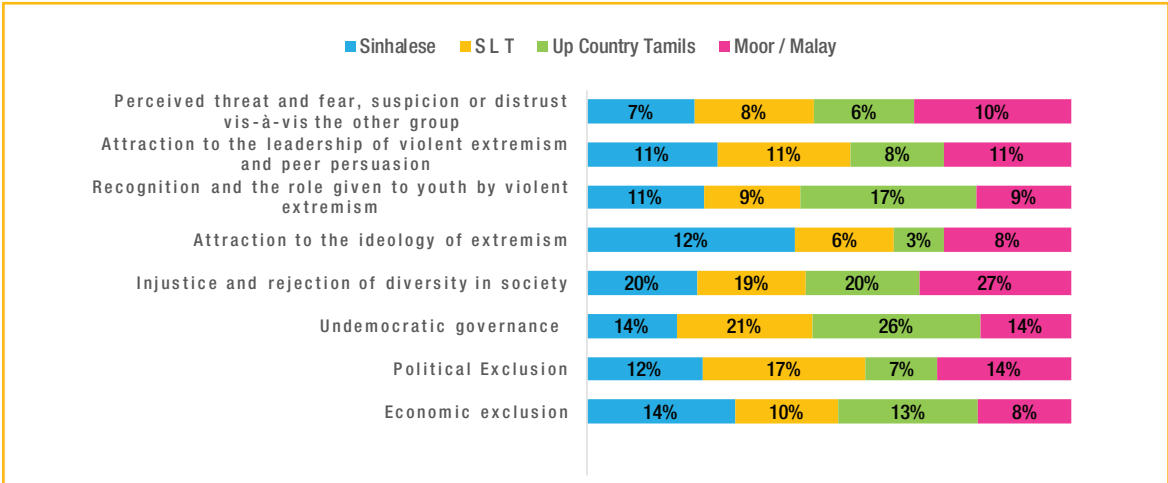


Across ethnicities, more than 60 percent of respondents believe violent extremism to be the prime factor conducive to political and socio-economic instability in the post-war context (Figure 4.6). Therefore, this section takes this as the starting point in examining the push and pull factors that induce youth into violent extremism.

4.2.1. PUSH FACTORS

The survey identified some generic push factors for violent extremism in the post-war context. The youth responses for this question were tabulated by ethnicity (Figure 4.7) and they indicated that 20 percent of Sinhalese and 27 percent of Malay/Moors were of the belief that injustice and rejection of diversity in society were key push factors for violence, whereas Sri Lankan Tamils (21 percent) and Up-Country Tamils (26 percent) were of the view that undemocratic governance was the major push factor. Economic and political exclusion also seemed to rank as key factors across the four ethnicities in pushing youth towards violent extremism.

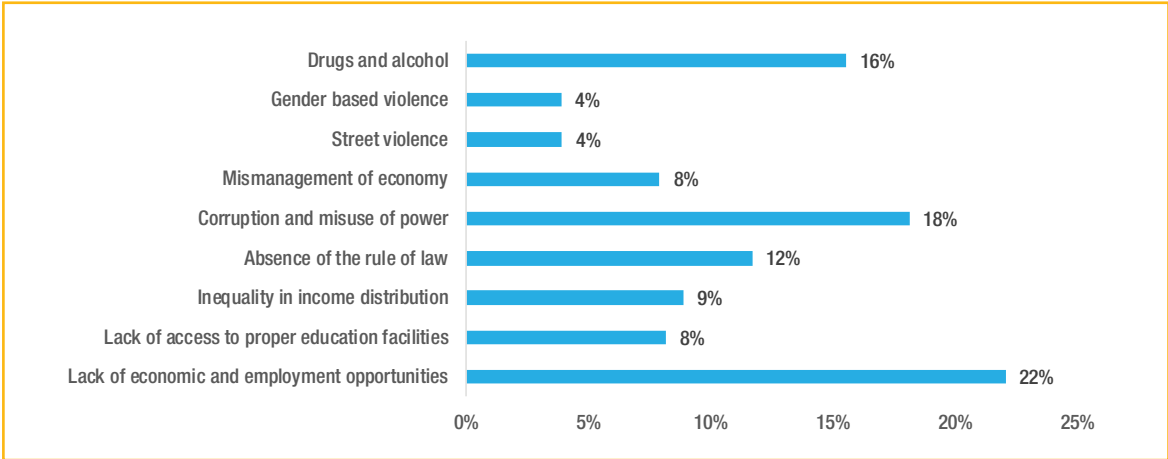
Figure 4.7: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions of push factors into violent extremism in terms of ethnicity



Unemployment and Poverty

The survey results highlights that issues related to employment seemed to influence youth attitudes and behavior with regards to radicalization. In other words, in the post-war situation, the trend of unemployment is a risk factor for youth (mentally, physically and economically). Their expectations of employment remain unmet and youth therefore feel that they are less integrated into national policies and programs. The survey corroborated this analysis by illustrating that, the youth’s perception of the most serious issue affecting their community currently was the lack of access to economic and employment opportunities (22 percent of the aggregate youth sample), as seen in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: Percentages showing prevalence of issues affecting youth communities in the present day



Criminality and gang violence are some of the secondary effects of mass unemployment amongst youth and is also a prevalent feature of post-war Sri Lanka. Despite the youth unemployment rate remaining high at 19.60 percent in the third quarter of 2018 (DCS, 2018), the literacy rate is rapidly increasing amongst the youth which accounts to 98.76 percent (DCS, 2018). This suggests that there is a propensity to learn amongst the youth but they are finding it difficult to leverage upon this acquisition of knowledge due to the Government failure in providing jobs. This high rate of unemployment can provide youth with more free time and therefore they are practically available for recruitment into violent extremism (Vergani, et al, 2018).

Poor Governance and Absence of the Rule of Law

Poor governance remains a key push factor for youth violent extremism in Sri Lanka in the post-war context. The underlying logic is that the development of democratic institutions and procedures will enable the peaceful reconciliation of grievances and provide channels for participation in policymaking, thereby alleviating pathways to youth radicalization and violent extremism. ‘The National Youth Survey 2009’ indicates that more than 49 percent of the youth were concerned about poor implementation of law and order, malpractices of implementation agencies and discrimination based on ethnicity, politics, gender, class, caste and social background (Punchihewa, 2014). As described by Uyangoda, the democratization process has not yet enabled the marginalized groups of Sri Lankan society to enjoy democratic and citizenship rights (2015). Such marginalization is structurally and culturally implemented into Sri Lankan society and therefore constitutes a long term push factor for the youth into violent extremism.

Political and Bureaucratic Corruption

The survey results show that approximately 18 percent of the aggregate youth sample considered corruption as a pressing issue in the country (Figure 4.8). Importantly, evidence shows that rampant corruption, anger at corrupt practices of Government officials – and, more generally, at a political system and social order in which elites are viewed as enjoying impunity – can loom large in the mix of grievances

that push youth toward violence. That is not to say that pervasive corruption and impunity always feed violent extremism. Instead, they may prompt civic disengagement and political apathy. In the case of Sri Lanka, people tend to experience and be affected by corruption on a daily basis. Thus, corruption can elicit a profound sense of moral outrage and deeply felt anger that, in turn, can provide a powerful motivation for supporting or engaging in violent extremism. More broadly, the South Asian region has witnessed gross corruption which has de-legitimized fragile Governments, such as those in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this context, it is important to understand that corruption typically operates as a driver, by pushing individuals into violent extremism and by creating an enabling environment for violent extremist groups to emerge.

Corruption may also allow for the bribing of officials, who in turn may negate State action against violent and extremist activities. This may make it much easier for organizations to establish sanctuaries, or to engage in illicit activities (smuggling, trafficking, extortion) that therein enable them to recruit, organize, and fund activities leading to violent extremism (USAID, 2009; Vergani, 2018). Some argue that corruption-related violence may also help establish justice, religious and secular radicals, who describe violent extremism as a means of ‘cleansing’ a corrupt society. The present day youth are leading anti-corruption alliances, yet the pathways to achieve their goals could either be violent or non-violent; it depends on the larger social-political environment that is fostered in the country.

Social exclusion and Discrimination

Evidence in the existing literature suggests that high levels of social fragmentation and marginality are push factors for violent extremism. One significant variable in linking social exclusion to violent extremism has been the failure of the post-colonial State to integrate first and second generation migrants into mainstream society. As a result, many youth with fragile ties to modern society have slipped through its cracks, felt abandoned by it, and, in some cases, turned against it (USAID, 2009).

In the Sri Lankan case, social exclusion is very much prevalent among former LTTE cadres, despite being rehabilitated by the former regime. From the qualitative interviews with some of these cadres, it is evident that no effective policy measures have been taken to reintegrate them back into society. There are two things to be understood with regard to former LTTE cadres – firstly, they themselves remain unintegrated with the rest of the community and secondly, the community has some reservations and hesitations in accepting them as a part of society, due to the stigma associated with being ‘former LTTE combatants’. A larger proportion of them belong to the age category of 25-29. The former LTTE cadres have been badly affected by poverty, unemployment, debt and livelihood constraints.

This was the case in Algeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, where, in the aftermath of the peace processes, young demobilized soldiers found themselves reintegrating into poverty, or into a similar situation of political, economic, and social marginalization as experienced in the pre-war period. (Özerdem, Podder, 2011). These trends suggest that at least in the longer term, social, political and economic inclusion and inclusive development can reduce vulnerability of youth to violence.

Political Drivers

There has been a common preposition that the more youth are allowed into political participation and decision making processes, the lower the incidences for them to be radicalized into violent extremism. This preposition has been tested in many countries¹⁹ and demonstrates a positive trend. Thus, in the case of Sri Lanka, there has been a high expectation amongst the youth to be involved in politics at all levels. Yet, the avenues towards political participation are restricted for the majority of Sri Lankan youth due to the dominance of party politics, elite capture, absence of effective youth quotas, endemic election violence, rigid party structures, and class differences in nominating candidates and expensive electoral systems.

19. See Chapter 6 for further details.

The absence of a proper mechanism to empower youth political participation not only as voters but also as candidates and representatives could further exacerbate this push factor. The National Human Development Report by UNDP (2014) shows that 89 percent of Sri Lankan youth expressed low levels of trust in political parties and 79 percent expressed low levels of trust in the provincial councils. These statistics demonstrate the level of frustration and discontent with regards to the political sphere. During the research study, a significant number of youth (52 percent) put forth the following views seen in Table 4.14, with regard to political actors and political parties, which illustrate the general direction of youth perceptions that may manifest in violent extremism.

Table 4.14: Youth perceptions of political actors and parties

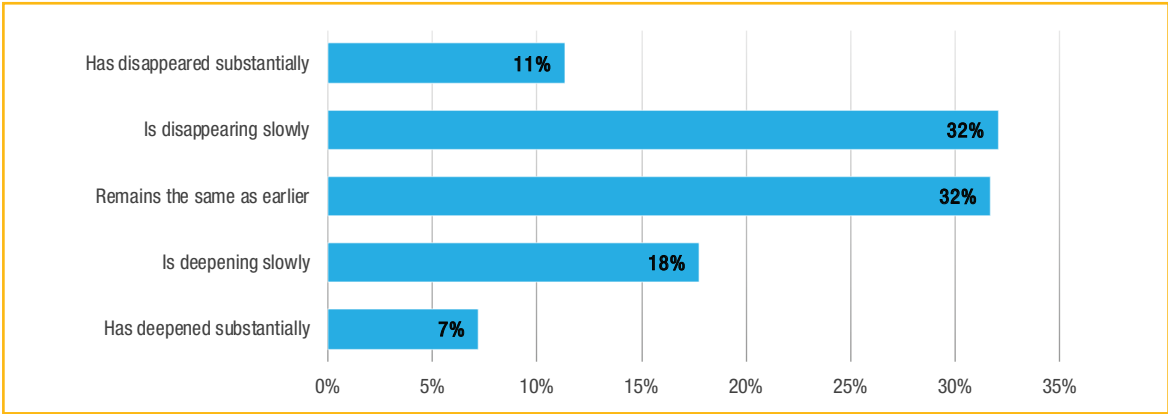
There is no point in voting. Political Parties do what they want to anyhow
We cannot influence politics, though we constitute the majority of the voting population
Most politicians promise many things but they do not fulfil them
Politicians are mostly corrupt
Most of our politicians are shrewd
Politicians serve their own interests
Politicians do what is right in most of the cases
If citizens do not trust the political system, things may become worse
The present political system has degenerated
What we need is political leadership to inspire us
Generally speaking, this country is run by a few big interests
Politics always involves violence and crimes
Politics is largely male –dominated

Notably, many respondents observed that politics in Sri Lanka is male dominated. This was evident when the Local Governments Elections Amendment Act in 2017 was passed in Parliament to ensure a 25 percent quota for female representatives. However, even with such quota systems in place, the representation of young female leaders is still lacking in the local context.

Ethnocentrism and Politics

Ethnocentrism is the belief that people, customs, culture and traditions of your own race are better than those of other races. When ethnic divides exist in a country and ethnic identities are crucial to the make-up of that country, politicians, religious or community leaders may try to leverage on such divides to gain or maintain power. The qualitative and quantitative data indicates that ethno-political entrepreneurs may also be a push factor for youth into the pathway of violent extremism.

Figure 4.9: Percentages showing youth perceptions of exaggerated ethno-centrism in political and public life in comparison to the pre-war period



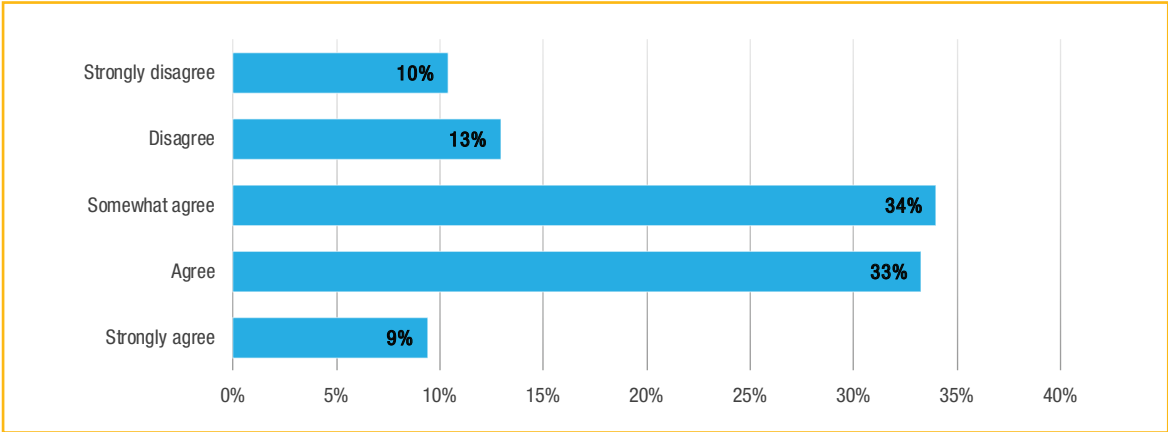
A quarter of the respondents (25 percent) believe that exaggerated ethnocentrism is slowly deepening or has substantially deepened compared to the pre-war period (Figure 4.9). Such perceptions are indicative of the current political landscape; including Constitution making, reconciliation, human rights issues, power sharing; all of which are imbued with ethnocentrism to some extent.

Religion and Violent Extremism

Since the civil war ended in 2009, the religious divide has grown in Sri Lanka, precipitating a rise of militant Buddhist groups, such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). Sri Lanka’s recent past has witnessed unprecedented violent attacks on mosques and churches targeting Muslims and Christians, which in turn has created a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability among religious minorities in the country. Notably a large segment of youth have also been involved in such acts of violent extremism and to date, over 300 such incidents have been reported, from all parts of the country, against the Muslim community. Furthermore, such events have often been accompanied with official inaction (Aliff, 2015; Gunatilake, 2015), (Perera, 2014). These incidents of violent extremism have further catalyzed feelings of suspicion, mistrust and betrayal within and between ethnic/religious communities. They may also inspire secondary push factors into violent extremism in the form of revenge. Many young minorities in the country are increasingly attracted to a fusion of politics with radical religious ideologies that are externally imposed and this is a potential pathway to violent extremism.

The increasing pattern of ethno/religious push factors for youth into pathways of violent extremism may indicate an absence or ineffectiveness of traditional social mediators, role models, and religious leaders in society. The following Figure 4.10, evidences this analysis by illustrating that a collective 76 percent of respondents agree with the statement that the absence of proper role models constitutes a significant push factor for violent extremism.

Figure 4.10: Percentages showing youth perceptions of the absence of role models as a push factor towards violent extremism



Sri Lanka has also witnessed the politicization and institutionalization of religion, which poses a serious threat to religious harmony. The youth have been polarized in this venture by political and religious leaders. This type of violent extremism, induced by a perceived cultural threat or ethno/religious identity threat is becoming a global phenomenon; threats to certain values, norms and cultures tends to provoke a shift towards focus on a single value, which in turn promotes low-complexity thinking (Nemr and Savage, 2019). A key informant interview highlights the significance of this particular push factor.

“At the current time I see the greatest danger of violent extremism in the form of Buddhist extremism, for the reason that the State has not been particularly effective or desirous of tackling the problem. This is because there is a perception that underlines Buddhist extremism as being supported by the general Buddhist population who feel that the extremists are actually doing something in defense of the position of the country, even though they may not specifically support their methods. The Government is indifferent to Buddhist extremism because the Buddhists are the majority and the leaders of the country are also Buddhist, so they may also sympathize with Buddhist extremists. Secondly, they do not want to jeopardize their electoral prospects by doing things that the majority might see as anti-Buddhist. Further, there are prospects of insipient Muslim extremism, but the danger in this would come from whether or not the Muslim extremists here can make contact with international Muslim extremists, which would make it very difficult to tackle. But on Muslim extremism, you will find that the security forces are very alert and willing to take action, unlike in the case of Buddhist extremism, where even though they may be alert, they tend not to take action. This would lead to individual acts of harassment and terrorizing of people, but not on a mass scale. They will be sporadic attacks that intimidate the minorities.”

