



PEaCE
ECPAT Sri Lanka



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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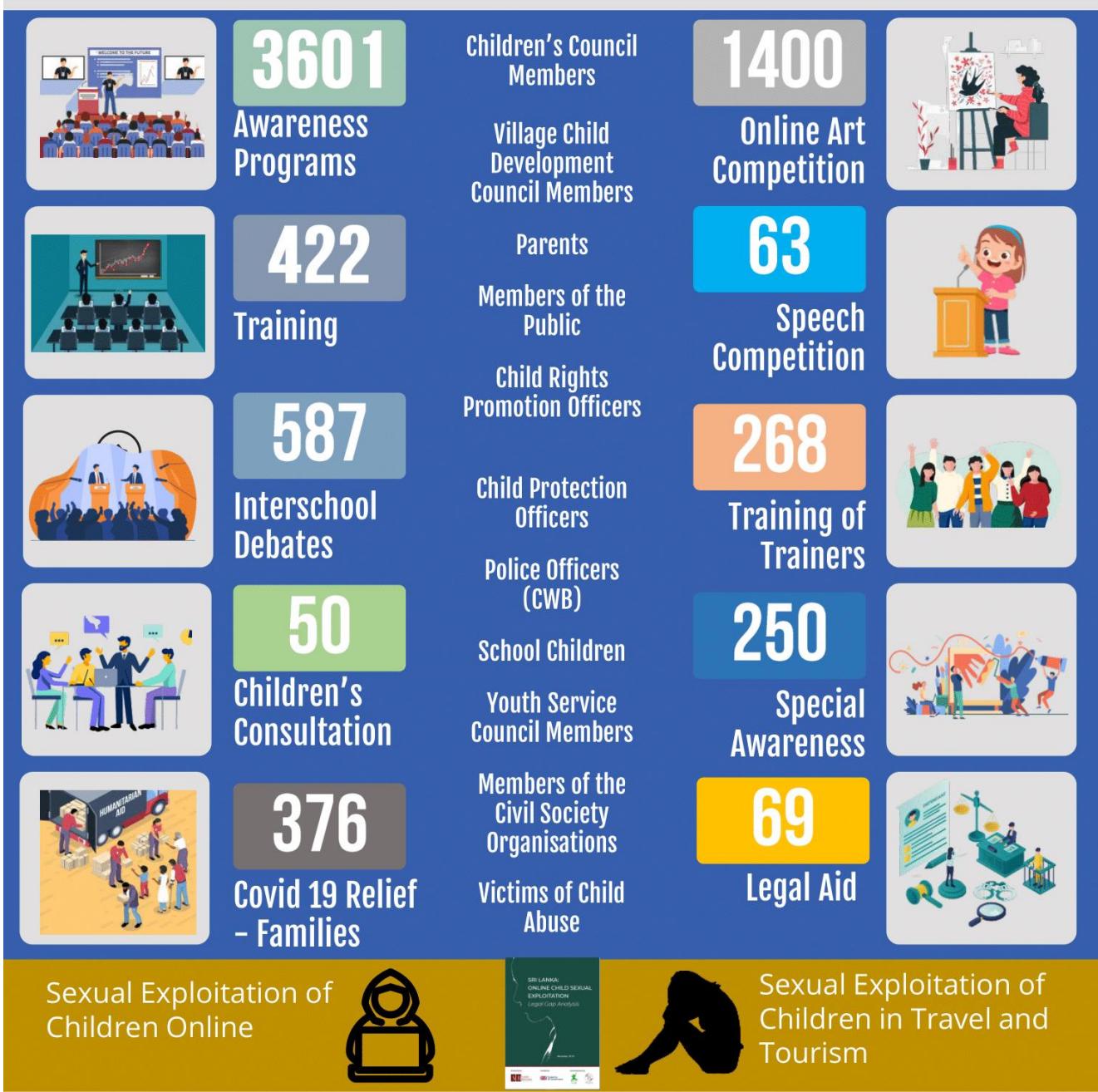
SUMMARY REPORT AND STATISTIC HIGHLIGHTS 2020