Name: Dr. Jehan Perera (Civil Society Activist)
Male, Age: Late 50s, Province/District: Western – Colombo

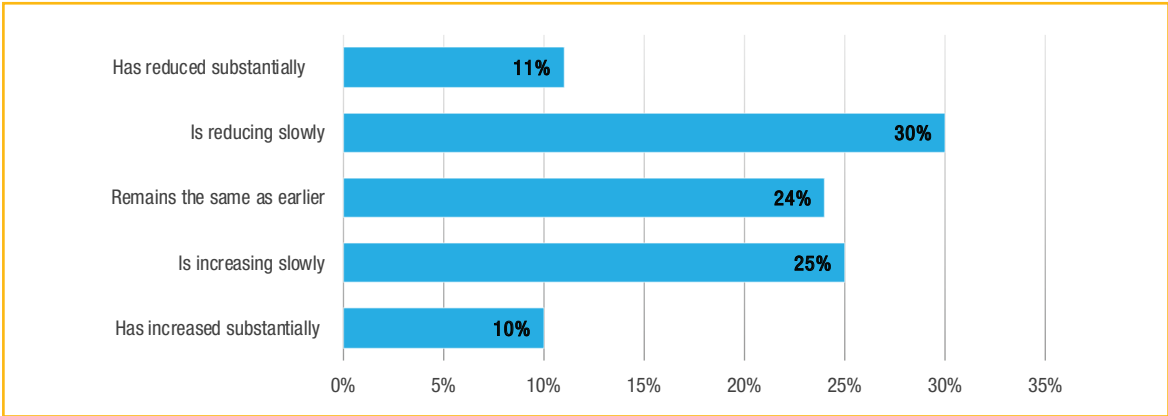
Over-presence of Security Forces in the North and East

The significant military presence in the war affected areas since 2009 and continued retention of civilian lands by the military is a regional push factor, confined to the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. A large section of conflict areas were occupied by the Sri Lankan Military during the final stages of the conflict, with significant areas of arable land and former Tamil settlements having yet to be rehabilitated in full, though there has been progress since 2015. Whilst a continued military presence is regarded by many post-war researchers as a push factor in radicalizing youth to take up violent extremism, thereby sowing the seeds for a resurgence of violence; the State perspective has been that it is curbing the prospect of terrorism resurfacing in the region. In a region with limited natural resources, the continuing confiscation of land provides a significant obstacle to the creation of employment opportunities. The existence of forces and their intervention in civilian life also perpetuate the longstanding distrust between the national Government and people of the region. Notably, the Army's recent attempts of farming and agriculture development of such lands are causing further problems for farmers in the Northern Province, who are unable to match the military's scale of production and cheaper prices, thereby affecting local farmers' agricultural market share. This factor together with the war trauma that is unique to the Northern and Eastern Provinces inculcate the new generation of youth to fight against this repression, often resorting to violent means.

4.2.2. PULL FACTORS

This research study also captured certain pull factors attributed in attracting youth towards paths of violent extremism. In this context, youth attraction towards ideologies of violent extremism and their corresponding networks were identified as the foundation for examining pull factors. Figure 4.11 illustrates that only 30 percent of respondents stated that such attraction towards violent ideologies and links are slowly reducing, while 24 percent noted that they remain the same as in the post-war period and interestingly, a quarter of the respondents were of the belief that such attraction to ideologies of violent extremism are slowly increasing amongst their peers.

Figure 4.11: Percentages showing youth perceptions on the level of ideological attractions of violent extremism



Substance Abuse

After the end of the civil war, the prevalence and upward consumption of illicit drugs was noticeable amongst the youth cohort. Access to liquor shops and illicit liquor consumption became relatively high amongst youth in general and in the Northern Province specifically. A large number of organized groups began to envelop the vacuum created in the post-war period, where rehabilitation and reconciliation were slow to take seed in the country. Currently, a vibrant underworld exists in Sri Lanka and the country is known as a transitory State as well as a destination State for the illicit flow of drugs. Despite not constituting a direct pull factor into violent extremism, the prevalence of substance abuse amongst the youth may indirectly cause a surge in violent extremism or the propensity to engage in violence.

Access to illegal arms

The prevalence and use of arms and illegal weapons amongst the civilian and youth populations grew in the post-war period. The availability of such illegal arms represents a pull factor for youth into violent extremism. This is especially true of former Army soldiers, former LTTE combatants and underworld groups who have easy access to such weaponry and were not demobilized or reintegrated into society following the war. Law enforcing agencies have failed to effectively mitigate such acts. Many of the youth who participated in this research study from the Northern Province cited this pull factor as enabling violent extremism in their region.

Tamil diaspora, remittances and youth violence

The ‘Tamil diaspora’ refers to the large number of Sri Lankan Tamils who are now dispersed across the globe following their departure from the country during the civil war era. Whilst the interactions between overseas Tamils and their ancestral communities in the North and East of the country are viewed as being mainly positive, there is a strong local feeling that the significant amounts of money being received by young people from overseas family members is actually hindering their desire to work. While remittances represent a key funding source for community-based post-war development, the money that young people receive from diaspora family members is typically spent on luxury items and is not used to improve their livelihoods, generate employment, or improve the overall well-being of their communities.

Limited avenues for participation

There is a close nexus between participation, empowerment, development and countering youth violent behavior. However, in the post-war context, youth participation in development, decision making and other activities are very minimal and their contribution to find solutions to key socio-economic and political issues are also very much limited, owing to existing political and administrative constraints. This makes youth feel disenfranchised and disillusioned with existing political systems and society at large, which they deem as unfair and discriminatory. The Sri Lankan case shows that participation of youth in development, policy processes, societal activities, formal and informal volunteerism and civic engagement are low at

all levels. This is caused by two factors, firstly, such initiatives are not encouraged at the school level and there are no concrete programs on the part of the Government to promote such activities; secondly, the rapid development of ICT and social media have isolated youth from social life and diminished their participation. Consumerist and materialistic life aspirations of the current youth cohort; who are arguably more free in the post-war context; is also an enabling factor.

Gender Dimension and War Widows

War affected women in the Northern Province face a variety of problems. In the case of rehabilitated women (formerly LTTE cadres) and war widows, they encounter discrimination and indifferent treatment in many forms, including obtaining public services, livelihood support and employment in the public sector. A considerable amount of women have taken microcredits from private firms with high interest rates, which they cannot afford, leading them to fall into debt. Women displaced in 2008-2009 who returned to their houses found them destroyed or looted and their livestock missing. The labor force participation of women in the North and East is the lowest in the country. Similarly, the unemployment rate is the highest in the country (DCS, 2014).

Many women describe exploitation by men in different fields of work and that most economic programs have been inadequate. State services are difficult for them to access and they often face harassment and exploitation when seeking assistance. The survey finds that women headed households face severe obstacles, such as a lack of jobs, social stigma, difficulty finding childcare, sexual abuse, and discrimination by employers. This has led to psychological and mental depression, leading to suicides. The continued military presence has also created insecurity among women. The trauma they face is compounded by the added pressures of increased economic responsibilities, social stigma, patriarchal attitudes, the collapse of traditional family support structures and a damaged social fabric.

All these factors are more likely to draw these women towards violent extremism or into violent behavior. These women need more governmental support, to help them become more engaged in the public sphere. Relevant stakeholders should consult these women about what exactly they need, so as to provide more effective and pragmatic support, rather than implementing general strategies/initiatives. It is clear that the voices of war affected women are yet to be heard by policy makers.

4.2.3. IMPACT OF INFORMATION ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The local context of the media, including mainstream media, such as television and print media, as well as the high penetration of social media, have been promoting content that is more likely to antagonize and induce violent extremism amongst the youth cohort. The media create, change and distribute social representations that are a powerful influence on the development of youth identity. The way in which the media presents the young generation is also a reflection of and influence on society's attitude towards this group. Participants of the research study indicated that the influence of foreign media and the activities of terrorist groups also induced local youth to be motivated to commit violent extremism. One Key Informant, who works in the Sri Lankan media industry, expressed the following views on the role the media should play.

“The media may sometimes take on responsibilities that they are otherwise not supposed to do, such as Newsfirst being involved in rural development and disaster response. It is done because, if a media organization is to be successful in this day and age, they must expand their idea of their own responsibilities. It's not just about free and fair/unbiased reporting or things of the sort; an organization must respond to the people's needs and understand their wider responsibility and duty, as well as the obligation towards the people.”

Name: Mr. Chevaan Daniel, Male, Age: 40
Position Title: Group Director – The Capital Maharaja Organization
Province/District: Western Province – Colombo

Social Media

Rapid development of social media and its increased usage amongst the young population has become a matter of serious concern in the post-war context. The recent religious/racial tensions which took place in Digana (Central Province), was a testament to the role played by social media in instigating violence. Importantly, young people often find themselves in a violent virtual space that has negative influences on their daily life, such as becoming isolated in real life. According to the Sri Lanka National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2014, 62 percent of the young generation are not experiencing adequate levels of ICT knowledge and skills (UNDP, 2014). Thus, social media represents an information catalyst for violent extremism amongst the youth as expressed in the following Key Informant Interview.

“I see violent extremism as a way of hate speech, as a way of racial aggression and the polarization amongst the community, especially among young people, based on their religion and race. This is something that I feel has been increasing in the past few years, especially in the post war context. If you remember from the cases of Aluthgama and Digana, and what we see on a daily basis on social media, what you can see is that this aggression keeps growing, and of course there are certain causes to it, there are certain portions of society that adds fuel to it. But I was also really interested to see that there was a report done on both Myanmar and Sri Lanka to analyze the causes of this racially aggravated violence, and in both cases it was proven that social media, especially Facebook, played a big role in promoting hate speech and similar types of messaging. So I think, when we talk about violent extremism, as much as we like to think about guns and wars, we also need to consider other forms of violent extremism, such as the use of hate speech, discrimination, xenophobia and homophobia that we see in the digital space as well.”

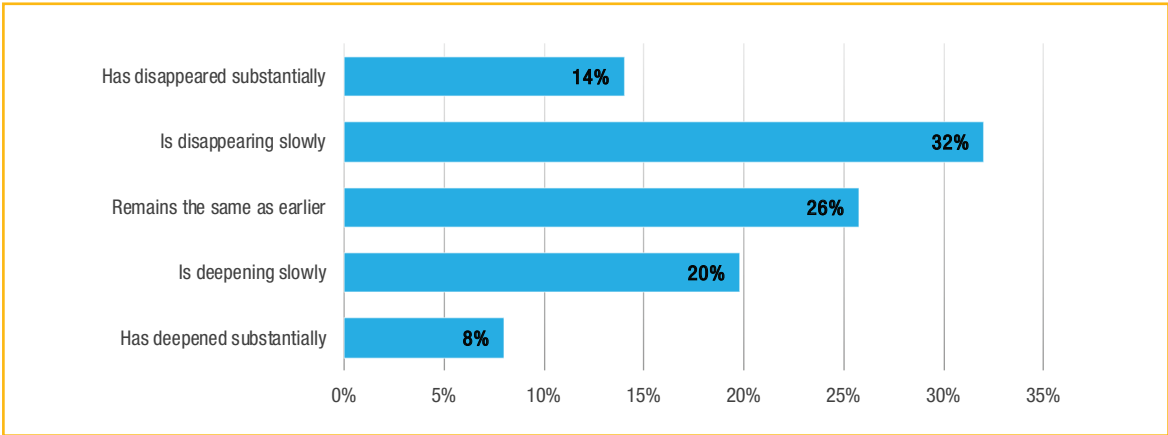
Name: Jayathma Wickramanayake, Female Age: 28
Position Title: United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth – She gave her interview in a personal capacity

Community/Cultural Vectors

Domestic violence and violence in the family may also create ample opportunities for children and youth to experience violent behavior from an early age. Though this type of violence is not usually categorized as ‘violent extremism’, it generally can induce behavioral changes in the youth so that they may be more prone or susceptible to violent extremism. Information vectors via TV and video games may bring violence to the home, making children immune and desensitized to its harmful effects later on in life. Violence can be manifested at an individual level, and in turn many young people begin to enact violence in their close peer groups, and then against outsiders. Namely, stress or dysfunctional family relationships can predispose young people to seek belonging with peer groups, gangs or with violent extremist groups. This was observable in disadvantaged rural areas and war affected areas, especially in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.

The research study also captured enemy images and perception towards other ethnicities/ religions in Sri Lanka (Figure 4.12). The results show that 32 percent of respondents were of the belief that such feelings and imaginations of the ‘enemy’ are slowly disappearing and 14 percent stated that it has substantially disappeared, which is indeed a positive sign in the post-war context. However, these statistics account to less than 50 percent of the aggregate, thereby suggesting that perceptions of an ‘enemy’ are still perpetuated amongst communities.

Figure 4.12: Percentages showing youth perceptions of enemy images



Community/cultural myths and predispositions accounting for such ‘enemy’ images are perhaps rooted in patterns of information absorption. During one of the Key Informant Interviews, an elected member of a local Government body in the Southern Province emphasized the international dissemination of information as a factor which influences local youth into violent extremism. He gave examples of the Buddhist (Myanmar and Thailand) and Islamic (mainly from Middle Eastern countries) extremist ideologies/ activities, overthrowing State leaders through freedom struggles/rebellions (Arab Spring and struggles in Turkey, Greece etc.) and mass killings by young persons (USA) have the ability to reach local youth and inspire them to take up violent extremism in the same forms.

Nevertheless, there are also some positive impacts of the media in the confines of the community; in particular, youth in isolated communities and cultures can gain access to information on politics, social and economic issues so as to broaden their views and knowledge. This may inspire some youth to be actively involved in discussions, debates and to share information on national issues, which concern the entire citizenry. This form of media may foster inclusivity and a common Sri Lankan identity. In addition, social media can foster common platforms to address social issues in the form of protests, campaign and public meetings, and so forth.

4.3. YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PVE

“Effective and long-term prevention approaches [to violent extremism] requires active support of and investment in young people’s multi-sectoral development priorities, their initiatives and their participation in decision-making” (Frontlines, UNDP Global Report on Youth and PVE, 2018). In this context, section 4.3 aims at firstly evaluating the youth’s own motivation, capacity and commitment towards preventive approaches to violent extremism. Secondly, it looks at the key stakeholders involved in addressing violent extremism with regards to the local context. Finally, innovative modes and approaches to addressing the challenge of violent extremism will be applied to the local context. This section will look at how interactive and social modes of exercise, such as the arts, theatre, culture and sports can address violent extremism in Sri Lanka. The utility of using the arts to approach a subject matter that is inherently political in the local context will also be discussed.

4.3.1. MOTIVATION, CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT

Youth Motivation towards PVE

Table 4.15: Percentages showing youth awareness level on PVE in terms of ethnicity

Q. What is your level of awareness on preventing violent extremism since the end of the war in 2009?					
Opinion - Ethnicity	Increased significantly	increased	Remained the Same	Total	Number of Respondents
Sinhalese	14	39	46	100	1079
Sri Lankan Tamil	22	46	32	100	476
Up Country Tamil	18	36	45	100	173
Sri Lankan Moor/Malay	24	44	32	100	347

Across ethnic groups, there is more than a 50 percent increase in awareness levels amongst the youth on the need for the prevention of violent extremism in the post-war context (Table 4.15). This suggests a degree of understanding amongst the youth on how violent extremism, especially manifested amongst their peers, can destabilize not only the country but their own developmental process.

Table 4.16: Percentage of youth change in attitudes towards PVE in terms of ethnicity

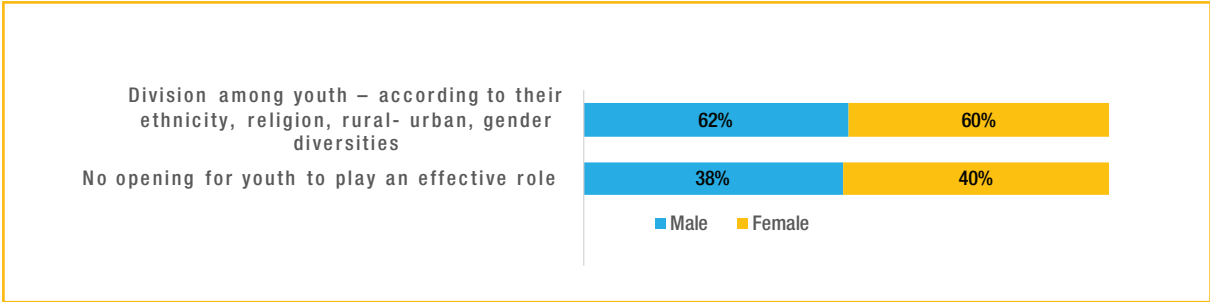
Q. Has this increase in awareness changed your attitude and/or behavior in preventing violent extremism?			Total	Number of Respondents
Opinion – Ethnicity	Yes	No		
Sinhalese	27	73	100	578
Sri Lankan Tamil	33	67	100	322
Up Country Tamil	34	66	100	95
Sri Lankan Moor/Malay	36	64	100	237

However, when asked if this level of awareness has changed young people’s attitude and/or behavior in preventing violent extremism, the overwhelming majority across ethnic groups said “No”. This suggests that, despite having an understanding of the need to prevent violent extremism, the current youth cohort lack any motivation to do so. This speaks to a broader issue of lack of youth leadership in this specific subject area. The data shows that the two main ethnic groups in contention during the war years, the Sinhalese population and Sri Lankan Tamil population (73 percent and 67 percent respectively), stated that they would not change their attitudes and/or behavior towards preventing violent extremism in the present day context. Therefore, young leaders from these two ethnic groups in particular, need to be encouraged to come forward.

Youth Capacity towards PVE

By the standards of the youth’s own perceptions, 62 percent of male and 60 percent of female respondents indicated that, divisions amongst themselves are the biggest hindrance to their role in PVE. Figure 4.13 illustrates that youth identifiers (such as ethnicity and religion etc.) sow divisions amongst the youth cohort. According to the youth, this creates more of an obstacle for them to take an active role in PVE than the fact that there are limited avenues in Sri Lanka for youth to prevent violent extremism. Hence, this data highlights that PVE is directly linked to the issue of a fractured youth identity in the Sri Lankan context.

Figure 4.13: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions of factors adversely affecting their role in preventing violent extremism



It is notable that Figure 4.13 does not indicate much gender variation in the responses. Only a 2 percent margin between male and female responses exist for both answers. This suggests that the female youth are of the same understanding as their male peers on the factors that adversely affect their cohort’s role in preventing violent extremism. It also implies that women are motivated and illustrate capacity towards being engaged in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka. The following Key Informant Interview highlights the capacity of young women in particular to engage in PVE in Sri Lanka.

Question: Why do you think it is important to include women and youth in the dialogue on preventing violent extremism in international peace and security?

Answer: This is because, in society now, we have a higher percentage of women and youth constituting the population. And they feel that their aspirations have not been met. So what needs to be done is to formally recognize their role in society and give them a position where they can give voice to their feelings and ideas.

Name: Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Male, Age: 80
 Position Title: Former Sri Lankan Diplomat
 Province/District: Western Province – Colombo

Table 4.17: Percentages showing youth perceptions on future projections with regards to PVE in terms of ethnicity

Q. Your future projections as regards to violent extremism in Sri Lanka				
Opinion	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamil	Up Country Tamil	Sri Lankan Moor/Malay
I am confident that we will be able to address the challenge of violent extremism satisfactorily with the passage of time	28	21	19	20
Still we are not on the correct path at present, but the youth will come forward to change the course and contribute to resolving the problem	24	24	27	28
I am confident that the youth can make a huge positive change but unfortunately their ability has not been recognized by the state and the society in Sri Lanka	27	30	32	27
I am not sure that the youth will be able to change the dismal future	14	12	11	10
I am highly worried that the youth may also become perpetrators of violent extremism as ground conditions are not improving	8	14	11	15
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1403	682	243	453

The youth cohort is highly fragmented in terms of ethnicity, in gauging future projections of their role in PVE (Table 4.17). The Sinhalese youth population is polarized; with 28 percent saying that they are confident that their generation will be able to satisfactorily address violent extremism and another 27 percent stating that youth have the potential but their ability will not be recognized by the Sri Lankan State. The ethnic minorities are also polarized between these two opinions. However, 27 percent of Up-Country Tamils and 28 percent of Moors/Malays also think that youth are not yet on the correct path but will eventually come forward to address PVE. It is notable that across the four ethnicities, only a small fraction of the youth cohort doubt their own capacity towards PVE in Sri Lanka and less than 15 percent of all the ethnicities do not believe that youth will be the cause/ perpetrators of violent extremism in the future. Hence, the data suggests that there is dormant capacity for the youth to take leadership in PVE. The following Key Informant excerpts evidence this fact.