BUDGET



DIRECT BENEFICIARIES



NAVIGATING THE YEAR 2020

2020 has not been a good year for anyone. It began in the first months of 2020 as a topic of conversation about an epidemic in China that started making waves in December 2019. No-one even thought that it was a big deal then. Then, within just a few weeks, it became more serious as many areas of China were shut down and there were reports and rumours of scores of dead. Governments started taking it more seriously and started initiating border controls. But it was only against the Chinese and against Chinese flights. For most of us the coronavirus was nothing more than a distant hot breeze bringing with it the smell of rot and decay.

But then the first infected slowly started appearing in the USA, Italy, France, the UK and more countries in the early months of 2020. The health organizations thought it would suffice to simply isolate the infected individuals. But it was too late and too little. The disease was infectious beyond control. Scores had already been infected unseen and keeping track was near impossible. The World Health Organization (WHO) intervened, though their stance at that early stage was that it would subside soon and become an equivalent to the seasonal flu. It was named SARS-CoV-2 for its genetic similarity to the respiratory virus that was responsible for the SARS epidemic in 2003, also called COVID-19 as it was first diagnosed in 2019. There were organizations working on a vaccine, but their failures did not register. Youth continued to behave irresponsibly as if they were immune, elders continued their community gatherings with the idea that their groups were safe spaces, travellers continued travelling.

Meanwhile, those in China continued to suffer, with the government not being truthful about the numbers – even as there were palls of smoke detected from satellites from hundreds or even thousands of dead being burned. But due to

benevolent bilateral relationship between the two countries, China requested Sri Lanka to permit Chinese workers to return to Sri Lanka after Chinese New Year celebrations to resume their work, Sri Lanka was in no position to resume. Hence, Sri Lankan students from Wuhan who were stuck there during the pandemic situation, and hundreds of Chinese arrived in Sri Lanka around March. The controls were minimal. After a mere fever check, they were allowed to return to their families or workplaces. A few weeks later, the first coronavirus was reported.

The first was a Chinese national. At the time it was taken lightly. The government said that it was from foreign tourists and visitors, and that no Sri Lankan had been affected. Any rumours otherwise were ruthlessly squashed. A few more cases were reported, all were said to be foreign nationals. The notion was that only foreigners could be infected by COVID-19, Sri Lankan were immune or essentially safe as the state's health controls were perfectly implemented.

But then, a few locals from the Negombo area, well known for tourists, were diagnosed to be infected. A few more cases were also found in overpopulated, rundown housing regions in the city limits of Colombo. The country went into a state of emergency. Shops were closed and children were hindered from attending schools in fear of infection. The government started isolating the affected regions with immediate effect. But a few small infection pockets started showing up all over the city. City-wide lockdowns were imposed in March 2020 including travel restrictions within and outside the city. The government was alarmed despite fewer cases being reported. The number of infected cases increased rapidly across the globe along with an alarming number of casualties. Country-wide lockdowns were imposed when cases were reported outside the

Colombo district as many left the city for uninfected regions in search for safer places.

It took up until August, or in some areas of the island September, for the lockdowns to be removed. Even then there were strict controls on travel. Shortly after the lockdowns ended, the Parliamentary Electoral Campaigns began. This caused the disease to spread further, and in the final months of 2020 the second wave of infection hit. The daily numbers of infected, which had been in the tens, reached hundreds. The death rate increased as well. What had been less than 5 casualties for over an entire half year, turned into one to two reported dead every day.

However, the government was reluctant to go into a complete lockdown in fear of further economic decline. The government attempted to downplay the crisis and convince the citizens of a 'new normal' So, people went about their work in a really controlled manner. Many never left their homes in fear of the infection. Areas where larger clusters were located were isolated immediately due to the government's poor response, citizens were faced by a major humanitarian crisis with lack of food and better quarantine measures. Despite the travel controls imposed within and on traveling outside the limits of Colombo district, the disease was soon affecting other districts as well.