“I think the youth are afraid to take up a leadership role. Even though they have the capacity, they do not have opportunities to show it. The government should take responsibility of this.”

Name: Asiri Lakmal Thennakon , Male, Age: Early 30s
 Position Title: Secretary, Student Union, University of Colombo. Province/District: Western – Colombo

“We then have a strategy called the Centenary Dream, where after 100 years of independence we ask, what do we want Sri Lanka to look like? But we need to see what kind of people can take us there, what kind of values we will have and how we can sustain them. We also need to find young people who have the capacity to want to change, train them and make them the ones to lead us and change their communities.”

Name: Prashan De Visser, Male, Age: Early 30s
 Position Title: Founder/President – Global Unites. Province/District: Western – Colombo

Youth commitment towards PVE

Table 4.18: Percentages showing youth perceptions on the foremost challenge Sri Lanka confronts in PVE in terms of Ethnicity

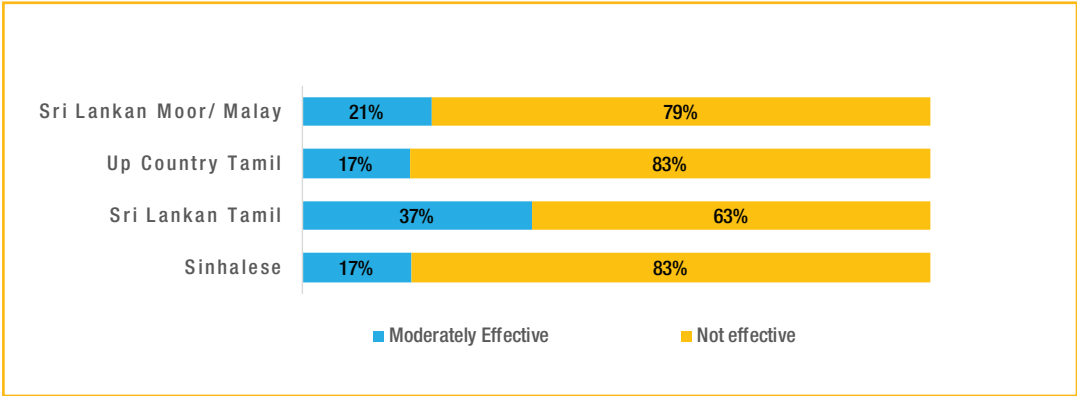
Q. The foremost challenge that Sri Lanka confronts in preventing violent extremism in the present context				
Opinion	Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamil	Up Country Tamil	Sri Lankan Moor/ Malay
Lack of political will	14	13	25	12
Disagreement among the main political parties	13	11	7	11
Exploitation of ethnic factor for narrow political ends	25	26	18	26
Impact of international terrorism	24	29	22	31
Prevalence of extremist narrations and ideologies	14	11	14	13
Inadequate awareness of citizens about the need to mitigate violent extremism in the multi-ethnic social context	11	11	14	7
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	1047	424	148	302

As regards to the foremost challenge that Sri Lanka confronts in the present context, the most frequent responses across ethnicities were “the exploitation of the ethnic factor for narrow political ends” and the “impact of international terrorism”. The data suggests that youth commitment towards PVE lies in their willingness to tackle these two perceived challenges. Notably, one of the challenges is externally imposed and the other is intrinsic to the context of violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

4.3.2. KEY STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The following section will analyze these key stakeholders’ commitment, including financial support, towards addressing and preventing violent extremism.

Figure 4.14: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions on the overall efforts of the Government towards PVE



Young people had negative perceptions when it comes to evaluating the overall efforts of the Government towards PVE (Figure 4.14). Specifically, 83 percent of the Sinhalese youth population and Moor/Malay youth population state that the Government has not been effective in preventing violent extremism. 63 percent of the Sri Lankan Tamil youth population agrees with this statement. Overall, this suggests that there is a serious concern amongst the youth cohort about the Government’s ability as a key stakeholder to prevent violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

Table 4.19: Percentages showing aggregate youth perceptions on the level of trust in formal institutions to address violent extremism²⁰

Q. Level of Trust in Formal Institutions						
Institution	Very high	Acceptable	Low	No trust	Total	Number of Respondents
Central Government	16	34	30	20	100	2606
Parliament	10	26	34	30	100	2704
The Judicial system	28	38	23	11	100	2718
Provincial and Local government authorities	7	26	40	27	100	2595
Police	19	35	29	18	100	2734
Army	24	37	22	17	100	2630
Political parties	4	15	30	50	100	2592
Public media	14	33	32	21	100	2528

20. The data for Table 4.19 and 4.20 is presented on the aggregate level because there is hardly any variation in response between ethnicities or Provinces for these particular data sets.

The above table shows the percentages of the aggregate youth respondent’s level of trust in formal institutions of the Sri Lankan State. The results illustrate that the level of trust in the Central Government to address violent extremism in general is split 50 percent between ‘very high/acceptable’ and ‘low/no trust’. Notably, the trust levels diminish significantly when the Parliament (64 percent low/no trust), Provincial and Local Government authorities (67 percent low/no trust) and Political Parties²¹ (80 percent low/no trust) are surveyed. The data points to the Police (54 percent very high/acceptable), the Army (61 percent very high/acceptable) and the judicial system (66 percent very high/acceptable) as being formal institutions vested with a higher level of trust by youth to address violent extremism. Overall, the data suggests that youth do not hold formal institutions of the State with an adequate level of trust as key stakeholders in preventing violent extremism in the Sri Lankan context.

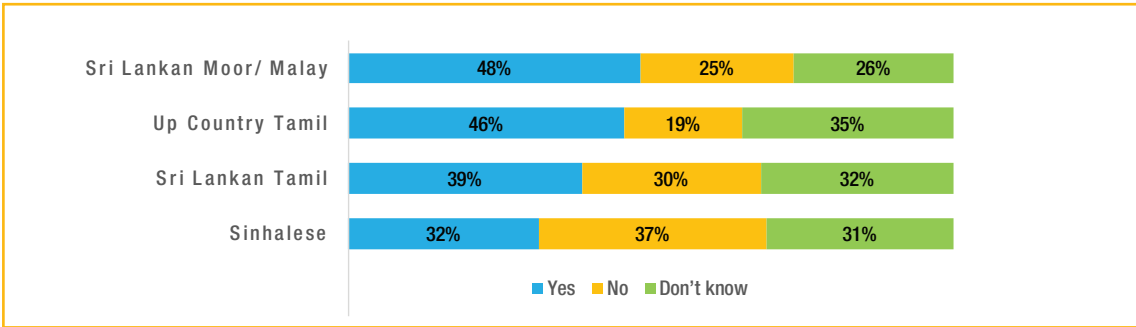
Table 4.20: Percentages showing aggregate youth perceptions on the level of trust in informal institutions to address violent extremism

Q. Level of Trust in Informal Institutions						
Institution	Very high	Acceptable	Low	No trust	Total	Number of Respondents
Community Leadership	17	42	32	9	100	2525
Religious institutions	22	42	27	9	100	2674
Social Media	15	36	34	14	100	2682
Social/Sports clubs	9	36	39	16	100	2534
Trade unions / Student unions	12	35	38	15	100	2569
Arts and Cultural Forums	9	34	39	19	100	2502
Youth Groups	18	41	29	11	100	2609
Non-Governmental Organizations	10	28	37	25	100	2305

In comparison, the youth cohort show significantly higher levels of trust in informal institutions to address violent extremism, as shown by table 4.20. The data highlights community leadership bodies (59 percent very high/acceptable), youth groups (59 percent very high/acceptable) and religious institutions (64 percent very high/acceptable) as vested with the highest levels of trust for informal institutions by the youth.

In terms of financial support, as per the 2018 records, the total budget for the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training was LKR 6.5 billion (USD 37 million) to carry out various programs targeting youth (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2018). However, it is important to highlight that the Sri Lankan State has not allocated a separate budget or targeted policies towards addressing youth participation in decision-making processes to prevent violent extremism.

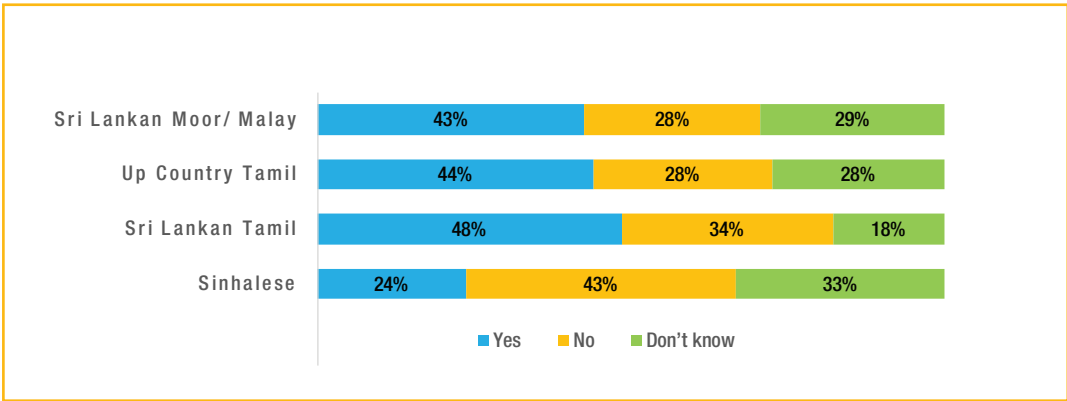
Figure 4.15: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions on the level of trust towards civil society organizations to address violent extremism



21. The figures may be skewed negatively towards these institutions in particular, due to the recent political crisis that Sri Lanka faced in October 2018.

In general, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are also not successful in winning the trust of the youth. Figure 4.15 highlights that 37 percent of Sinhalese youth do not show trust in CSOs to address violent extremism in the country. This is in contrast to 39 percent of Sri Lankan Tamil youth and 46 percent of Moors/Malays who are more trustworthy of civil society with regards to PVE. The data suggests that ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka are more likely to trust civil society organizations as a key stakeholder than the majority Sinhalese population. This is possibly because CSOs have more outreach to ethnic minorities and therefore have built up a level of trust with them.

Figure 4.16: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions on the capacity of international/ multilateral institutions to prevent violent extremism in Sri Lanka

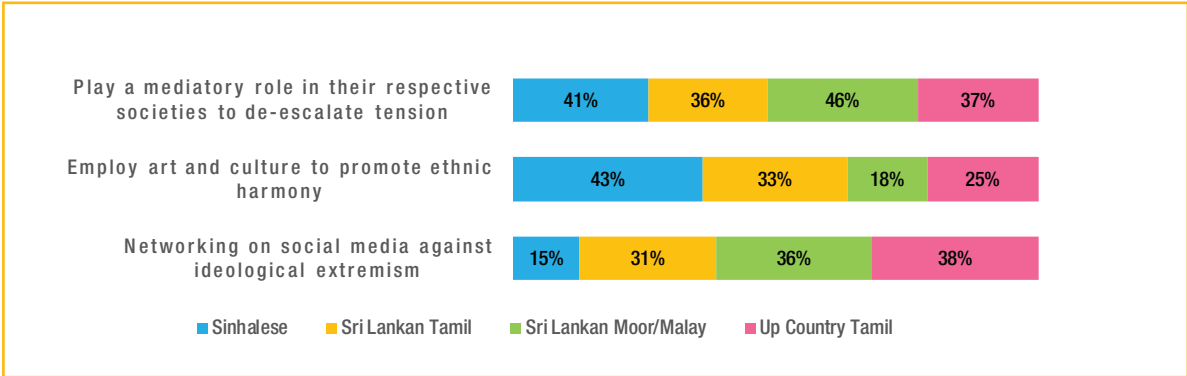


In terms of ethnicity, most youth from ethnic minorities (between 43-48 percent) feel that international/ multilateral institutions are a key stakeholder and have the capacity to prevent violent extremism in Sri Lanka (Figure 4.16). However, this is in stark contrast to the Sinhalese youth, of which only 24 percent feel that international organizations should play a role in addressing domestic violent extremism. This suggests that when it comes to international actors as key stakeholders, the youth cohort is ethnically polarized. This may be due to the history of international actors in the country in the context of the civil war.

4.3.3. CULTURE, THEATER, ARTS AND SPORTS

This section analyzes the tools and spaces of culture, theatre, arts and sports towards inspiring youth leadership in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

Figure 4.17: Percentage distribution showing youth perceptions on modes of harnessing their energy towards PVE in terms of Ethnicity



The above figure illustrates that, across ethnic groups, there is an interest amongst the youth to prevent violent extremism by employing art and culture to promote ethnic harmony. The spaces of theatre and sports in particular are conducive to inter-ethnic interactions, especially in the context of the history of Sri Lanka's ethnically driven civil war. Sports such as Cricket illustrate that common prejudices and suspicions are alleviated in group dynamics and go as far as to foster national unity. Sports clubs also encourage team-building and bonding; skills and exercises which are transferrable to the PVE space. Sports in particular helps to break down rigid identities, cultural myths and barriers to entry based on caste, class, ethnicity or religion.

Theatre is also a space where isolated communities and gendered communities can interact together and foster inter-communal interactions. A common culture can be created in Sri Lanka which will dispel youth from radicalization and going down the path of ethnocentric or religious violent extremism. A civil society activist spoke of the need to inspire youth leadership in spaces of theatre, art and culture. She stated that it was necessary for a leadership mindset amongst the youth to start at the community level and not be imposed as a top-down approach.

“What we [Sunera Foundation] do is, firstly, we welcome anybody for this opportunity. Our age group is about 14/15 to about 25/30. We create a space that is a friendly space for them. In this space, we create specially designed activities for them using the performing arts. What we do is create a space for them to develop a bond and friendship through the activities we conduct. When we start off a workshop, we get them to do stretching exercises and other basic activities. Then we move on to other activities such as music, dancing and even drama pieces.With regard to young people in our country, even if they do not wish to work in such a field, I think that there should be some kind of leadership to bring young people together for whatever reason. For example, a person I know who comes from a village in my hometown, he and a few others have taken leadership and have formed a society for his village. There may be a lot of youth that want to do things, but there must be a leader or a team of leaders to guide them.”

Name: Ms. Sunethra Bandaranaike, Female, Age: 75
Position Title: Chair – Sunera Foundation
Province/District: Western – Colombo

CHAPTER 5: ROLE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

5.1. CONTEXT OF VOLUNTEERISM

The role of volunteerism, especially for youth, is an important aspect to be considered in the systematic approach to preventing violent extremism. Volunteerism has been identified as one of the best tools for development, poverty eradication and peacebuilding in communities emerging from conflict, civil war, and disaster situations. On this basis, the added value of volunteerism is being emphasized as part of making the concept popular and practicable. In UN Resolution 56/38, 'Recommendations on Support for Volunteering', volunteerism or voluntary activity is defined as a "wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor" (UN, 2002). Volunteerism helps to create a stable and cohesive society by bringing people together to act for the betterment of the community through trust and cooperation and it seeks to produce prompt and fruitful solutions to social problems (Wijesinghe, 2015).

Volunteerism is a well-established concept in Sri Lanka, ingrained in all the major religions followed by Sri Lankan communities. According to Buddhism, which is a major religion that influenced many of the traditions and norms in Sri Lankan society, the concept of 'Dana' (the practice of sharing and giving) is a major ethos to be practiced in the path towards the reduction of mundane cravings and desires. All other major religions also have continued to teach volunteerism among youth and children. It is also conditioned by socio-economic conditions and particular politico-historical traditions, relevant to the location, as the form and meaning of volunteerism varies in different socio-economic settings. In the past, youth volunteers have proved their worth and potential through promptly meeting the material needs of conflict affected people, people affected by natural disasters, and people in the process of relief, recovery and reconstruction in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. However, in the post-civil war context, the added value of youth volunteerism remains a source of immense strength which has yet to be mobilized as a potential force for the prevention of violent extremism.

This chapter consists of two parts: while placing volunteerism in a Sri Lankan context, the first part will trace the attitudes, knowledge and motivation of youth in this regard, as well as their capacity and commitment. It also reviews the current initiatives of youth volunteers. In the second part, attention will be on the added value of volunteerism in addressing PVE specifically and the current engagements of youth volunteers for prevention of violent extremism. In this chapter, both quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the survey, will be utilized for analysis.

5.2. AN OVERVIEW OF YOUTH VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS, ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are many youth volunteer organizations presently operating nationally and locally. But, there are very few active volunteer organizations throughout the country proactively engaged in volunteer work. For instance, Sri Lanka Unites is a leading volunteer organization which unites the youth of Sri Lanka from all ethnic and religious groups in a movement which facilitates reconciliation in the country, paving the way for a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka for future generations. It also stands for diversity of Sri Lanka's different ethnic and religious heritages, each of which enriches our lives as common citizens of Sri Lanka. The movement aims to create a united Sri Lanka where young people are intentional about working together with members of different ethnicities, religions, classes and castes for the sustainable development of the country. This movement is based in Colombo and it has around 125,000 members

who have gone through Sri Lanka Unites, which is very much determined to take on the task of eliminating ethnic prejudice and religious prejudice among the youth of Sri Lanka in a post war context. Some NGOs and IGOs including USAID, UNDP, UNHCR, Sarvodaya, WUSC-Uniterra have partnered with the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) by supporting their programs financially.

There are quite a few active youth organizations (YOs) engaged in various volunteer activities and they are getting enormous support from the community. Community members perceive YOs as a catalyst, which brought youth together to serve the village, and accorded a high degree of recognition to the YOs. Many YOs are actively involved in organizing and participating in village-level functions and they are maintaining links with religious institutions such as churches and temples contributing to the community's endorsement of YOs. Currently, youth initiatives or youth movements fall under sports, community development and religious activities, vocational training and education. The study findings revealed that these organizations have engaged in at least one of these activities. Most of the youth organizations in the study area engage in Shramadhana work in temples, hospitals, churches, schools and other public places. In rural areas, youth organizations have engaged in organizing annual festival events and cultural shows to raise funds to implement certain programs. It was observed that government officials, religious leaders and local elites seem to have a significant role in forming and sustaining youth movements and they do play a key role in their initiatives.

It is also pertinent to note that currently youth organizations face four main challenges: limited funds; constant changes in the membership base; lack of proper guidance and specialized expertise; and financial constraints. This has been a constraint to expedite youth initiatives at the local and national level. The study also suggests that dedicated innovative membership, community support and access to funds from external sources would enable YOs to effectively run their programs.

In North, South and Central provinces, some YOs noted that they have assisted flood victims in many areas – they raised funds and material (clothes, dry rations) in their locality and distributed them among victims irrespective of ethnicity, caste, gender and other differences. In some places, youth had organized cultural shows to raise funds to support victims. The members of these YOs considered the help extended to the flood victims as one of the most successful activities of their YOs. It was observed that some YOs do conduct trainings at the village, district and regional level to impart knowledge on leadership, peace, reconciliation, good governance, transitional justice, communication, personality development, etc. and provides the opportunity for members to interact with members of other organizations in other parts of the country.