The year 2020, likewise came to an end through fear and uncertainty.

HOW COVID – 19 AFFECTED PEaCE

PEaCE was heavily affected. The organization did not save any rainy-day funds. All funding is always fully utilized for projects and direct administrative activities. Therefore, when the lockdown was imposed, PEaCE did not have the contingency provisions to work online or from home. While PEaCE managed to obtain special provision and have some staff living nearby come to work on a limited basis, distant staff were unable to do so. Two of the key staff lived in the nearby Negombo region, just out of Colombo city. Negombo was under heavy lockdown as it was where the earliest patients were discovered. There was no way for them to even go get groceries in a supermarket near their homes, let alone to the PEaCE office. All main PEaCE activities had to be halted. However, the organization still tried to continue its activities under this stifled atmosphere. Some of the funding received was used to provide relief of essential items to extremely poor families with children, with the fullest support from the specific donors of Global Giving. PEaCE also did online campaigns and social media updates on Online Safety for children during this period.

The lockdown in Sri Lanka and Colombo only ended in the second half of 2020. But some parts were still under isolation. PEaCE's numerous attempts to engage in organizational activities were continuously obstructed. The Parliamentary Elections were right after that, and officials were focused on the procedures. Doing activities involving the law enforcement and other officials or obtaining state permission was a difficult task. In addition, there were still severe district wise travel restrictions. Gathering above a certain number was also not permitted.

Yet, PEaCE managed to implement a significant number of awareness and training programs, though they were nowhere close to what had been planned for the year. The UK Government funded project ESECO (End Sexual Exploitation of Children Online) came to a successful close during March, fortunately before the lockdown started. Hence, while the close was not as active as planned and a few programs such as the launch of the research report had to be delayed, it did not have a great impact overall. The Lemonaid and Charitea Project ended after its 3-year period as well. But though the project ended

in the first half, there were a few activities remaining to be implemented. These had to be completed before the end of the year as they were part of the long-term project. Hence, PEaCE completed them while facing the challenges of the situation.

2020 was also the year that the KIOS project was initiated. However, things couldn't be implemented as planned. Only a small portion of the project was carried out. Some programs had to be done combined due to the difficulties obtaining permission. However, the plan was to finish as much as possible.

But then the 2nd wave of COVID-19 hit around September. Large clusters of infected patients were found in clothing factories and other industries. While the country only went into lockdown for a couple of weeks or so, the effects were long lasting. The government banned travel to other districts until further notice. Gatherings above a certain number of people (around 20) were banned as well. As a result, the project implementation slowed down once again. PEaCE had to stop project activities involving gatherings. As these formed a large part of the KIOS project,

much of it was curbed. In addition, the KIOS project focused on child sexual exploitation in the travel and tourism sector. The only option was to do a social media campaign on child protection.

The pandemic continued to be a menace in the final months of 2020. Over 500 people were infected with COVID-19 every day in Sri Lanka, and there were casualties reported every day. Many organizations were closed or had their staff working from home. Towards the latter part of the year, PEaCE was able to better adapt to the situation. Staff worked from home partially when they were unable to come to the workplace due to the pandemic situation. PEaCE used the time when they were unable to do other activities to focus on advocacy efforts with the state and worked with the NACG (National Action Coordinating Group) that was part of the SAIEVAC Initiative to implement the new National Action Plan on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

The year ended with lingering sadness over the lives lost all over the world and on a hopeful note for the new vaccines discovered.