According to available sources, out of the total 1,469 Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in Sri Lanka, 260 are located in Northern, Eastern, Central and Southern Provinces. Some of these NGOs do not have a specific focus on preventing violent extremism, yet still have components related to the prevention of violence. Four NGOs in the Northern Province, seven in Eastern Province, and one in Southern Province have been directly focusing on the prevention of violence amongst youth. These organizations are small in size and their financial capacity and activities are limited to certain areas on a small scale. Furthermore, there are numerous NGOs working closely with those who are affected by calamity and conflict. It should be noted that any organization that works for the development and welfare of the people, especially for those conflict affected, poor and marginalized communities, could generally engage in reducing the possibilities for violent extremism by reducing the hardships of these communities and giving them hopes and means for an optimistic future. Thus, despite the prevention of violent extremism not being stated as an objective, the activities of many organizations indirectly contribute to the prevention of violent extremism. Importantly, many of these local NGOs have youth representation in their work and young people provide their labor and contribute on a volunteer basis, though this maybe in a limited manner.

During the field survey and qualitative data collection, the research team also observed the presence of UN Volunteers (UNV) in many parts of the country and that they have actively been involved in many youth-centered programs focusing on peace, reconciliation and development. Empowering and fostering youth volunteer initiatives remain one of the key objectives of the UNV as a global network; and it has been active in Sri Lanka since 1974. In 2014 the UNV of Sri Lanka, with support from UNDP and the Ministry of Social Welfare, established the first National Volunteering Secretariat – the major objective of the secretariat is to create a conducive environment that encourages youth volunteer initiatives for peace and reconciliation. UNV also recognizes individuals who make an extraordinary contribution to society through volunteerism as well as outstanding volunteers at the national level. Youth and peace, youth and disaster management and youth and community development are some of the key areas that are focused on by UNV programs.

5.3. ATTITUDES, KNOWLEDGE AND MOTIVATION

According to the survey, majority of the respondents have heard about youth volunteerism in general. The highest percentage among the respondents (71 percent) who have heard about youth volunteerism comes from the Southern Province, while the lowest (52 percent) comes from the Northern Province. The contraction of civil political space in the Northern Province during the civil war is perhaps one reason for the limited knowledge on volunteerism by its youth.

Table 5.1: Percentages showing the awareness of youth volunteerism in terms of Province²²

Q. Have you heard about youth volunteerism in general?	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
Yes	71	52	62	63
No	29	48	38	37
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents ²³	868	448	616	868

Nearly one third of youth in all Provinces understand youth volunteerism as ‘a form of advocacy and campaigning for common interests’ while another one third understands it as a ‘sacrifice of labor for the common good without charge’ (Table 5.2). In addition, about 15 percent of youth understand it to be ‘a form of voluntary participation in civil activities’. Only less than 10 percent understand youth volunteerism as the ‘first step to enter politics’ or as ‘a source of material benefit/monetary reward’. From these understandings it is notable that volunteerism is being conceived of as inherently for the betterment of and advancement of others and a common cause rather than for personal gain. Therefore the utility of volunteerism for youth is grounded in it being perceived as a good deed.

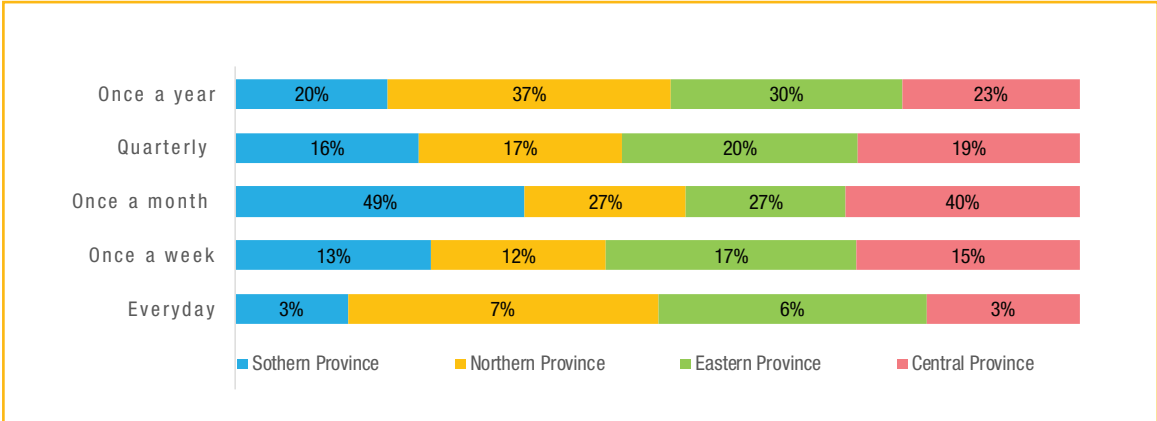
22. All Tables and Figures presented in this chapter showing percentages/percentage distribution are rounded to equal 100. The original data is specific to one decimal place. Therefore, if the data presented here is tallied it may equal 99 or 101 due to rounding purposes.

23. The Number of Respondents (N) is not given as a percentage but as a basic frequency representing how many youth were surveyed for that particular response.

Table 5.2: Percentages showing youth understanding on volunteerism in terms of Province

Q. Have you heard about youth volunteerism in general?	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
A form of voluntary participation in civic activities	22	17	14	14
A form of advocacy and campaigning for common interests	31	31	34	31
Sacrifice your labor for the common good without charge	32	25	32	27
Protest against power and authority	7	12	8	15
First step to enter politics	5	10	6	7
A source of material benefit / monetary reward	4	5	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	868	448	616	868

Figure 5.1: Percentage distribution showing how often respondent volunteers help with the activities of their groups or organizations



The majority of respondents stated that they help with the activities of their groups or organizations once a month (Figure 5.1). At the same time, a considerable percentage of youth have also stated that they help with activities only once a year. However, the percentage of those who contribute their services every day or once a week is relatively low. This indicates that there is a relatively low level of continuous or recurring motivation for youth to volunteer at the provincial level. The following Key Informant Interview²⁴ sheds more light on youth volunteerism.

24. All excerpts given in chapter 5 have been taken from Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted at the national and provincial level as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Case Studies conducted at the provincial level.

“Currently, youth have been involved much in social work, such as blood donations, tree planting, awareness creation against child abuse, illegal drugs and Dengue prevention...but they are taking place on a very limited scale. If we could expand this in a fruitful manner, it would bring positive outcomes.” Further, he mentioned that “these activities are carried out by a handful of youth but if we take initiatives to motivate more youth into such activities; not only will this change their negative attitudes but also will strengthen harmony amongst them and will bring betterment to the society”.

Name: S. Pradhapan, Male, Age: 30
 Position Title: Member of local Government authority
 Province/District: Northern Province – Jaffna

Table 5.3: Percentages showing main driving forces for youth engagement in volunteerism

Q. In your view, what is the main driving force for youth to engage in volunteerism?	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
To obtain leadership training	18	13	18	17
For personality development	24	19	30	26
Professional advancement	16	11	12	14
To enter party politics	8	15	7	8
Achieving social capital	10	8	5	12
Contribution to social harmony and progress	19	25	24	17
Self-satisfaction	6	8	5	7
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	868	448	616	868

The highest percentage of respondents from three Provinces (Southern, Eastern and Central) feels that “personality development” is the main driving force for youth to engage in volunteerism (Table 5.3). It is interesting to note however, in the Northern Province, the most frequent answer is the “contribution to social harmony and progress”, while it is the next highest for the other three provinces. Only a very small percentage of respondents have identified entering politics as their driving force for volunteerism. The youth give almost equal priority to advancing their own skills and forming networks in order to compete in the job market, as well as to promote community development and social harmony in engaging in volunteerism. Thus, their attitudes towards volunteerism seem to be two-fold in this regard – personal development and social harmony.

5.4. CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT

This section illustrates the extent of youth capacity and their commitment toward volunteerism in the local context. The following tables and figures highlight voluntary organization membership, nature of organization, and frequency of attendance and activities performed by youth in the respective Provinces.

Table 5.4: Percentages showing youth membership in any group or organization in terms of Province

Q. Were /Are you a member of any volunteer groups or organizations in the last 12 months	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
Yes	45	36	43	46
No	55	64	57	54
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	868	448	616	868

A large proportion of respondents from all Provinces have mentioned that they are not members of any group/organization (Table 5.4). This is perhaps indicative of a gap in providing social modes of gathering/recreation/volunteerism in the local context. The highest percentage for non-involvement comes from the Northern Province – (64 percent). The Table highlights that the percentages of respondents who have been members of groups/organizations in the last 12 months are quite similar in 3 Provinces (Southern, Eastern and Central).

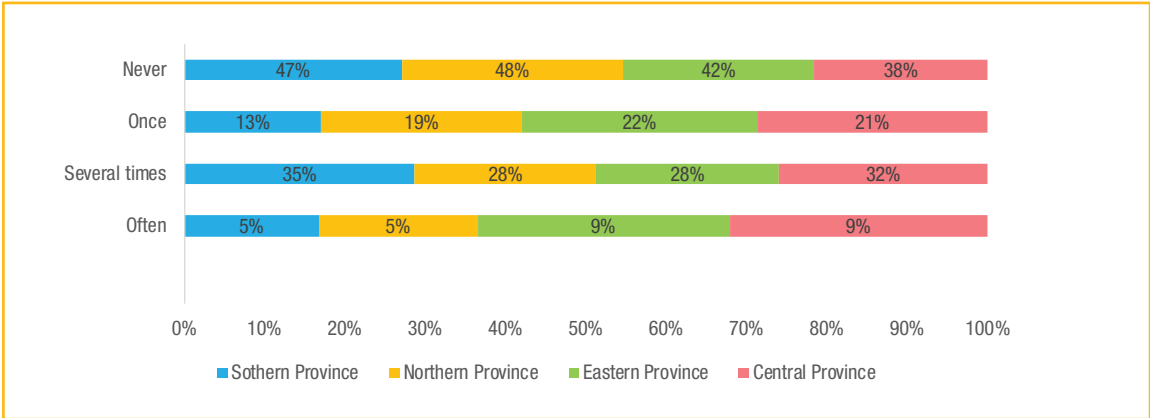
Table 5.5: Percentages showing youth membership in organizations in terms of Province

Q. If you answered yes (Were /Are you a member of any groups or organizations in the last 12 months) to the previous question, what type of groups or organizations are or were they?	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
Youth clubs	31	34	46	42
Women's organisations/ Kantha Samithis	9	10	11	11
Sports clubs	14	28	15	22
Religious associations	14	10	8	8
Community organizations	6	12	6	7
Charity organizations/ funeral aid societies	8	1	4	2
Job related organizations	5	2	4	3
Political groups	7	1	2	3
Cultural groups	5	2	1	2
Village self-help societies	0	1	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents who answered 'yes'	391	161	265	400

Among the respondents who said they were/are members of groups or organizations, the highest percentage across the Provinces belonged to youth clubs. The data also shows relatively high percentages for those who are members of sports clubs, religious associations and women's organizations in the four Provinces. Therefore, these types of groups/associations should be targeted in mobilizing youth for volunteer activities as well as to carve out spaces for youth to volunteer within these particular groups/associations.

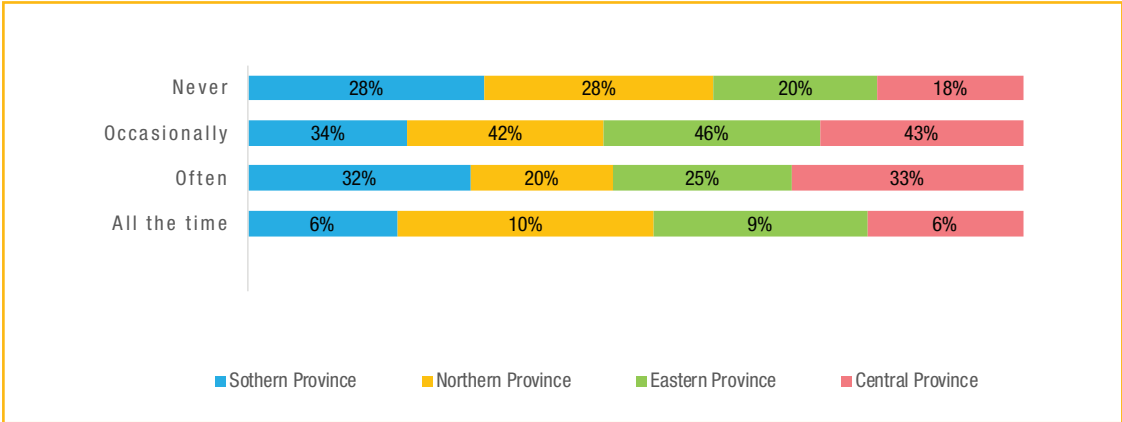
Notably, women's organizations have between 9-11 percent membership amongst the surveyed youth. Though this percentage is low, it ranks higher than other types of groups or organizations in the responses. Therefore, this is another area in which volunteerism can be fostered, where women's organizations proactively engage in the volunteer sector and simultaneously advance and develop skills that may help them in their communities.

Figure 5.2: percentage distribution showing how often youth attended a youth committee meeting



When the respondents were asked whether they attended any youth committee meetings during the past year, the majority from all four Provinces gave the answer of ‘never’ (Figure 5.2). Despite the membership of the majority of the surveyed youth in youth clubs, their commitment is significantly lacking. The next highest percentage of youth responded that they had attended such meetings several times during the past year. The percentage of youth who gave the answer “Once during the last year” varied and it ranged from 13 percent to 22 percent. The data suggests that youth have some motivation towards volunteerism but their commitment and involvement needs to be developed and mobilized through appropriate strategies.

Figure 5.3: Percentage distribution showing how often youth organizations get involved in volunteer activities



“The present situation of Sri Lanka has changed a lot, compared to the situation we had in the 1980s. Today many youth are not interested in any volunteer activities and they are pushed by their families to pass examinations and to qualify formally. Although there are some youth leaders with very positive thinking, they have not been successful in attracting other youth, mainly due to lack of social recognition of volunteerism, lack of political and administrative support towards volunteerism, the examination centered education system...”

Name: Amala, Female, Age: Mid 50s
 Position Title: Civil Society Worker
 Province/District: Southern Province – Galle

To gain a better understanding of the youth commitment towards volunteer activities, the question - “How often do you think youth organizations/groups in your area get involved in volunteering for the betterment of their community?” - was included in the questionnaire (Figure 5.3). The majority of respondents from all four Provinces answered ‘occasionally.’ In contrast, the data shows a relatively high percentage of respondents from all four Provinces that answered ‘never’ and only a very small percentage answered ‘all the time.’ The responses indicate a gap in the capacity of youth groups/organizations and an opportunity where they can be mobilized to better their communities. This would also increase youth commitment towards volunteerism, if the capacity of youth groups were channeled positively.

The students of public universities in the Northern and Southern Provinces also mentioned that they have the capacity of doing volunteer activities. A few of them were proud of their organizing ability and skills in lobbying the Government. They presented some successful examples of how they were able to change some decisions of the Government or university authorities. They claimed that low propensity of university students participating in volunteer activities were due to the lack of social recognition, lack of family support/acceptance, discouragement coming from the university authority, the competitive examination system and the continuous assessment system; thereby preventing even the committed students from coming forward to take up leadership roles in volunteer activities. The following excerpts exemplify the above analysis. Some students from the Northern Province noted that, “if you look at youth participation in volunteer activities at the universities, it is very minimal and they do not show much interest”. They further added that this is closely connected with the civil war memories and experiences, where students did not have much exposure to such practices as they were fully confined to exams and the competitive educational system to gain placement.”

A statement given by a female key informant (Southern Province), who has been serving several NGOs for the past three decades, also identifies the gap in the capacity of youth volunteerism in the local context.

He has appreciated the capacity of youth in his area by sharing similar experiences with the researchers and said that his area covers 16 Grama Niladhari Wasams and they organize youth activities – sports, shramadana, distributing relief assistance, musical shows, religious /cultural festivals, leadership building workshops and blood donation etc. at least one event every month. They give ample opportunities to all youth in the area to do volunteer activities. He believes that the youth in the area have a close and friendly relationship with the police and it minimizes youth violence.

Name: Upul
Age: Early 50s, Sex: Male
Position Title: Police Officer
Job Category: Government Sector
Province/District: Southern Province – Hambantota

Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicates that young people have the capacity and commitment to initiate and participate in volunteer activities, but there are certain obstacles that stand in their way. The data also showed provincial obstacles, especially in the Northern Province in mobilizing youth as well as a lack of initiatives amongst pre-existing groups/organizations to utilize volunteerism in their activities.

5.5. UTILIZING VOLUNTEERISM FOR PVE

5.5.1. ADDED-VALUE OF VOLUNTEERISM

Since youth are the future of the country, enriching youth in volunteer activities will be an added source, not only for development and peacebuilding, but also for preventing conflict and violence among individuals and groups in society. This section will look at the added value of volunteerism in terms of preventing violent extremism.

Table 5.6: Percentages showing youth feelings towards the utilization of volunteerism for PVE

Q. Do you think, in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka, youth volunteerism is	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
Sufficiently utilized	8	12	20	15
Under-utilized	48	47	47	45
Not utilized	25	21	19	24
Don't know	19	21	14	16
Total		100	100	100
Number of Respondents	868	448	616	868

Nearly 50 percent of respondents across the Provinces have stated that youth volunteerism for PVE is under-utilized. The data suggests a gap in the local context, where key stakeholders can develop and enhance volunteer activities which directly contribute to preventing violent extremism. The data also illustrates that the current youth cohort see a benefit of volunteerism being used in an innovative way and as a social mode to facilitate PVE, which has been confined to the political sphere.

5.5.2. CURRENT ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS FOR PVE

Assessing the nature of the current engagement of youth as volunteers in PVE was also considered a major focus of this study. The study initially explored the existing policies and programs allowing youth to be engaged as volunteers in PVE. The review of the existing policies particularly adopted in the post-war context, such as the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament- SLYP (2010), National Youth Policy (2014), and Acts which govern some youth related programs and institutions such as The National Youth Social Innovation Challenge (2017), found that there are spaces for youth volunteerism. It was identified that youth volunteerism is increasing in the areas of emergency relief and social justice but is very much lacking in terms of preventing violent extremism and building peaceful communities.

Figure 5.4: Percentages showing youth understanding about volunteer/youth/women's organizations working on preventing violence in terms of Province

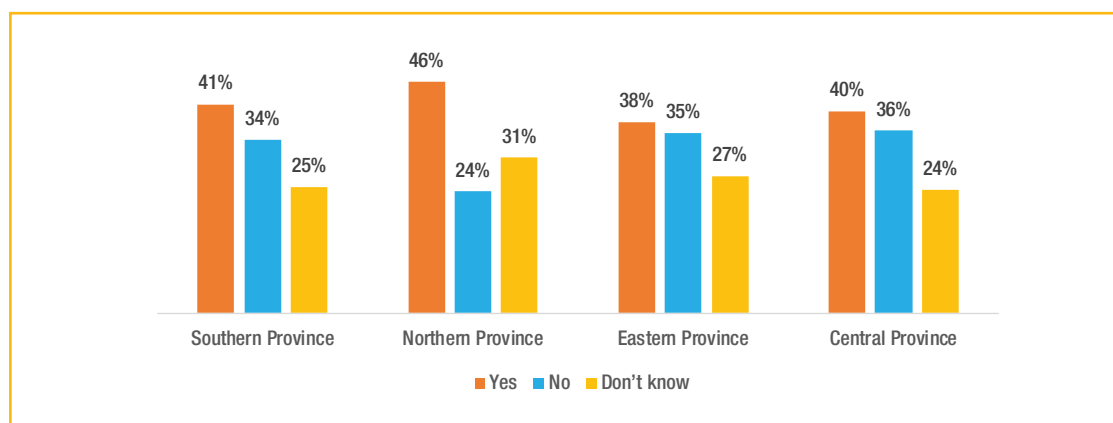


Figure 5.4 shows that 41 percent from the Southern Province, 46 percent from the Northern Province, 38 percent from the Eastern Province and 40 percent from the Central Province have some awareness about volunteer/ youth or women’s organization working on PVE or in preventing violence specifically. The data indicates that there is scope to mobilize youth to volunteer and participate in such activities as they already have a fair knowledge on programs centered on violence prevention.

It is interesting to observe that 81 percent of respondents from the Northern Province have stated that these volunteer organizations are successful in preventing violence. In contrast, the vast majority of the youth in the other three Provinces feel that these organizations are not successful in their efforts. This suggests that currently, prevention of violence and PVE efforts are more concentrated in the Northern Province. Hence there is a need to expand such activities into other Provinces.

Table 5.7: Percentages showing youth/volunteer/women’s organizations’ rate of success in preventing violence

Q. Are they (volunteer/ youth/women’s organizations) successful in their efforts to prevent violence?	Province			
	Southern Province	Northern Province	Eastern Province	Central Province
Yes	7	81	0	19
No	41	0	74	45
Don’t know	52	19	26	36
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of Respondents	868	448	616	868

Among the participants engaged in FGDs and KIs in the Central Province, a considerable number of participants including youth, youth related officers, religious and community leaders and civil activists also expressed their criticisms and disappointments regarding the failure of post-war regimes to adopt comprehensive policies and programs to make youth activism and volunteerism key concepts in culture and society, and make it one of the best ways to counter or prevent violent extremism at the community level.

The perspectives from the Northern Province with regard to the Government’s effectiveness of mobilizing youth volunteerism, particularly in preventing violent extremism were also negative. They argued that, since 2009, subsequent Government agencies have carried out reconstruction and reconciliation programs, including Northern Spring, youth exchange programs, and sports and cultural programs with the aim of preventing further violence, but these programs did not see effective participation of youth as volunteers.

The views and perspectives of people in the Southern Province toward youth volunteer engagement in preventing violent extremism and building peace were similar to the perspectives of the rest of the Provinces. While appreciating some positive outcomes of youth related volunteer programs, such as ‘Suduneluma’, Yowunpuraya, Yowun Parliament, Nilbalakaya, Yowunsenanka, Civil Arakshakabalakaya, yowungamma and Athurumithuru, they lamented that these initiatives were highly politicized and were used by a few political leaders to increase their ‘popularity.’ It’s important to further note that these programs were led by political henchmen and not by young political leaders, not giving ownership to youth and empowering them in volunteerism. Importantly, the field survey also shows that there has been a sense of fear among youth to gain access to volunteer institutions due to institutional hierarchy, power relations or institutional discriminations. Furthermore, youth leaders and volunteers often fail to identify distinction between preventing violence and preventing violent extremism. Their perceptions on volunteerism in the context of PVE are relegated to communal understandings of violence perforating their day to day lives. Therefore, greater awareness must be created on volunteerism in a PVE context and the important role that youth can play in this regard.

CHAPTER 6: GLOBAL EXAMPLES OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This section will examine youth leadership in PVE in South Africa, Rwanda and Nepal in order to trace global examples of strategies and models in engaging youth in PVE. The three case studies have been chosen because each demonstrates different socio-historical contexts of violent extremism, a variety of narratives and trajectories of prevention of violent extremism and context-dependent youth leadership patterns, which offer useful insights to Sri Lankan scenarios.

6.1. SOUTH AFRICA

HISTORY OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has a disturbing history of colonialism and repression, which generated hatred and conflict among different ethnic and racial groups. The period between 1910 - 1947 was illustrative of how economic racism consolidated the structures of White domination and Black disenfranchisement and exploitation. Some discriminatory laws forced Black people to evacuate the major cities and move to remote settlements in an impoverished part of the country. In 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) was founded to protect Black African rights.

The right wing National Party²⁵ (NP) that came to power in 1948 consolidated and strengthened a structurally racist system of governance known as the apartheid²⁶. It constrained Black mobility and participation in socio-economic and cultural activities in the country, segregating them into 'homelands' on the pretext of preserving national authority. Separate administrative plan for the homelands was aimed at "rehabilitation within the colonial framework of South Africa. It was an attempt to exclude the Black majority from having a role in the administration of their own country" (Veil, 1989). Anti-Apartheid struggle led by ANC gradually became the defining theme in South African politics.

YOUTH AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

During the anti-apartheid struggle, youth organizations played an important role in mobilizing mass resistance. At a grassroots level, a host of organizations were formed, united in opposition to apartheid. These organizations comprised of religious groups, sports, and arts clubs, theatre groups and NGOs.

Extensive studies have been conducted on the roots of violent extremism. No single factor explains adequately why some youth resort to violence or violent extremism. South Africa's unique history has given a particular structure to violent extremism in the country. Apartheid policy led to the concentration of poverty and many other risk factors in marginalized Black communities, thereby establishing preconditions for the social diffusion of violence (Altbeker, 2007). Despite South Africa's transformation to democracy, the majority of young people still live in communities that experience weak social cohesion. As a result, they are at increased risk for exposure to and involvement in acts of violent extremism (Panday and Richter, 2005).

25. The National Party (NP) was a political party in South Africa which promoted Afrikaner interests in South Africa.

26. Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.

Once negotiations began between the ANC and the Government, and the armed struggle was suspended, the youth in the anti-apartheid struggle were instructed to stand down. This was in part due to the recognition by leaders that youth have other life priorities in the changed environment, but the youth themselves felt that they were cheated by new decision-makers. In the long run, this marginalization of youth during the transition phase posed significant challenges to the post-apartheid governments as it led to the development of both youth criminal gangs and alternative youth policing bodies (Monique, 1999).

YOUTH-CENTRIC POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The transition from the Apartheid to democracy faced many challenges. After a laborious, difficult and courageous political negotiation between the various interest groups under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the post-Apartheid South Africa prevented further violence by developing multiple democratic approaches to create a foundation for peace and security. The role of inspiring political leadership has become a positive point in the country's approach to resolving conflicts. Furthermore, the South African Constitution guarantees social justice, human rights, rule of law, and freedom of association, language and religious rights. Power sharing mechanisms were introduced by the Constitution to prevent the racial/ethnic domination of any group. The Constitution dismantled the homelands and created nine provinces, in place of the former four provinces, which existed during apartheid. The provinces were given sufficient autonomy to govern their areas and this helped to de-escalate conflicts.

South Africa also introduced affirmative action for disadvantaged groups such as minority racial and ethnic groups, as well as for women, with the aim of guaranteeing diversity and addressing structural racism by the former apartheid Governments. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to heal the wounds inflicted by the apartheid system. It also inculcated a commitment to accountability and transparency into the South African public sphere.

South Africa's approach to youth since the first democratic elections in 1994 has been expressed mainly in three official documents: the National Youth Policy (NYP) - 2000; National Youth Development Policy framework (NYDPF) and the Second generation NYP – 2009 - 2014. The NYP 2009-2014 rests on four pillars: education, health and well-being, economic participation and social cohesion for youth. It emphasizes the importance of placing youth at the centre of national development initiatives both as beneficiaries and participants. Two national institutions were established to implement this policy: the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the Youth Desk, established under the Office of the Presidency. Moreover, there are provincial youth commissioners and youth desks at local levels to implement this policy.

One of the key challenges in post-Apartheid South Africa was crime and the continuation of violent extremism perpetrated by youth. The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) was passed by the Cabinet in 1996. It promoted social crime prevention and sought to implement its principles within the criminal justice policy. However, due to various reasons, the NCPS was never fully implemented, leading to some provinces in South Africa developing their own Safer City Strategy (2006-14) and encouraging social participation to reduce crime, improve quality of policing, promote social crime prevention and strengthen the institutional arrangements of provincial Government to better understand and respond to crime (World Bank, 2012). The South African Department of Correctional Services also organizes some programs for all sentenced offenders. Although these are not designed only for youth, many young people participate in them, due to the high levels of incarceration of South African youth.

Moreover, the South African Government implemented programs to address youth violence, especially in schools, with the partnership of NGOs. The National Youth Service Program (NYSP) aimed at involving unemployed youth in Government services, while providing skills to increase their employability.

South Africa also recognized the importance of educational reforms in order to address the problem of reconciliation and conflict transformation of the youth. Schools reinforce the teaching of more peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and tools via their curriculum (Exploring the Role of Youth in Truth and Reconciliation, 2018). Although these policies provide a sound framework to address youth violence, there are many weaknesses in their implementation. Very few of the programs intervene at the family level and no attention is paid in linking the home and school environments. Less attention is also given to develop care facilities and recreational facilities for youth in impoverished areas. Lack of unity and integration within and between Government departments and the different levels of Government, as well as a lack of funds are the main roadblocks to implementation in this regard.

South Africa's 'Circle of Courage', based on Desmond Tutu's 'Ubuntu' (celebrating our common being) approach, stands apart as a useful practice in addressing recidivism, violent crimes and helping young people combat the experience of disaffection (Belton, 2015). Tutu stated that "we must look on children in need not as problems but as individuals with potential to share if they are given the opportunity." (Tutu Desmond, 2002). Tutu is highlighting the notion that we often look upon young people as victims or perpetrators in relation to violent extremism, but we must reconfigure that narrative and look at them as the solution to violent extremism. The Circle of Courage initiated community peace projects and peace making circles, which now amass to around four hundred groups all over South Africa. The majority of the peace projects are usually organized by volunteers, who work in collaboration with other institutions and Government structures. The peace projects and circles did not replicate Western, expert driven, crisis intervention approaches but were underpinned by a community-oriented response that had South African roots and involved the family, healers, spiritual guides, teachers and elders. The peacemaking circles or healing circles used peacemaking practices which resonated with the Ubuntu ethics. They focused on resolution of conflict, not forms or measures of punishment. This assisted the process of healing; facilitated by insight and knowledge; and the understanding that violent action and behavior were motivated by what made sense to them at the time of the apartheid.

Furthermore, South Africa has a strong civil society and it plays a very important role in linking the formal bureaucratic activities with the interests of the people. The vibrant civil society largely contributed to South Africa's peaceful democratic transition in the past, by developing mutual trust and understanding in order to prevent violence. Peacebuilding activities organized by a few South African civil society organizations, such as the Quakers Movement or the Religious Society of Friends, based on a variety of religious and philosophical teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, even before the colonial penetration, are noteworthy to be mentioned. Moreover, between 1948 and the 1960s, a few more community based organizations emerged, concerning themselves with the negative implications of apartheid, and initiated non-violent opposition to protest the system. One of the prominent such organizations was the Women's Defiance of the Constitution League.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) was created as an umbrella body for Christian churches in South Africa, its main focuses were justice and reconciliation. It criticized the apartheid government and supported people, mainly youth, who suffered due to apartheid laws and policies (Spong, 1993). The War Resistance Movement emerged in the 1970s within universities and churches in support of an emergent collection of conscientious objectors, who also assisted youth particularly to end violence. The United Democratic Front was established in 1983, and rapidly became one of the prominent non-racial and anti-apartheid movements, which motivated mainly Black and coloured young people to work against violence.

The willingness and interest of the South African government, during the transition period, to support and include CSOs in its policy formulation and development activities can also be considered as lessons for any conflict affected country. During the political transition, a significant number of peacebuilding CSOs with young leaders were established. The South African government collaborated with them mainly on resolving issues of policy development, resource allocation and service delivery. The young leaders

were satisfied with their new roles and acted as watchdogs in terms of government accountability and transparency.

6.2. RWANDA

The Rwandan genocide in 1994, which claimed the lives of almost one million Hutus and Tutsis, is undoubtedly one of the most sordid episodes of ethnic genocide in our time. Both the Tutsi and Hutu tribes in Rwanda espouse in claiming the exclusive right to territory between them and acted on the emotive presumption that each was the original inhabitant. Even if the hatred between the two ethnicities were historically conditioned, it was further catalyzed and propagated by Kambanda, the Prime Minister of Rwanda. At the start of the 1994 genocide, Kambanda “was radically anti-Tutsi as he believed that the Tutsi were racially alien. The national policy of his government was to create a Hutu State without them” (Melvern, 2006: 1).

The socio-economic and demographic profile of pre-genocide Rwanda needs to be brought to focus to understand the socio-economic context of the genocide. The rural population was around 90 percent. When coffee prices fell between 1986-1987, this impacted the Rwandan economy heavily as coffee was their main export. The Rwandan government yielded to World Bank/IMF pressure to implement a package of structural adjustment measures and the Rwandan national currency was immediately devalued by two-thirds (Waller 1996: 33). The situation was further exacerbated due to the deterioration of economic and social conditions in the country. This led to a situation in which there were many idle youth, unemployment was high and economic recession was impending.

The Rwandan genocide is also a prevalent illustration of ethno-political entrepreneurs using State institutions to exacerbate ethnic divisions and catalyze violent extremism. Kambanda, the Prime Minister at the time, used the State apparatus to conduct the genocide and coerced the Hutu population into acting on their primordial hatreds. The State media was utilized through the journal—Kangura (1991) - to incite ethnic hatred by espousing slogans which coerced Hutu’s to carry out anti-Tutsi activities and commit massacres against them.

YOUTH AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The role of youth in the perpetration of violent extremism during the genocide was vital. The abundance of young, unemployed males at the time were not only due to non-farm jobs being available for much of the agrarian population, but because of the lack of education opportunities which created a frustrated youth cohort. In 1978–1979, reforms were undertaken by the Government which introduced agricultural skills training, vocational skills training and a vocational education system called CERAI. “However, the reforms were poorly implemented: vocational courses were not linked to the local employment market and thus those leaving primary school and the CERAI were inadequately prepared for employment” (Hoben 1989: 113).

In the face of the deepening political and socio-economic context of Rwanda in 1994, the Regime at the time wanted to retain power by any means. This led to the creation of paramilitary youth organizations (State within the State), which operated in tandem with the army and other State institutions at national, district and municipal levels (Hintjens, 1999:261). These paramilitary youth organizations comprised mainly of young unemployed males. It was the militias together with the army that organized much of the killing during the genocide. “They grew rapidly from 1991 onwards, starting off innocuously enough as local football clubs for street children, and patriotic associations for unemployed youth to carry out public works” (Reyntjens 1995: 57-8). The existing literature shows that these young militias were trained to glorify violence and were inculcated in this manner.

THE RWANDAN MODEL OF ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Rwanda's model has been to undertake an ambitious journey toward justice and reconciliation. In the years following the genocide, more than 120,000 people were detained and accused of bearing criminal responsibility for their participation in the killings. To deal with such an overwhelming number of perpetrators, a judicial response was pursued on three levels: The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the National Court System and the Gacaca courts (UN Secretary General, 2006).

The reconciliation process in Rwanda placed focus on reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace and security. The country's new Constitution now states that all Rwandans share equal rights. Laws have also been passed to fight discrimination and divisive genocide ideology (UN Secretary General, 2006). The Government has also established the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) which organizes conferences that aim to help people understand the roots of the genocide, and how to proceed with life in the aftermath of genocide (Staub, 2014). One symbolic example is the Kigali Genocide museum, which holds a memorial exhibit on rescuers; Hutus who endangered themselves to save Tutsis. This museum helps both groups see something positive about the other (Staub, 2014).

YOUTH-CENTRIC POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN RWANDA

The successive Governments, after the genocide, adopted significant political, social and economic reforms to prevent VE from occurring again and to prevent a new generation of youth from perpetuating an ethnically-fueled cycle of violence. They included measures to ensure economic stability for all its citizens as well as to provide equal and accessible educational opportunities from the primary to the tertiary levels. However, the Rwandan education system tends to still be highly bureaucratic and technocratic. Therefore, the policies and programs implemented to reform the education system do not go far enough in providing a safe space for Rwandan youth to constitute a new common Rwandan identity. Ingrained age-old hatreds do not disappear over-night. "Without opportunities for safe, collaborative learning activities, divisions between Hutu and Tutsi students will likely grow in the context of systemic triggers like access to post-primary schooling and language policy". (Walker-Keleher 2006: 51).

Rwandan youth also face cultural challenges in the post-genocide era that may trigger violent extremism in the future. These include "the economic difficulties of reaching cultural perceptions of adulthood" (Sommers and Ulvin, 2011). An additional cultural threat which besets Rwanda in the present day, is what Nordstrom has termed the "invisibility" of girls and young women in war-affected contexts, in which a "veil of silence" descends and makes it difficult to access the trials and alarming vulnerabilities that girls and female youth endure (1999: 75). Thus, as much as Rwanda is seen as a model for promoting ethnic harmony in the post-genocide era, many of its policies and cultural norms actually exacerbate the conditions for violent extremism to flourish in the country again.

6.3. NEPAL

Youth have played an important role in Nepalese society, economy and politics for the last few decades. In Nepal, 27.85 percent of the population is youth. However, Nepal has its own categorization of the youth population, i.e., the age category 16–40 is considered as youth (National Youth Policy, 2010). Accordingly, 40.3 percent of the population is youth in Nepal and this is considered controversial due to the high upper limit age.

The People's Armed Struggle (popularly referred to as the 'People's War') initiated by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 1996 changed the political and societal landscape of the country. The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist wing (CPN (M)) used ideas and tools that could train, indoctrinate, motivate and radicalize Nepalese people to turn against the State forces, which made it possible for the CPN to come to power (Thapa 2018:66). The CPN (M) used many instruments to radicalize people, particularly most of the youth population, by advocating for changes such as achieving economic equality

even at the cost of political liberty. After the cessation of the ten years armed conflict, CPN (M) secured a victory with a good deal, allowing for political power sharing. Most Maoist factions have now joined the legitimate political process, but some participants of the former Maoist insurgency remained outside of the political process and occasionally used violence or threats to meet their objectives.

The Nepali youth have experienced a prolonged violent conflict and civil war. A majority of the youth were involved in Nepal's past conflicts, including the Maoist insurgency, Madhesi Andolan (movement), and Jana Andolan. The impact of the ten year-long armed conflict²⁷ (1996-2006) radicalized Nepalese youth to such an extent that they have become more violent and aggressive.

After the political change of 2006 there was a new surge of unrest with regards to the issues of ethnic identity, indigenouness and caste (Anya Jati or non-indigenous race). Particularly, in the post-Maoist era, other groups, notably the Madhesi group, felt deprived of power and started to induce youth towards propagating violent extremism. The Madhesi group's aim has been for a separate and independent Madhesi State. The movement emerged in 2007 decisively setting the agenda for federalism (Strasheim, 2017). There were three Madhesi uprisings since 2007 which have expressed their ire against the discriminatory practices of the State; advocating for Federalism and the inclusion of marginalized communities.

Particularly, since the promulgation of the new federal Constitution of 2015, Terai Madhesi, regionally located in the southern plains of Nepal, have become agitated and politically volatile in terms of radicalized youth. Thus, if the Central government of Nepal does not identify the root causes and address the potential threat, it may lead Nepal into another bout of violent extremism in future (Thapa, 2018:64). The direct and indirect pressures from various international groups and actors have also contributed to the instability in Nepal; where the values and sentiments of different ethnic groups came into conflict with each other and were perhaps an externally imposed catalyst of youth radicalization.