OUR PROJECTS

PEaCE had 3 projects for the year of 2020. Out of these 2 projects were completed during the first half successfully. The details are below:

Project Name: **End Sexual Exploitation of Children Online (ESECO)**

Donor: UK Government

In April 2018, PEaCE was selected to receive the UK Government fund, one of the biggest UK grants awarded to a single international non-profit that year. The 2- year grant was for addressing an issue that was until then little known or understood in Sri Lanka; *Online Child Sexual Exploitation* (OCSE). The beginning of the year 2020 saw the final quarter of the project and it was completed successfully.

At the time of starting the project, Sri Lankan children were unprotected online. This often caused them to fall down a rabbit hole, entering the dark side of the internet - often being sexually exploited by criminals online regardless of the child's gender. When such exploitation incidents occur, the child would hide it from their parents for fear of reprisal. The children would then get blackmailed into sending sexually explicit photographs or videos by the criminals, which would also be used as further blackmail material, sending them into a spiral of misery.

When at last, the child musters up the courage to tell their parents, or the parents find these crimes themselves, the children are blamed for the criminals' actions instead of the parents taking to heart their carelessness. Most parents do not even attempt to report the crime to the police in

fear of being stigmatized and ostracized in the society. Even if parents did report, the victimised children almost never obtained justice, the police blamed the child too and engaged in victim-shaming.

The ESECO Project worked to change this mindset. It was implemented on four levels: the individual level, the system level, the industry level, and the system and policy level. Through this project, children, parents, teachers and community members were provided awareness on OCSE. Youth were selected from youth councils and took part in training of trainers' activities, and then actively engaged in training their own communities. The law enforcement officers, and child protection officers were given organized training with top overseas law enforcement teams which deal with OCSE cases. Mobile service providers and cyber security officials from the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) were trained to detect suspicious activity and block or respond to it. There was also a study done to identify the legal gaps in the Sri Lankan system that prevented victims of OCSE from getting justice. The end of the project saw a marked rise in nationwide awareness and increased interest from the government to end OCSE.

Project Name: Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children

Donor: Lemonaid and Charitea

Lemonaid and Charitea is a Netherlands based organization which raises funds by selling lemonade and flavoured tea with Fair Trade ingredients sourced from second and third world countries. The funds are then donated for charity projects in the same countries that they source their ingredients from.

As such, Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children is the second 3-year project that began in mid-2017, where PEaCE partnered with Lemonaid and Charitea. It was a more generalized follow-up on their earlier project on 'Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism' and took note of the rise of child sexual exploitation online (OCSE). 2020 saw the final leg of the project to its completion.

The concept was that children, regardless of age, gender, race or location are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The 'exploitation' could occur through an exchange of funds, material goods, or immaterial goods such as promises or blackmail using a weak point, between the perpetrator and the child, or a related third party.

It is a growing concern in current society as more and more people come to realize that children easily fall prey to child sexual perpetrators, most

often without their knowledge. Increased networking, anonymity, and online storage spaces have formed conducive environments for predators to do their acts. Sexual exploitation of children often goes unaddressed and underreported for various reasons. Thus, it is a social issue that needs immediate attention and intervention.

Protecting the younger generation from social evil is a combined effort where every single individual in society has a role to play. Child sexual exploitation has ripple effects that can last for generations if not eradicated in its prime.

Combating sexual exploitation of children was a project that targeted various beneficiary groups including children, youth, families, community members, civil society organizations, law enforcement authorities, ICT organizations, and tourism and travel companies. The desired goal was to create a violence free, peaceful environment for children affirming at zero tolerance against all forms of sexual exploitation.

By the year 2020, PEaCE was able to reach approximately one million citizens around the country and pass on the message of child protection through this project.

Project Name: Right to Justice for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism- Sri Lanka

Donor: KIOS Foundation

With the rapid growth in tourism industry in Sri Lanka during the years leading to 2020, there were notable increases in the numbers of cases of Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT). Many children were subjects of child trafficking. As the US Department of State Trafficking stated in Persons Report 2017

with regards to the Sri Lankan law on trafficking, *"The Government of Sri Lanka does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of child trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so".*

Unfortunately, the legal framework and enforcement procedures that are expected to

address the criminal aspects of this issue in Sri Lanka are not as strong as they should be. Multi sector institutional mechanisms at national and decentralized levels have repeatedly shown a lack of understanding and capacity to tackle and prevent the appalling violations of child rights surrounding SECTT crimes. In addition, gaining compensation and support for the victims from the Government proves to be next to impossible, due to lengthy and complicated procedures.