THE NEPALESE MODEL OF ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

In the present context, Nepal faces threats and challenges emanating from gang violence, extremism, and radicalism, which are all interlinked. There has been a surge in competitive power centers, where various student unions and trade unions affiliated to political parties rule and dominate industries, educational institutions and most construction and development projects. Many of the academic institutions are highly controlled by student unions which are mostly in favor of attaining their objectives through violent means. Drug abuse has also become rampant. The central Government generally does not view violent extremism, specifically its ideology, as a significant threat to Nepal. Both government and civil society organizations have not developed strategic communication programs to counter violent extremist ideology. In the post-Monarchial period, politics continued to take periodic violent turns.

In Nepal, the contributions of youth to every political change are critical - from reinstating multi-party democracy to ending the monarchy. The youth survey (2010-2011) conducted by the British Council in Nepal, in partnership with the Association of Youth Organizations, observed that, most youth are playing a positive role in peacebuilding simply by choosing not to return to violence in the post-conflict reconciliation scenario. The survey found that most of the youth inherently prefer peace over violence.

In 2015, a National Youth Policy (NYP) was presented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to address the issues of concern to the youth. It was part of a strategy aimed at achieving post conflict peace, economic and social transformation. The vision of the National Youth Policy is to empower the youth of the nation towards leadership roles, thus enabling them to make meaningful contributions to political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation; creating a generation of youth who are competent, enterprising,

27. The Nepalese Civil War, known popularly as the Maoist Conflict, Maoist Insurgency or Maoist Revolution, was a tenyearlong armed conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPNM) and the government of Nepal, fought from 1996 to 2006.

creative and scientific, and have positive thinking (MoYS, 2015). The NYP has emphasized the need to streamline their capacity building as well as preserve and promote their minimum basic needs. The NYP put forth recommendations to: (a) conduct special programs to discourage the involvement of youth in various types of violence, (b) make special provisions to discourage the involvement of youth in criminal, illegal and anti-social activities, (c) to rehabilitate and reform youth involved in crimes, violence, illegal and anti-social activities.

VOLUNTEERISM AND PVE

Volunteerism is one specific aspect in which the youth of Nepal have played a crucial role. This was especially exemplified when the youth took on a major role in responding to the earthquake of 2015. This is indicative of a larger pattern, where in the post-war context, a large number of NGOs, INGOs and IGOs were key stakeholders contributing to the development of Nepalese society; particularly of the young population. They have become the engine of youth aspirations in the post-war context.

Youth volunteerism in Nepal has been used to tackle the incidence of risks that lead to violent extremism amongst the youth. In 1999, Nepal established a National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS), which is part of the Secretariat of the National Planning Commission. The NDVS's primary role is to assist the Government of Nepal in tackling poverty, as well as to evaluate how, when and why volunteering impacts poverty. The NDVS's second objective is to increase employment for young people who meet normal selection criteria for Government service and who are committed to nation building; thereby providing them with the opportunity to assist in rural and local development work (Hacker 2014).

LESSONS FROM GLOBAL CASE STUDIES

The case studies of South Africa, Rwanda and Nepal have shown that violent extremism in its manifestations and its prevention are context dependent. Therefore, these strategies may not find direct applicability in the Sri Lankan context. The youth demographic within these case studies are not homogenous in itself, therefore the different countries have different demands, grievances and aspirations by their own youth cohorts. The strategies to prevent violent extremism must always consider who the strategy is for, who it is being implemented by, for what purpose and always account for the domestic history; political social and economic landscape as well as individual identities.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's 'Circle of Courage' was another useful practice in addressing violent crimes which helped young people combat the experience of disaffection. Such an approach can be adopted in the local Sri Lankan context as well. Especially at the community level. Religious and community leaders can adopt such 'safe spaces' to discuss difficult topics with the participation of youth. A project currently being done by the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka encompasses such a strategy to bring together multi-ethnic communities to discuss the need for transitional justice mechanisms in the post-war context.

Sri Lanka could derive lessons from the initiatives taken to include youth in reconciliation and reconstruction processes in the post-apartheid period of South African Government. In Sri Lanka, reconciliation and reconstruction have been a top-down process, where the objectives and implementation have been imposed from above.

The first decade of post-Apartheid South Africa began with high hopes for the youth who enjoyed a well-organized youth cohort sector with high profile young leaders and well developed policies for advancing their needs. On the positive side, youth enjoyed their new rights and freedoms, while education was the main tangible output of the post-apartheid democracy. The ruling party, the ANC, was successful in introducing a fundamental societal change via the 1996 Constitution and recognized a broad range of human rights that completely changed the landscape of South Africa. However, a decade later, the

hope for a youth democratic dividend had begun to fade. The failure to implement integrated youth development into a range of well-functioned programmatic interventions in all parts of the country was one of the major failures of the post-apartheid government.

In the Sri Lankan context, the initial euphoria prevailing in the country after the end of the war has now dwindled. Lack of recognition of youth and lack of incorporating them into decision making structures has caused frustration and discontent amongst the youth population, especially in the Northern and Eastern Province. This underscores the importance of regional priority in training and skill development programs in the Northern and Eastern Provinces to attract more youth from these Provinces into Government structures.

In South Africa, the Freedom Charter – the moral blueprint for post-apartheid South Africa, drawn up in 1995, demanded that the “doors of learning and culture shall be opened” and committed the ANC to providing education which was free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children. Similarly, Sri Lanka could adopt a post-war, peacebuilding Charter which is not tied to a narrow political agenda. The Charter should aim to enshrine equality of all ethnicities and provide a roadmap for integration and reconciliation, with tangible targets.

RWANDA

Even though the context is different, Sri Lanka can learn lessons from Rwandan experiences in countering violent extremism in post-Genocide Rwanda. After independence, both Rwanda and Sri Lanka have witnessed the rise of ethno-political entrepreneurs, who were able to mobilize racial and ethnic political ideologies to consolidate power. A redefinition of collective identity along exclusively racial or ethnic lines paved the way for genocide in the case of Rwanda and three-decades of armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

After the genocide in Rwanda, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), established by the Government, organized conferences to help people understand the roots of genocide, and how to proceed with life in the aftermath. The Kigali Genocide Museum holds a memorial exhibit on rescuers; Hutus who endangered themselves to save Tutsis. It helps both groups see something positive about the other and serves to erase “enemy” images in post-conflict society.

Sri Lanka could adopt a similar strategy to illustrate Sinhalese-Tamil or Sinhalese-Moor unity through common cultural initiatives. In order to pursue a coherent and well-coordinated strategy in preventing violent extremism and promoting national reconciliation all the current Ministries and bodies tasked with rehabilitation, reconciliation and national unity should be combined under one authority to ensure that there is no overlap and duplication of work or mandates.

Rwanda has approached the post-Genocide era with a significant judicial response, including the setting up of an International Criminal Tribunal; addressing equal rights and discrimination in the country’s new Constitution. Sri Lanka has only undertaken reconciliation at the Government level but it has been slow to integrate post-conflict peacebuilding into its judicial system.

NEPAL

The Nepal case-study is the most relevant to Sri Lanka in addressing violent extremism through volunteerism. The first take away is that youth have been allowed to make a broad range of contributions in terms of political change, democracy and social change with regards to the governance structures of Nepal. Whereas, in the Sri Lankan case, youth are still ostracized and marginalized from official decision making processes. The Nepalese youth have been emboldened by their Government which has inculcated volunteerism into the official structures; thereby setting up a National Volunteer Service. Sri Lanka can also learn from Nepal in terms of improving the technical and vocational skills of its volunteers and conducting outreach activities across the country. Not only have the Governance

structures of Nepal allowed for a volunteer culture to be formed, but non-profit organizations and civil society at large have also empowered local communities in the country. Sri Lanka should also embrace and be open to civil society and international organizations as they allow for the financial mobilization of social modes of exercises such as volunteerism in aiding development.

The research study showed that youth have insufficient role models in their communities and are therefore vulnerable to the push and pull factors of VE. School drop-out rates are increasing as easier ways of making money are presented. For instance, young boys would rather purchase a three-wheeler and earn a daily wage, than complete their education and find employment. Even when they complete their education, often, many young people would want to secure a 'government' job rather than considering the corporate sector or becoming an entrepreneur.

As in the case of Nepal, forums and leaders of civil society and political society must get together to build platforms and offer programs that enable young people to thrive in Sri Lankan society. This should be done through investment in skills development through volunteerism. By building a hybrid (civil, state, business) platform, volunteerism should be fostered especially amongst youth in isolated communities, and volunteer exchanges should be expanded.

CHAPTER 7: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the main conclusions and key recommendations arrived at the end of the research. The methodology of the research comprised of the collection of primary data in both qualitative and quantitative forms. The quantitative data, collected through a large field survey of 2,800 youth aged between 15-29 years, was supplemented by qualitative data, gathered from focus group discussions, case studies and key informant interviews. In addition, an extensive debriefing of enumerators and interviewers was done to read between the lines of responses. Further, insights and experiences of the team leader and co-researchers in dealing with youth and youth radicalism for years helped immensely in the process of formulating the following conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are meant to provide necessary inputs in informing stakeholders and Government counterparts on actionable processes to engage young leaders in prevention of violent extremism (PVE) as well as to support youth led initiatives on PVE and in devising a broad roadmap for Sri Lanka in PVE by mobilizing youth and youth volunteers with a strategic vision.

KEY FINDINGS:

STATUS, PERSPECTIVES, POTENTIALS AND ENGAGEMENTS OF YOUTH AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

1. Sri Lanka's youth bulge that accounted for nearly one-fourth of the country's population is an asset. In general, they are dynamic, energetic and forward-looking. The majority of the youth, who were interviewed, cutting across the ethnic divide, believe that they are the future of the country, and an energetic, technologically savvy and progressive generation. The conventional perception that youth in Sri Lanka are only boisterous, restless and intrinsically rebellious does not portray a totalistic picture.
2. The majority of youth identifies themselves only as 'Sri Lankan' or as 'human beings' without other divisions. It must be noted that less than 17% identify exclusively in terms of ethnicity. However, they still consider the ethnic factor as important. This finding substantiates the fact that one can claim to the overarching Sri Lankan identity while honoring and maintaining one's own ethnic identity.
3. In the post-war context, there is a long way to go in building inter-ethnic relations among youth and in dispelling 'enemy images' towards other ethnic groups. Attitudes or feelings of nearly half of the youth towards other ethnic groups, irrespective of ethnic divide, is friendly, and animosity towards others is as low as 11-5%. However, inter-ethnic relations among youth are far from satisfactory. When different ethnic communities remain in isolation, practically and mentally, they will continue to reproduce and retransmit prejudiced and ethnically biased perceptions. Around half of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim youth think that a hierarchical order exists in Sri Lanka. Youth have experienced uncomfortable situations more due to language than ethnicity. Sri Lankan Moors/Malays give equal weightage to religion as a factor causing uncomfortable situations. We still have a long way to go in truly understanding the thinking process of youth in these communities with regard to the ethnic conflict and the war. Tamil and Sinhala youth view the impact of the military defeat of the LTTE differently. Whereas 69% of the Sinhalese respondents say that the military defeat of the LTTE was a major step towards the prevention of violent extremism, 51% Sri Lankan Tamil believe it was not.

4. Youth have a fairly good understanding on what is meant by violent extremism. However, political and social discourse of the country is still conditioned by the phenomenon of ‘countering terrorism’. Around 40% of Sinhala and Tamil youth and 33% of Moor/Malay youth agree to the definition of VE - ‘advocating, engaging, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence’. About 20% view it as ‘violence directed against the state and state institutions by non-state actors’.

5. The craving of youth for a role in the political, economic and social spheres are great and their yearning for recognition is deep. However, there is a widening gap between youth capabilities and opportunities. Youth representation in national, provincial and local level governing structures remain miserably low, despite many calls to rectify the situation. At present, the role of youth is recognized and their presence is visible only in the cultural spheres. They feel that the older generation continues to dominate political, economic and social spheres making no adequate space for the youth of the country. There are policy documents and recommendations on youth policy and the empowerment of youth. However, there seems to be no interest to implement these recommendations. When the political system is incapable of accommodating youth who demand a political role, they tend to gain entry into politics without identifying with the established political organizations.

YOUTH AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

6. Recent experiences in Sri Lanka have revealed repeatedly that youth radicalism, if not addressed prudently at the correct time, would become a precursor to violent extremism. While not curtailing the space where radical youth could vent their grievances, blocking the pathways of transition of youth radicalism into VE is a difficult but crucial challenge before Sri Lanka at present.

7. Sri Lanka cannot be complacent with the belief that the bloody phase of terrorism is over after defeating the LTTE. In the context of growing disillusionment and frustration among youth in the South, North, East and Central Provinces in the post-war period, there is the possibility of a reemergence of violent extremism in Sri Lanka. The majority of youth agrees, or agrees to some extent, to the view that violent extremism is the main factor that threatens socio-economic and political stability in the post-war context. It reflected the concerns of youth.

8. Ideology plays a critical role in propelling youth towards violent extremism. It is the ideology that justifies the violence against the ‘other’. There are mainly three types of ideologies that motivate, justify and advocate violence: (i) revolutionary political ideology based on socialist ethos; (ii) exclusive ethnic nationalism; and (iii) faith-based extremism. To youth, revolutionary political ideology is not as attractive as in the past. Other two ideologies are potent and should receive careful attention. Youth attraction to ideologies of violent extremism is a matter of concern.

9. The level of discrimination in Sri Lanka seems to be considerable from young people’s point of view. Places where these discriminations are most prevalent are in educational and work environments. The Study shows that there is a need for an understanding of gender narration with regard to VE by both sexes. The field survey found that gender discrimination is highly prevalent in certain regions around Sri Lanka. The most prominent example being the plight of women in the Northern Province, especially those who are heads of households. They face severe obstacles, such as a lack of jobs, social stigma associated with women who work outside the home, difficulty finding childcare, sexual abuse, and further discrimination by employers. A significant number of women in the North do not receive adequate support from public institutions.

10. Around two-thirds of youth, irrespective of ethnicity, believe that their expectations in post-war conditions are met to a large extent, some extent or fully. But they have a long list of concerns. Equal access to opportunities for all and equitable distribution of resources top the list. The three main push factors that could drive youth towards VE are (i) undemocratic governance, (ii) injustice and rejection of diversity in society and (iii) political exclusion.

11. There is a marked vacuum of role models for young people. The survey findings indicate an absence or inadequacy of traditional social mediators, role models and charismatic faith leaders who could earn the trust and respect of youth. 76% of the respondents endorsed the statement that absence of proper role models contributes a significant push factor for VE.

12. The positive and negative impact of the role of media, both traditional and social, in an era of information on PVE should receive serious attention. Media should be viewed as a platform to utilize skills of the youth and to mobilize their energies in PVE.

ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE IN VOLUNTEERISM

13. Volunteerism is an in-built element of traditional Sri Lankan culture. But, the socio economic context underlying traditional form of volunteerism has now been changed with the advent of modern society. However, some threads and strands ingrained in Sri Lankan culture still continue. Resurfacing of these cultural norms associated with voluntarism and self-help has been illustrated during times of natural disasters.

This study conducted in four provinces in Sri Lanka indicates that there is a relatively low level of youth volunteer activities existing in the country. As of survey data, a large proportion of youth are not members of any voluntary group/organization. Of all four provinces, youth in the Northern Province reported the highest position – 64 percent of them were not having any membership. Among the respondents who said they are members of groups or organizations, the highest percentage were/are attached to youth clubs. An overwhelmingly large proportion of youth opinion was that a majority of youth organizations do not get involved in volunteering for the betterment of their community. The main driving force for youth to engage in volunteerism is related to personality development. The survey results also points to the fact that youth give almost equal priority to picking up skills and forming networks in order to compete in the job market and to promote community development and social harmony in engaging volunteerism. They believed that volunteer activities are mostly conducted for selfish reasons or ‘hidden agendas’.

BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERISM

14. Survey data indicated that many young persons have the capacity to initiate and participate in voluntary activities, but due to changing life-styles, liberal economic & new social values and especially the changing culture of NGOs, youth have less interest in volunteerism. Majority of youth are joining NGOs by looking at them as another employment opportunity because the competitive economic structure of the country has taught them to earn money anyhow. As a result, they do not perceive NGOs as vehicles for volunteerism.

15. The study also finds that traditionally, youth organizations have higher male participation in all their activities. Evidence shows that female participation in regular activities have improved. However, higher level positions and decision making are still dominated by male youth.

16. Over-politicization of youth programs also limits the engagement of youth in volunteerism and to oppose violent extremism. Many argued that the majority of the existing youth programs are developed and implemented with political motivation, rather than studying the concern and importance of youth. Youth policies and programs are not implemented forecasting the future generation of youth, therefore, there is no sustainability in the youth programs carried out in the country.

VOLUNTEERISM & PVE

17. The recent concern and interest of the national and international community towards volunteerism shows its significance in terms of development, social justice, conflict and violent prevention in communities. However, since hegemonic nationalism and extremism became highly influential in the

post-civil war context in Sri Lanka, the added-value of youth volunteerism, particularly in preventing violent extremism (PVE), began declining and youth became active in violent extremism. Politicians and nationalist forces also induced youth to be active in violent extremism for their political ends. It directly reflects that the Government and the respective people or organizations have paid less attention to youth volunteerism and were not capable to generate support from youth to prevent violent extremism. In fact there are a few volunteer groups in Sri Lanka which involve youth from all ethnic groups to address some social issues.

Due to a number of factors, such as - the influence of violent political culture and a lack of visionary political leaders, the emergence of more extreme nationalist forces, religious extremism and their influence in society, increasingly materialized among youth and adults, the competitive teacher & examination-centred education system, and the lack of policies and programs focusing on the value of volunteerism- it has become apparent that the present day youth do not have much concern for the value of volunteerism in building peace and resolving conflict in their communities. Rather, they respond to any action or conflict situation in a violent way. Further, the above identified factors do not allow young people to acquire the knowledge and skills required to engage in volunteer work and to prevent violent extremism.

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS FOR PVE

18. Assessing the nature of the current engagement of youth as volunteers in PVE was considered a major focus of this study. It was identified that youth volunteerism is increasing in the area of emergency relief and social justice but is very much lacking in terms of preventing violent extremism and building peaceful communities. Survey data indicates the poor involvement of youth in volunteer organizations working for preventing violence and enhancing community or social unity at the local level. Nearly 75 and 68 percent of youth from the Southern Province and Northern Province respectively have stated that youth volunteerism for PVE is under-utilized or not utilized at all in the country. As the data suggest, it is observed that the current engagement of youth volunteerism in order to prevent violent extremism and building peaceful communities is very poor and there are very few organizations and programs driving youth towards volunteerism, particularly in PVE.

Although youth involvement in anti-Government civil riots, violent ethnic conflict, and civil war in the Southern, Northern and the Eastern Provinces were high, their engagement in youth groups or organizations -which are major drivers of youth volunteerism- is relatively low. This also shows that youth volunteerism is not always active in the country, but rather emerges sporadically as issues emerge. On the other hand, the majority of youth involved in the survey mentioned that they are involved in youth volunteer activities for personal development, to obtain leadership training, and professional advancement. Only less than one-quarter of them mentioned they were involved in volunteer activities to contribute to social harmony and progress, which will directly support PVE at any level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes the following recommendations and identifies three time frames for implementation of recommendations: short-term (0 – 12 months), mid-term (1 to 4 years) and long-term (5 to 10 years). These timeframes are not 'start dates' instead the amount of time required for implementing the recommendation.

In order to include young people as partners for peace, policy makers and social leaders must view young people from a positive perspective and recognize their active and important role in peacebuilding.

- There is an urgent need for an attitude change in the older generation with regards to the youth and youth radicalism. This change must be reflected in appropriate changes in the policy-making process and in governance by taking youth-sensitive approaches.
- Radical youth should be viewed as whistle-blowers and as early warning signals of violent extremism. The difference between radicalism and subversion needs to be clearly defined.
- Implementation of a systematic plan that coordinates all the stakeholders with strategic vision to achieve national reconciliation is mandatory in order to thwart narrow ethno-nationalism. At present there are many agencies and institutions that deal with different elements of national reconciliation. The coordination and collaboration amongst these agencies and institutions needs to improve.

Ensure equality of all ethnic identities as the constituent elements of Sri Lankan identity.

Mid-term interventions

- Translate equality of ethnicity into concrete policy actions in respective public policy spheres and give priority to develop ethnic affairs policy in order to make necessary administrative reforms.
- Initiate an island-wide discourse with the objective of adopting a 'Post-war National Reconciliation Charter', similar to the 'Freedom Charter of South Africa' in 1995.
- Based on the discourse, develop a roadmap for the implementation of the Post-war National Reconciliation Charter.

Initiate Inter-Ethnic Dialogue to Promote Multi-ethnicity

Short-term interventions

- Create forums for youth to exchange views freely. Dialogue is the best way to dispel misunderstanding and mistrust. Pilot project on community history involving Jaffna and Colombo university students launched by the Department of History of the Colombo University provides a good example in this regard. Civil society organizations, on both sides of the ethnic divide, should get together to offer a forum for youth to exchange their views freely.
- Launch a social media campaign island-wide to illustrate positive examples and benefits of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural youth leadership and activities that are currently being carried out at the community level. Social media penetration in Sri Lanka is quite high, especially amongst the youth cohort. This medium can be channeled, especially in opening up alternative avenues towards isolated communities, and therefore alleviate issues pertaining to a lack of plurality.

Mid-term interventions

- Establish a 'National Multi-Cultural Museum' to highlight and promote multi-ethnic and multi-cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, by drawing lessons from the 'Kigali Genocide Museum' which played a positive role in changing the divisive mindset of the people of post-genocide Rwanda

Long-term interventions

- There is a growing realization of the need to acquire English and other language skills. The link language of English needs more promotion by the State to foster inclusion across ethnicities. The State needs to invest in training and educational courses that simultaneously offer English and skills development. In addition to the facilitation of interaction contacts, this will equip the younger generation to gain a competitive advantage in the job market.

- The role that education can play in promoting or dispelling ethnic bias and stereotypes of other ethnicities is critically important. Education reforms and school curriculum development are very important policy priorities for the government in the post-war context. It needs serious thinking and a systematic approach. Education practices and the national curriculum must incorporate the history of Sri Lanka's civil war and the victories achieved as a nation. Such an approach will ensure that future generations of Sri Lankan youth are aware of VE in general, as well as the challenges that exist in preventing them.

Ensure youth-Centered political reforms

Short-term interventions:

- Make sure that institutional apparatus of the state should be accessible to all youth.
- Mobilize youth to ignite new discourse on PVE and expand social and political discourse on terrorism to capture the phenomena of 'prevention of violent extremism'.
- The state should take the lead in mobilizing youth in PVE discourse and integrate other stakeholders by giving them appropriate roles to play. Discourse on PVE is meant to identify push and pull factors of violent extremism in Sri Lanka and develop a national plan of action with due attention to good international practices. In the multi-ethnic context, it is essential to take systematic steps in the direction of building trust and confidence among ethnic groups in order to address sources of VE in Sri Lanka.

Mid-term interventions:

- Promote participatory democracy and good governance in order to deflate the push and pull factors of VE.
- Ensure political space for the youth by widening democratic political space and calibrating democratic political processes, which will in turn adequately address the challenge of revolutionary political ideology linked to VE.

Decrease the gap between youth capabilities and opportunities.

Short-term interventions

- Youth leadership in PVE should not be confined solely to the narrow space of 'youth policy'. A systematic process should be adopted at the National level in reviewing existing youth policies and practices, particularly adopted in the post-war context, such as the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament-SLYP (2010), National Youth Policy (2014), and acts which govern some youth related programs and institutions such as, The National Youth Social Innovation Challenge (2017) and implementing volunteer components as part of these existing structures. Both formal institutions of the State and informal institutions must work in partnership to address violent extremism.

Mid-term interventions

- Examine why earlier attempts to increase youth representation in politics did not work and guarantee a space for youth to play a positive role in politics. For example, established political leaders, ensure easy entry of their young kith and kin into politics, and manipulating the youth quota system proposed by the Youth Commission. Prevailing political culture and practices negated the true objectives of these proposals. In order to ensure a role and space, there should be a genuine commitment on the part of political and administrative decision-makers to move towards taking necessary policy initiatives. The main political parties have a bigger role to accommodate emerging youth leaders.
- Introduce a system of social auditing in all provincial level development projects, and youth leaders in the area should be accommodated as social auditors. Accordingly, youth energy and commitment could be utilized to check corruption and waste. At the same time, it would assign an important role for youth leaders in the region.

Youth Radicalization Should be addressed to prevent it from Transferring into VE

Short-term interventions

- Different pathways from youth radicalism to violent extremism should be unpacked systematically. How to approach youth radicalism effectively, preventing it from moving towards violent extremism is a national priority; it needs to be placed above narrow political interests.
- Learn from negative and positive experiences of the past and trace good practices to develop a coordinated strategic plan and vision to deal with future possible scenarios of violent extremism. Prevention is more effective than countering violent extremism. Failure of prevention leads to countering where its human and material cost would be enormously high.

Mid-term intervention

- Initiate a broader national dialogue on how to handle youth radicalism in order to build a broad national consensus. Political, administrative and business leadership, media, civil society organizations and faith leaders must initiate or take part in this discourse along with youth leaders and their opinion-makers.

Address Youth-Based Grievances by giving them a Priority

Mid-term interventions

- Initiate necessary steps establish an independent office of Youth Ombudsman with necessary powers to deal with complaints regarding the delivery of services to youth needs to be established without delay, as proposed in the National Youth Policy.
- A gender approach should be given attention to by key stakeholders, implementing actionable policies and programs to PVE that inspire youth leadership.
- Special attention must be paid to single mother-headed families and take multi-level initiatives to engage directly with them and promote their participation in the public sphere. The space should be created for them to voice their opinions, grievances and to make their contributions to the relevant policy making process as well as in the community at large. Rather than addressing gender-based grievances through general strategies and initiatives, the government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders should first directly consult these women about what exactly they need, in order to provide them with more effective and pragmatic support. This consultation can even be done through youth volunteer organizations, who can then relay their gathered information to the relevant policy makers.

Mobilize faith leaders and promote role models for youth

Short-term interventions

- Widening the democratic political space and process would adequately address the challenge of revolutionary political ideology. The more difficult challenge is how to address the challenges posed by exclusive ethno-nationalism and faith-based ideology that motivate youth towards violent extremism. Mobilize faith leaders against faith-based violent extremism and initiate a discourse with youth on how to handle this challenge.
- Encourage faith leaders to set up 'safe spaces' for the youth to discuss 'difficult' issues with identified stakeholders by drawing appropriate lessons from 'the Circle of Courage' in post-Apartheid South Africa

Mid-term interventions

- Youth really need role models to set their life goals and expectations. As a result of disintegration of traditional patterns of social relations in the face of rapid social and cultural change in the digital age, the validity and influence of conventional role models of the youth is withering away. Ethno-political entrepreneurs could make use of this vacuum for their advantage. A 'Role model' is a social and political construct. The responsibility of social and political leadership in this regard is very high. Education systems and media should be mobilized to address this issue with a strategic vision. All these observations point to the need for a comprehensive national action plan on prevention of VE.

Identify Pathways from Radicalization to VE

Mid-term interventions

- Policy makers must make note of the fact that media is a double-edged weapon as far as violent extremism is concerned. It can be used to induce youth to violent extremism. In addition, community/ cultural myths and predispositions accounting for 'enemy' images are perhaps rooted in patterns of information absorption. At the same token, media can be used to prevent youth from resorting to violence.
- Youth leadership in terms of internships and work placements should be encouraged in the media sector to counter some of the negative aspects of information dissemination that can lead to VE.
- If young people from diverse backgrounds are given a platform and voice in local media, they can shape the narrative of youth leadership, especially with regards to PVE. In addition, young people can also implement social media components in traditional media organizations that can foster common platforms to address social issues in the form of protests, campaigns and public meetings, which encourage non-violent means.

De-politicization of Youth Programmes

Mid-term interventions

- Give priority to organize, develop and implement programs by younger generations without any political motivation. Young people should have necessary support and guidance from the government to initiate and implement such programmes.
- Promote and provide relevant space for female leadership in voluntary organizations.
- Change the culture of NGOs to motivate youth to get involved in NGO work without looking at them as job providers.
- Revitalize volunteerism as a tool of social progress including PVE through a well-designed program for youth leaders to acquire necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills.
- Create adequate awareness on utility of volunteerism in PVE to parents and teachers as they can play a key role to influencing the young generation towards to volunteerism.

Foster a Culture of Volunteerism

Mid-term interventions

- Re-invent the traditional norms and ethos and combine them with modern structures and cultures to promote volunteerism.
- Strengthen youth forums to attract more youth volunteers for developing better leaders. State, private sector, civil society and INGOs should work together to strengthen these platforms.
- Build a regional approach to volunteerism that is adopted by key stakeholders. Priority should be accorded to Northern and Eastern provinces by mobilizing youth to engage in volunteer activities across the country.
- Foster a culture of volunteerism, especially amongst youth in isolated communities, through exchange of volunteers.

EPILOGUE

Sri Lanka is sitting on top of a volcano as far as violent extremism and its potency to lure youth is concerned. Though majority of young people are of the view that conditions of the country have improved since the end of the war, we cannot afford to be complaisant. Political, economic and social factors and conditions that gave birth to violent extremism in the past still remain more or less unattended. Faith-based global terrorism adds a new dimension to local scenarios. It is never too late to wake up from the slumber reminiscing the memory of defeating the most ruthless terrorist organization in the world militarily. It is a collective responsibility to defuse the volcano in a systematic manner with a national plan of strategy. As an integral part of a multi-faceted strategy, a systematic campaign must be carried out to promote culture of peace among youth to counter the culture of violence.. When extremism associated violence becomes a part of culture, it is not easy to uproot it. Energy and dedication of Youth could be channeled by reinventing deep-rooted ethos of voluntarism and stimulating local mechanisms to achieve that objective. A well-coordinated plan of action at national and provincial levels to utilize skills and capabilities of youth leaders and volunteers in art and culture, and on social media should be systematically launched with the participation of state institutions, business sector, NGOs, media institutions, faith -leaders and intellectuals. National and regional coordinating committees should be set up for this purpose through which the support of all stakeholders can be channeled.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTION TEMPLATE FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND CASE STUDIES

GUIDE FOR FGDS & KIIS

Type of group/ Name of the informant.....

Institution.....

Position.....

Location.....

Date.....

1. The term extremism can be interpreted differently, depending on the context of its use. Then, how do you define 'Violent Extremism' in our context? In your view, what are its manifestations?
2. In the past Sri Lanka suffered heavily from violent extremism, in the South as well as in the North. In your opinion what would be the prospects/possibilities for recurring violent extremism once again in the country? What would be its possible forms?
3. How do you view the link between political activism of the youth and violent extremism in the country, in the past as well as in the future?
4. To what extent has Sri Lanka created the policies and political space for young people and young leaders to engage in the construction of peace, identity and reconciliation since the end of the armed conflict? Can you please give positive examples?
5. What are the practical steps that should be taken to empower the youth and channel their voluntarism as a force and a strategy in the prevention of violent extremism in the country?
6. What are the steps that need to be taken to prevent the youth from falling into the path of violent extremism in the future?
7. What are the constraints and limits that would confront in mobilizing volunteerism of youth as a bulwark against the recurrence of violent extremism?

APPENDIX 2: DISTRICT/PROVINCIAL POPULATIONS AND TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE FOR THE SURVEY

Province/District	Population
Central Province	2,571,557
Kandy	1,375,382
Nuwara Eliya	711,644
Matale	484,531
Southern Province:	2,477,285
Galle	1,063,334
Matara	814,048
Hambantota	599,903
Eastern Province	1,555,510
Ampara	649,402
Batticaloa	526,567
Trincomale	379,541
Northern Province	1,061,315
Jaffna	583,882
Vavuniya	172,115
Kilinochci	113,510
Mannar	99,570
Mullaitivu	92,238
Total population of 4 Provinces:	7,665,667
Total sample size for questionnaires:	2,800

APPENDIX 3: SELECTED DISTRICT DIVISIONS

Province	District	Selected DS Division
Southern	Galle	Nagoda
		Galle Four Gravets
		Yakkalamulla
	Hambantota	Thissamaharama
		Hambantota
		Tangalle
	Matara	Kotapola
		Weligama
		Matara Four Gravets
Eastern	Batticaloa	Eravur Pattu
		Manmunai North
		Kattankudy
	Ampara	Samanthurai
		Karativu
		Ninthavur
	Trincomalee	Trincomalee Town and Gravets
		Kinniya
		Seruvila
Northern	Jaffna	Valikamam North
		Vadamaradchi North (Point Perdro)
		Jaffna
	Mannar	Mannar Town
		Manthai West
		Musalai
	Mullaitivu	Oddusuddan
		Maritimepattu
		Welioya
	Vavuniya	Vavuniya South
		Vavuniya
		Vengalacheddikulam
	Killinochchi	Kandavalai
		Karachchi
		Poonakary
Central	Kandy	Gagwata Korale
		Udawalpala
		Pasbage Korale
	Matale	Matale
		Rattoto
		Ukuwela
	Nuwara Eliya	Kothmale
		Nuwara Eliya
		Ambagamuwa

APPENDIX 4: TOTAL RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO ETHNIC GROUPS AND DISTRICT/PROVINCE

Province/District		Sinhalese	Sri Lankan Tamils	Up-Country Tamils	Sri Lankan Moors	Other	Total
Southern Province	Galle	313	11	08	41	0	373
	Matara	247	06	11	14	0	278
	Hambantota	202	02	0	04	09	217
	Total	762	19	19	59	09	868
Eastern Province	Batticaloa	04	123	0	86	02	215
	Ampara	97	48	0	108	0	253
	Trincomalee	43	41	01	61	02	148
	Total	144	212	1	255	4	616
Northern Province	Jaffna	02	242	0	03	0	247
	Mannar	01	27	01	11	0	40
	Mullaitivu	14	24	01	01	0	40
	Vavuniya	25	43	01	07	0	76
	Killinochchi	01	43	01	0	0	45
	Total	43	379	4	22	0	448
Central Province	Kandy	277	41	73	73	5	469
	Matale	111	15	15	24	0	165
	Nuwara Eliya	75	12	138	09	0	234
	Total	463	68	226	106	5	868

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

CONFIDENTIAL

The purpose of this study: The study is conducted by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) with the support of academics attached to the University of Peradeniya, to understand the role of youth leadership and volunteerism in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka. The information collected will help improve the strategy and mechanism in the prevention of violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

Expected time commitment for this study is: About one hour.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to the participants of this study, however, we hope that the information obtained from this study may generate and enhance policies related to peace, reconciliation and social harmony in Sri Lanka.

Confidentiality: Participation in this survey is voluntary. Information gathered here by no means will be used for political purpose covertly or overtly and they will be strictly limited to academic and research purposes.

Person to Contact: Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact the researcher at po3@rcss.org or 0112690764.

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Serial No: _____

Name of Enumerator:

Date of interview:

Province							
Southern	1	Central	2	Eastern	3	Northern	4
District:						Number:	
D.S. Division:						Number:	
GN Division:		Name:				Number:	
Name of MC/UC/Pradesiya Sabha:							
Name of City/Village/Estate:							
Respondent Records							
Respondent:		Name:					
		Address:					
..... Interviewer Signature							

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC, EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION CODES

Col. 1.3: Religion		Col. 1.7(i): Educational Attainment	
Buddhist	1	Primary school education only (Grade 1-5)	1
Hindu	2	Middle school education only (Grade 6 to 9)	2
Islam	3	High school education only (Grade 10-13)	3
Christian/ Catholic	4	Vocational training and technical education/ Diploma/certificate course	4
Other	5	Presently an undergraduate	5
		Graduate	6
Col. 1.4: Ethnicity		Post-graduate degree (M.A./ M.Sc./ Ph.D. / reading for or obtained)	7
Sinhalese	1	Professional Education (Law, Accountancy, Architecture etc.)	8
Sri Lankan Tamil	2	No formal schooling	9
Up-country Tamil	3	Other	10
Sri Lankan Muslim/Moor	4		
Sri Lankan Malay	5	Col. 1.7(ii): If you have not proceeded beyond middle school, identify the main reason	
Burgher	6	Economic hardships	1
Other	7	Lack of education facilities	2
		Harassment in the school/class room	3
Col. 1.5: Marital Status		Health reasons	4
Single	1	Because I got an employment opportunity	5
Married	2	Lost my interest in education	6
Divorced	3	Other	7
Widow	4		
Widower	5	Col. 1.7(iii): If you have not proceeded beyond high school, identify the main reason:	
Separated	6	Economic hardships	1
Other	7	Failed to jump over examination bars	2
		Lack of education facilities	3
Col.1.6: Age		No proper guidance given to me	4
15-19	1	Health reasons	5
20-24	2	Because I received an employment opportunity	6
25-29	3	Lost my interest in education	7
		Other	8

Col. 1.8(i) If you have ever received institutionalised religious education, please identify from where you obtained it		Col. 1.9: Employment Status	
Dhamma School at a Buddhist temple	1	Unemployed	1
Sunday School at a Catholic/Christian Church	2	Full-time student	2
Quran Madrasa at a Mosque	3	Part-time employed	3
Araneri at a Hindu Temple	4	Self-employed	4
None	5	Volunteer	5
Other	6	Homemaker	6
		Government employee	7
Col. 1.8(ii) Please indicate the duration of your institutionalized religious education		Semi-Government employee	8
1-2 years	1	Private sector employee	9
3-5 years	2	Casual Worker	10
Over 5 years	3		
		Col.1.10: Place of residence	
		Urban	1
		Semi-urban	2
		Rural	3
		Estate	4

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC, EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

1.1	Serial Number
1.2	Sex M = 1 F = 2 O=3
1.3	Religion
1.4	Ethnicity
1.5	Marital Status
1.6	Age
1.7(i)	Educational Attainment
1.7(ii)	If you have not proceeded beyond middle school, identify the reason
1.7(iii)	If you have not proceeded beyond high school, identify the reason
1.8(i)	If you have ever received institutionalised religious education, please identify from where you obtained it
1.8(ii)	Please indicate the duration of your institutionalized religious education
1.9	Employment Status
1.10	Place of residence