The 1-year project proposed by PEaCE was a holistic program to protect children through Prevention, Protection, Promotion, and Prosecution. The proposed actions involve multi sector stakeholders at national, regional and local levels: children, communities and families, government, law enforcement, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Planned activities included awareness programs, training

programs, street dramas, meetings and advocacy with key individuals, and more. The aim was to bring about zero tolerance for SECTT within the country.

However, PEaCE was not able to complete its project according to the plans due to the unexpected onset of COVID-19 globally. As Sri Lanka too became affected, travel within the country came under severe controls and tourism drew to a standstill. In this situation, reaching the planned audience not only became difficult, but with tourism-centric communities struggling to make a living in the hard times, the SECTT focus of the project became almost a taboo to speak of. As such, PEaCE was only able to complete a very small portion of the program during the expected timeline. The balance funds were transferred to a new child sexual exploitation themed project in 2021 with full approval of KIOS.

Project Name: Medical Program for Underprivileged Communities

Donor: White Bird (Shiroi – Tori) is a private donor from Japan

The Medical Program for Underprivileged Communities is a very long-term project done by PEaCE with the partnership of an individual Japanese donor. The donor, who was in the medical field himself, took pleasure in being able to give medical assistance to needy people from the worst slum zones in Colombo and its surroundings.

The project ran for over 20 years, and PEaCE ran a bi-weekly clinic in vulnerable areas that were able to help thousands who were too far from state hospitals, while also being unable to afford private clinics. The project also helped spread the

message of child protection, while helping PEaCE identify a few abused children and report the incidents. The Shiroi-Tori project also included Educational Support for children, and a mothers' aid program at one stage, but these were stopped towards the latter end of the project.

The project officially came to a close in 2019 as the elderly donor was too sick to continue his lifetime of service. However, some leftover funds were used to continue aid for the involved vulnerable communities in 2020 as well.

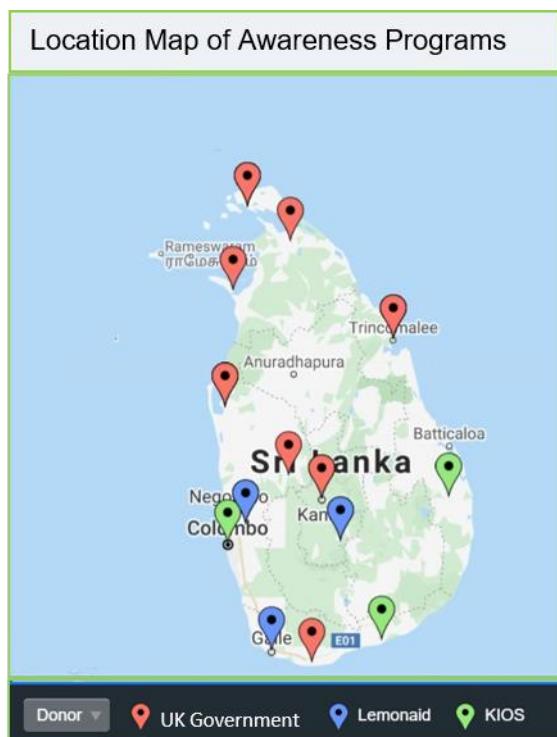
OUR ACTIVITIES

AWARENESS PROGRAMS

PEaCE had a total of 23 Awareness Programs benefiting 3601 stakeholders, along with a 1 special awareness program for 250 beneficiaries. Beneficiaries received an informative session that helped them learn about child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), the types of CSEA, methods of protection, the law related to CSEA crimes in Sri Lanka, and how to report incidents. Depending on the project that they were done as part of and the types of

beneficiaries, they also were given additional in-depth information on details such as online child sexual exploitation manifestations, implementation of the child sexual exploitation laws, and an overview of things to note when investigating.

The details of the types of Awareness Programs and the total number of different beneficiaries for each type are listed below.



Target Group	No of Programs	Number of Beneficiaries
School Children	5	1421
Parents	3	118
Community Leaders	2	200
Child Protection Officers (CPOs)	3	258
District Children's Council Members (DCCs)	2	188
Village Child Development Committee Members (VCDCs)	6	566
Public Awareness Campaigns	2	850
Subtotal	23	3601
Special Awareness Program in Batticaloa	1	250
Total	24	3851

The map to the left shows the locations in Sri Lanka where awareness programs were conducted. The different donors are shown by the different pin colours.



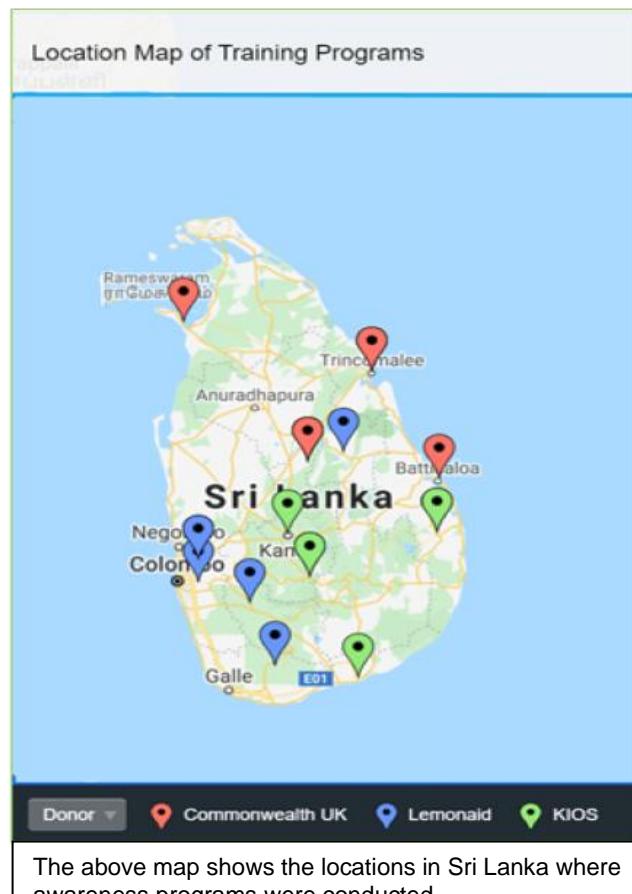


TRAINING PROGRAMS

PEaCE had a total of 19 training programs for 690 beneficiaries in the year of 2021. This also included 8 Training of Trainers (TOT) programs for youth that empowered them as change ambassadors against child sexual exploitation and abuse. The program provided in-depth training on child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), the types of CSEA, methods of protection from CSEA, the laws related to CSEA crimes in Sri Lanka, and how to report incidents.

The other training programs were for state child protection professionals and law enforcement officers and included detailed training on investigation methods and interpretation and implementation of laws related to CSEA in Sri Lanka in addition to an overview of the above mentioned areas of training in the youth program.

The details of the types of Training Programs and the total number of different beneficiaries for each type are listed below.