SECTION 2: IDENTITY AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION

2.1	I wish to identify myself: (Please circle the most appropriate number)	
	Only as a Sri Lankan	1
	Not only as a Sri Lankan but also as a member of my ethnic group	2
	Not only as a Sri Lankan but as a member of my religious/faith group too	3
	Not only as a Sri Lankan but also as a member of my ethnic group and a member of my religious/faith group	4
	Only as a member of my ethnic group	5
	Only as a member of my ethnic group and a member of my religious/faith group	6
	Simply a human being without all other divisions	7
Other	8	

2.2	If someone identifies themselves in terms of ethnicity and/or religion, please identify how important you consider this to be. (Please circle the appropriate number)	
	Very important	1
	Important	2
	Not important	3
	Should not be a factor	4
Do not know	5	

Instruction 2.3				
Please fill in the following table using the scale given to you. 1 = Very friendly , 5 = Animosity				
1	2	3	4	5
Very friendly	Friendly	Ambivalence	Distant	Animosity

2.3	Please describe your feelings towards the following ethnic groups in Sri Lanka	
2.3.1	Sinhalese	1
2.3.2	Sri Lankan Tamils	2
2.3.3	Sri Lankan Muslims/Moors	3
2.3.4	Up-country Tamils	4
2.3.5	Sri Lankan Malay	5
2.3.6	Burghers	6

Instruction 2.4				
Please fill in the following table using the scale given to you. 1= Very close, 5= No relationship				
1	2	3	4	5
Very close	Close	Normal	Distant	No relationship

2.4.	Please describe your relationship with the following ethnic groups in Sri Lanka	
2.4.1	Sinhalese	1
2.4.2	Sri Lankan Tamils	2
2.4.3	Sri Lankan Muslims/Moors	3
2.4.4	Up-country Tamils	4
2.4.5	Sri Lankan Malay	5
2.4.6	Burghers	6

2.5	(i)	Do you think that a hierarchical order of ethnicity exists in Sri Lanka? Yes = 1, No = 2, Don't Know = 3			
	(ii)	If you answered (1) in the previous question, please indicate how you perceive the prevailing hierarchical order of these ethnicities to be:			
		Sinhalese	1		
		Sri Lankan Tamil	2		
		Muslims	3		
		Upcountry Tamils	4		
		Sri Lankan Malays	5		
Burgher	6				
	(iii)	Do you condone such a hierarchy? Yes = 1, No = 2, Don't Know = 3			

Please circle the appropriate numbers to the questions from 2.6 to 2.11

2.6	How comfortable are you to interact with someone from a different ethnic/religious background to your own?		
	Comfortable		1
	Uncomfortable		2
	Ambivalent		3

2.7	(i)	How often do you confront situations where you are uncomfortable due to your ethnicity, language, religion, culture, gender and class?	
		Often	1
		Sometimes	2
		Rarely	3
		Never	4
	(ii)	Which factor is it mainly due to?	
		Ethnicity	1
		Religion	2
		Language	3
		Culture	4
		Gender	5
		Class	6
		Other	7

2.8	How important is having friends from other ethnic/religious or any other groups? (Please circle the appropriate number)	
	Very important	1
	Somewhat important	2
	Not important	3

2.9	How important is having friends with a variety of political opinions? (Please circle the appropriate number)	
	Very important	1
	Somewhat important	2
	Not important	3

2.10	(i)	Do you think you have been discriminated against in Sri Lanka? (Please circle the appropriate number)		
		Yes	1	
		No	2	
	(ii)	If you answered (1) in the previous question, in which situations/ places has it occurred?(Please circle the appropriate number)		
		School/ Educational institutions		1
		At public offices / workplaces		2
		At private establishments		3
		At public/social events/festivals/meetings etc.		4
		In Police stations and courts		5
Other		6		

2.11	To what extent have your expectations of the post-war conditions been met? (Please circle the appropriate number)		
	Fully		1
	To a large extent		2
	To some extent		3
	Very little		4
	Not at all		5

SECTION 3: VIOLENCE / VIOLENT EXTREMISM

3.1	What is your understanding about violent extremism in general? (Mark most appropriate 3 statements)		
	Advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence		1
	Violence directed against the state and state agencies by non-state actors		2
	Violence directed against the community/ individuals by non-state actors		3
	Violent actions carried out by the state exceeding its legal limits		4
	Violent actions carried out by the youth against state repression		5
	A criminal and/or anti-social activity		6
	An act of terrorism		7
	A generic feature in every human society		8
Other		9	

3.2	Do you believe that women are radicalized into violent extremism in different ways than men? (Please circle the appropriate number)		
	Yes		1
	No		2

3.3	In your opinion, do you feel that gender should be a crucial factor taken into consideration when designing programmes to tackle violent extremism? (Please circle the appropriate number)		
	Yes		1
	No		2

SECTION 4: SOURCES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

Please circle the appropriate number to the question from 4.1 to 4.6

4.1	As a youth, do you see the manifestation of violent extremism in Sri Lanka as mainly:	
	against the Government	1
	by the Government	2
	against ethnic minorities	3
	by the ethnic minorities	4
	against religious minorities	5
	by the religious minorities	6
Other	7	

4.2	In your opinion, why are youth in Sri Lanka attracted to Violent Extremism?	
	Economic exclusion	1
	Political Exclusion	2
	Undemocratic governance	3
	Injustice and rejection of diversity in society	4
	Attraction to the ideology of extremism	5
	Recognition and the role given to youth by violent extremism	6
	Attraction to the leadership of violent extremism and peer persuasion	7
	Perceived threat and fear, suspicion or distrust vis-à-vis the other group	8
None of the above	9	

4.3	(i)	Were you directly affected by any violent incidents that took place in the country in the past?	
		Yes	1
		No	2
	(ii)	If you answered (1) to the above question, then please indicate which incident:	
		The 1971 youth uprising	1
		Election violence in the country	2
		1983 ethnic riots and anti-Tamil communal violence	3
		The Southern insurrection in the late 1980s	4
		Activities of the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups	5
		Military conflict between the LTTE and the State	6
		Anti-Muslim riots	7
Other	8		

4.4	According to your view, outbursts of violent extremism in the country since the end of the war were caused by:	
	Xenophobia propagated by ethno-political entrepreneurs for narrow political ends	1
	Failure to build trust and confidence among ethnic groups	2
	Reaction to extremist narrations and networks through social media and devices of information technology	3
	Reaction to extremist tendencies allegedly emanating amongst particular communities	4
	Failure of the state to take appropriate action at the proper time	5
	National repercussions of global trends	6
	Other	7
	Perceived threat and fear, suspicion or distrust vis-à-vis the other group	8
None of the above	9	

4.5	Do you agree to the statement that violent extremism is the main factor that threatens the political, economic and social stability of Sri Lanka in the post-war period?	
	Yes I strongly agree	1
	I agree	2
	I agree to some extent	3
	I do not agree	4
Don't know	5	

4.6	(i)	After 2009, has your level of awareness on the importance of preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka:	
		Increased significantly	1
		Increased	2
		Remained the same	3
		Decreased	4
	Decreased Significantly	5	
	(ii)	If you answered (1) or (2) in the previous question, has this increase in awareness changed your attitude and/or behaviour in preventing violent extremism?	
		Yes	1
		No	2

SECTION 5: PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

5.1	What is the most important thing that is missing in Sri Lanka that would make you feel more free? (Please circle the appropriate number)	
	Equal access to opportunities for all	1
	Equitable distribution of resources	2
	The ability to live without violence and fear	3
	The ability to make my own life choices without being subjected to any discrimination against me	4
	The opportunity to partake in the political process	5
	The freedom to protest against authority	6
	The freedom to live and work anywhere	7

5.2	In your opinion, what is the most serious issue affecting your community today? (Please circle the appropriate number)	
	Lack of economic and employment opportunities	1
	Lack of access to proper education facilities	2
	Inequality in income distribution	3
	Absence of the rule of law	4
	Corruption and misuse of power	5
	Mismanagement of economy	6
	Street violence	7
	Gender based violence	8
Drugs and alcohol	9	

Instruction 5.3				
Please fill in the following table using the scale given to you.				
1	2	3	4	5
Very high	Acceptable	Low	No trust	Don't Know

5.3	What is your level of trust of the following formal institutions in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka?	
5.3.1	Central Government	
5.3.2	Parliament	
5.3.3	The Judicial system	
5.3.4	Provincial and Local Government authorities	
5.3.5	Police	
5.3.6	Army	
5.3.7	Political parties	
5.3.8	Public media	

Instruction 5.4 Please fill in the following table using the scale given to you.				
1	2	3	4	5
Very high	Acceptable	Low	No trust	Don't Know

5.4	What is your level of trust of the following formal institutions in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka?			
5.4.1	Community based organizations			
5.4.2	Religious institutions			
5.4.3	Social Media			
5.4.4	Social/Sports clubs			
5.4.5	Trade unions / Student unions			
5.4.6	Arts and Cultural Forums			
5.4.7	Youth Groups			
5.4.8	Non-Governmental Organizations			

Please circle the appropriate number to the questions from 5.5 to 5.10

5.5	In your view, how effective have the overall efforts of the Government been in preventing violent extremism	
	Very effective	1
	Effective	2
	Moderately effective	3
	Not effective	4
	Do not know	5

5.6	In your view, what should be the foremost priority of the Government in preventing violent extremism in the future?	
	Continue current reconciliation strategies and programmes with more vigour as they satisfactorily address the problem.	1
	Plan and implement peace building/ reconciliation programmes in a more inclusive manner (with participation of men, women, youth, rural, urban and differently abled etc.)	2
	Mobilize state institutions effectively to prevent recurrence of violent extremism because deliverability is the priority.	3
	Build trust and confidence among communities to dispel fear and suspicion through innovative steps, as we have failed so far in building a harmonious society.	4
	Broaden structures of democratic governance, through political reforms, to integrate marginalized elements in society into the decision making process.	5
	Expansion of economic opportunities for youth, as well as to the broader society, and equitable distribution of resources.	6
	Open up more avenues for advancement of the youth through education and skill development.	7
	Reform the system of education to counter ethnic biases and prejudices.	8
	Mobilize community leaders, including the youth and faith leaders, against violent extremism.	9
Other	10	

5.7	Do you trust the civil society organizations in Sri Lanka and believe in their activities as successful bulwarks against violent extremism?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3

5.8	Do you think any international/multilateral institutions have the capacity in preventing violent extremist acts in Sri Lanka?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3

5.9	Do you know any volunteer /youth/women organization in your area which is working on preventing violence?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3

5.10	Are they (youth volunteer organizations) successful in their efforts?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3

SECTION 6: YOUTH' ROLE IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

Please circle the appropriate number to the questions from 6.1 to 6.5

6.1	How do you see the general perception of youth in Sri Lankan society?	
	Future of the country	1
	Drivers of peace and national unity	2
	Energetic, technologically savvy and progressive generation	3
	Victims of the mistakes of the older generation	4
	A restless and frustrated group	5
	A force that can be easily manipulated for political ends	6
	Other	7

6.2	How does the youth perceive the older generation of Sri Lanka?	
	The group committed to develop the country	1
	The group largely responsible for the current divisions of the country	2
	The group who exploits the younger generation	3
	The group who does not believe in the abilities/skills of the younger generation	4
	The group who supports and guides the younger generation to be future leaders	5
	The group who monopolized opportunities and exploited resources selfishly	6

6.3	In your opinion, how should young people harness their energy and enthusiasm for a positive environment, deterring violent extremism?	
	Taking part in self-help activities	1
	Organizing informal groups against violent extremism	2
	Networking on social media against ideological extremism	3
	Employ art and culture to promote ethnic harmony	4
	Help identify early warning signals of ethnic disharmony	5
	Play a mediatory role in their respective societies to de-escalate tension	6
	None of the above	7

6.4	What are the factors adversely affecting the role of the youth in preventing violent extremism?	
	Negative attitude of authorities about the youth	1
	No opening for youth to play an effective role	2
	Feeling that violent extremism is justifiable	3
	Apathy for socio-political issues	4
	Feeling of helplessness	5
	Division among youth – according to their ethnicity, religion, rural- urban, gender diversities	6
	Fear of threat from extremist elements	7
	None of the above	8

6.5	How can youth contribute to the prevention of violent extremism in Sri Lanka?	
	Organizing activities which promote ethnic harmony and national unity, such as cultural events /shows, concerts, sports activities/tournaments, community activities	1
	Promote respect for ethnic and religious diversity	2
	Respect human rights, equality and freedom of all ethnic, religious and gender groups	3
	Prevent friends and youth becoming a victim to extremist propaganda	4
	Channel energies and enthusiasm towards non-violent social and political change	5
	Getting involved in the reconciliation initiatives of the State	6
	Contribute to develop alternative narration to counter violent extremist narration on online and offline platforms	7
	Other	8

SECTION 7: YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN SRI LANKA

Please circle the appropriate number to the questions from 7.1 to 7.8

7.1	Have you heard about youth volunteerism in general?	
	Yes	1
	No	2

7.2	(i)	Were /Are you a member of any groups or organizations in the last 12 months		
		Yes	1	
		No	2	
	(ii)	If you answered (1) in the previous question, what type of groups or organizations are or were they?		
		Youth clubs		1
		Women's organisations/ Kantha Samithis		2
		Sports clubs		3
		Religious associations		4
		Community organizations		5
		Charity organizations/ funeral aid societies		6
		Job related organizations		7
		Political groups		8
		Cultural groups		9
		Village self-help societies		10
Other		11		

7.3	During the past year have you attended a youth committee meeting?		
	Often		1
	Several times		2
	Once		3
	Never		4

7.4	How often do you think youth organisations / groups in your area get involved in volunteering for the betterment of their community?		
	All the time		1
	Often		2
	Occasionally		3
	Never		4

7.5	How often do you volunteer to help with the activities of your groups or organizations?		
	Everyday		1
	Once a week		2
	Once a month		3
	Quarterly		4
	Once a year		5
	Other		6

7.6	What is your understanding about youth volunteerism?		
	A form of voluntary participation in civic activities		1
	A form of advocacy and campaigning for common interests		2
	Sacrifice your labour for the common good without charge		3
	Protest against power and authority		4
	First step to enter politics		5
	A source of material benefit / monetary reward		6
	Other		7

7.7	In your view, what is the main driving force for youth to engage in volunteerism?	
	To obtain leadership training	1
	For personality development	2
	Professional advancement	3
	To enter party politics	4
	Achieving social capital	5
	Contribution to social harmony and progress	6
Self-satisfaction	7	

7.8	Do you think, in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka, youth volunteerism is	
	Sufficiently utilized	1
	Under-utilized	2
	Not utilized	3
Don't know	4	

SECTION 8: OPPORTUNITIES, PROBLEMS AND BARRIERS IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

Please circle the appropriate number to the questions from 8.1 to 8.10

8.1	Do you think that the military defeat of the LTTE is a major step toward the prevention of violent extremism in Sri Lanka?	
	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3

8.2	In your view, at present, compared to the pre-2009 period,		
	(i)	The enemy images/perceptions towards other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka:	
		Has deepened substantially	1
		Is deepening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
		Is disappearing slowly	4
	Has disappeared substantially	5	
	(ii)	The enemy images/perceptions towards other religious groups in Sri Lanka:	
		Has deepened substantially	1
		Is deepening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
		Is disappearing slowly	4
	Has disappeared substantially	5	

8.3	In your view, at present, compared to the pre-2009 period,		
	(i)	The psychological distance among ethnic groups in Sri Lanka:	
		Has widened substantially	1
		Is widening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
		Is reducing slowly	4
	Has reduced substantially	5	
	(ii)	The psychological distance among religious groups in Sri Lanka:	
		Has widened substantially	1
		Is widening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
Is reducing slowly		4	
Has reduced substantially	5		

8.4	In your view, at present, compared to the pre-2009 period,		
	(i)	Exaggerated ethnic-centrism in political and public life of the country:	
		Has deepened substantially	1
		Is deepening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
		Is disappearing slowly	4
	Has disappeared substantially	5	
	(ii)	Exaggerated ethnic-centrism in day-to-day life in your community:	
		Has deepened substantially	1
		Is deepening slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
Is disappearing slowly		4	
Has disappeared substantially	5		

8.5	In your view, compared to the pre-2009 period, at present		
	(i)	The factors and conditions that push youth towards violent extremism:	
		Have strengthened substantially	1
		Have been strengthened	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
		Is reducing slowly	4
	Has reduced substantially	5	
	(ii)	The attraction of the ideologies of violent extremism and their networks to the youth:	
		Has increased substantially	1
		Is increasing slowly	2
		Remains the same as earlier	3
Is reducing slowly		4	
Has reduced substantially	5		

8.6	(i)	Do you think that at present the Government has paid sufficient attention to the challenge of violent extremism?	
		Yes	1
		To some extent	2
		Should be more	3
		No	4
		Don't know	5
	(ii)	If you answered (3) or (4) in the previous question, in your view, what is the main reason for it:	
		Failed to understand its gravity	1
		Mixing up of priorities	2
		Lack of political unity among main partners of the Government	3
		Lack of vision	4
		Absence of courage to address politically sensitive issues	5
		Influence of extremist ethno-political forces	6
Other	7		

8.7	To what extent do you agree with the view that the inadequate social capital and lack of proper networks among the youth of Sri Lanka have affected their choice of role models and narrowed life options?	
	Strongly agree	1
	Agree to some extent	2
	Do not agree	3
	Strongly disagree	4
	Don't know	5

8.8	To what extent do you agree to the view that the absence/ineffectiveness of traditional social mediators/role models (teachers, mentors, employers and religious leaders) has compelled the youth to turn towards ethno-political entrepreneurs for their role models	
	Strongly agree	1
	Agree	2
	Somewhat agree	3
	Disagree	4
	Strongly disagree	5
Don't know	6	

8.9	According to your view, what is the foremost challenge that Sri Lanka confronts in preventing violent extremism in the present context?	
	Lack of political will	1
	Lack of societal will	2
	Disagreement among the main political parties	3
	Exploitation of ethnic factor for narrow political ends	4
	Lack of integrated plan and strategy	5
	Absence of participatory approaches	6
	Adverse impact of diaspora community	7
	Impact of international terrorism	8
	Prevalence of extremist narrations and ideologies	9
	Ethnic biases of the state institutions	10
	Inadequate awareness of citizens about the need to mitigate violent extremism in the multi-ethnic social context	11
	Other	12

8.10	What would be your future projections as regards to violent extremism in Sri Lanka?	
	I am confident that we will be able to address the challenge of violent extremism satisfactorily with the passage of time	1
	Still we are not on the correct path at present, but the youth will come forward to change the course and contribute to resolving the problem	2
	I am confident that the youth can make a huge positive change but unfortunately their ability has not been recognized by the state and the society in Sri Lanka	3
	I am not sure that the youth will be able to change the dismal future in Sri Lanka	4
	I am highly worried that the youth may also become perpetrators of violent extremism in future as ground conditions are not improving	5
	Absence of participatory approaches	6
	Adverse impact of diaspora community	7
	Impact of international terrorism	8
	Prevalence of extremist narrations and ideologies	9
	Ethnic biases of the state institutions	10
	Inadequate awareness of citizens about the need to mitigate violent extremism in the multi-ethnic social context	11
	Other	12

8.11	In order for youth to play an active role in preventing violent extremism in Sri Lanka in the future, please state three recommendations you wish to suggest.	
		1
		2
		3