DEBATES

As part of the project to '*End Sexual Exploitation of Children Online*' sponsored by the UK Government, PEaCE conducted several debates for school children on topics related to online child sexual exploitation as a continuation to those

held in 2019. A total of 5 inter school debate competitions took place in the year of 2020 and was attended by 587 school children including the participants. The topic was '*Is the Internet Safe for Children?*'

Debate Location	Competing Schools		Children benefitted
Polonnaruwa	Ananda Balika Vidyalaya	Girithalegama National School	150
Polonnaruwa	Aththanakadawala Maha Vidyalaya	Hiru Sandu Ketu Wewa Maha Vidyalaya	95
Galle	Sangamiththa College	Southland College	160
Colombo	Hindu College	Ratmalana Hindu College	92
Mannar	Sithi Vinayagar Hindu College	Al Azhar Muslim College	90
Total			587



OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to these major activities, there were a number of other activities that impacted communities in a smaller way. Among them was the legal support provided to child sexual exploitation survivors. Though PEaCE had not

been able to take up many new cases due to COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of survivors received legal aid and advice for their ongoing cases. A total number of 69 victims were assisted in this manner.

During the peak of COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns were in progress in mid-2020, none of the standard activities were able to take place due to travel restrictions. However, this did not stop the PEaCE team from reaching out to children and ensuring that they understood their rights to safety. PEaCE organized a nationwide Online Art Competition on the theme of '*We will Stay Home Safely*' that 1400 children participated.

The Art Competition had 3 categories according to the age groups 1-5 years, 6-11 years and 12-15 years. Each category had 3 winners who were announced on Facebook and received cash prizes.

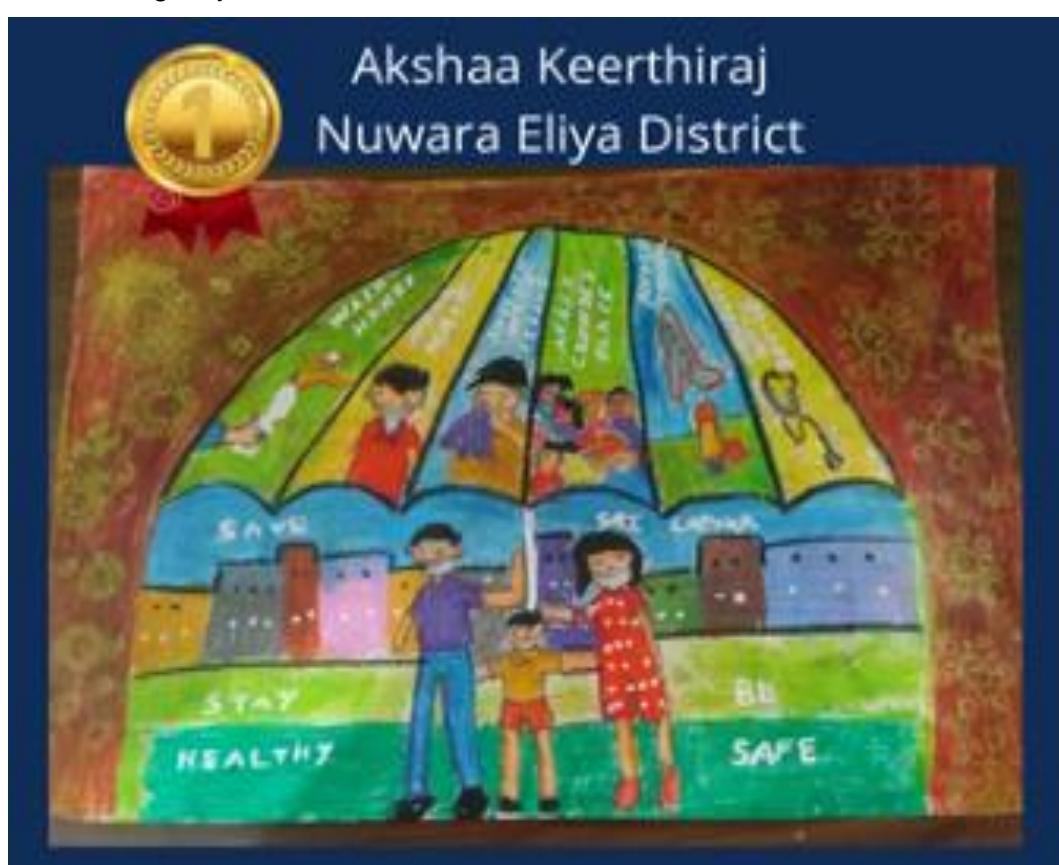
There was also a nationwide Online Speech competition organized by PEaCE, that 63 children participated in. The themes were '*Are you Happy or Sad during this Corona Period? What are your reasons?*' for children aged 8-10, '*Living with Corona – A New Experience*' for children aged 11-13, '*Is COVID – 19 a Challenge or an Opportunity?*' for children aged 14 - 16. The speeches were done in Sinhala and Tamil Language Medium.

Among the rarer activities that PEaCE does each year is emergency relief. While relief

work is not part of the organization's activity range, on occasion urgent aid needed by children during disasters become a driving force for PEaCE to organize relief.

This year such relief was provided for COVID-19. Right after the lockdown was initiated in the first half of 2020, people had extremely limited access to daily necessities. The country was not prepared and there weren't many active delivery channels for goods. The issue was exacerbated among communities who relied on day wages which was an income avenue that was completely cut off during that period.

This meant that just a few weeks after the lockdown started, before the government arranged relief for impoverished families, there were thousands of families on the brink of starvation, especially in the slums of Colombo where there were no farming communities nearby to provide cheap food. Hence PEaCE distributed hundreds of emergency relief packages with rice, dhal and other dry food and sanitation necessities to their families of these areas. This helped tide them over until they received assistance from the government.



Savani Buddhika
Rathnapura District



D.H Vethara Kithnuli
Colombo District







OUR DONORS

LemonAid + ChariTea Foundation

LemonAid and ChariTea Foundation has been supporting the work of ECPAT Sri Lanka - PEaCE since 2015. The Lemonaid & ChariTea Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 in the bohemian St. Pauli area of Hamburg. The organization aims to contribute to the sustainable improvement of social, economic, and ecological structures in the Global South. Particularly in regions that have been negatively affected by the structures of the global economy. It partners with local organizations worldwide that implement projects within their communities to create positive change and strengthen economic independence.

The UK Government

The overarching purpose of the Commonwealth 18 - 20 Fund (which sits within the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund) is to demonstrate the ability of the Commonwealth to lead the international agenda on key issues. The Security Programme was set up to support the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018, commitment of delivering 'A More Secure Future' through:

- 1) A more secure cyber environment that enables digital growth through a free, open and peaceful cyber space
- 2) Progress towards a Commonwealth without modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking and the worst forms of child labour, and
- 3) Enhanced capacity within the Commonwealth to tackle online child sexual exploitation. In 2018, the UK Government together with the Commonwealth extended funding for the 2-year project, Ending Sexual Exploitation of Children Online.

KIOS Foundation

The Finland based human rights organisation - KIOS Foundation- strengthens the realization of human rights by supporting the human rights work of civil society in developing countries. In 2020, it started to support PEaCE / ECPAT Sri Lanka for a unique project - *Right to Justice for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation in the context of Travel and Tourism in Sri Lanka*. Unfortunately, due to the worldwide eruption of COVID-19, Sri Lanka was under a complete lockdown initially for nearly four months in 2020 and partially for nearly a year. Stringent controls on travel and gatherings were imposed ever since the first lockdown was lifted. As a result, it was difficult for PEaCE to implement the full range of planned activities. Only a very limited number of activities were carried out.

White Bird (Shiroi Tori) Japan

White Bird (Shiroi Tori) is a Japanese charity led by Mr. Minoru Okada. It has been in a committed partnership supporting the work of ECPAT Sri Lanka – PEaCE for over 20 years. The key focus of White Bird has been on uplifting and improving the health of vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka. This has been achieved through free medical camps and clinics in communities where awareness on and access to health care has been limited.