Achievements, Good Practices and Lessons Learned

"WT2: Work Together, Win Together" Project - Phase 2

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Executive Summary

Hate speech and fake news on social media have become an ever-increasing problem especially in the Sri Lankan post war context. The lack of political will, undermining of rule of law, limited awareness of legislations, and limitations on the technological front has led to alternative approaches to be explored and practiced to deal with this problem. The 'WT2: Work Together, Win Together' project aimed to enable youth to engage in real discourse about reconciliation by empowering them to be the national drivers of change. The Project – Phase II was designed based on the learning of two projects: WT2 Phase I and Cyber Guardians project. The project, thus, aims to further strengthen peace and reconciliation in the country by helping youth to recognize hate speech and advance peaceful co-existence and reconciliation on social media. The project focused on youth aged 18-25 years in five provinces: Northern, Eastern, Central, Western and Southern. Search was the main implementer of the project and coordinator for Western Province. Search partnered with Prathiba Media Network (Southern Province), Fodyce Youth Club Hatton (Central Province) and Sagacious Youth Lead Consortium (Eastern and Northern Province) for implementation of the project in other provinces.

The project was initially planned to be implemented in the year 2020. However, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic not only delayed the implementation but also significantly impacted project activities throughout the project cycle. The initial planned activity of mobilizing events with physical gaming activities of the project was amended to a social media marketing campaign due to COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions. In mid-2020, adapting to the pandemic, Search increased the number of boot camps from 5 to 10 to reduce the number of participants per training session with respect to government restrictions for the pandemic. However, with the impact of the 2nd wave of COVID-19, the project took a turn with another series of travel restrictions and lockdowns. Hence the project team had to take a 180 degree turn to conduct all boot camps virtually. The number of camps was again increased from 10 to 20 accommodating around 20 youths in a boot camp considering the bandwidth, retention of knowledge and maintaining the momentum. This amendment also required revision of the training manual into an online curriculum and reorganisation of participants based on digital literacy and infrastructure. Amidst these challenges, Search implemented 20 social media literacy boot camps in all five provinces from January 2021 to February 2021 and 379 youth participants were trained (232 males and 147 females). Thirty-four (34) groups/individuals were finally selected to create social media content on peaceful coexistence through innovation fund and youth participants created the content within a limited time of five weeks. The total reach of the social media creations produced by the youth were recorded as 3,496,429, a remarkable achievement of these 34 youth groups/individuals despite numerous limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the impact of COVID 19 3rd wave, the award ceremony for the 10 winning teams was also held virtually at the end of June 2021.

Methodology

The study intended to document lessons learned, good practices and challenges to inform future work and planning to Search and its partners and donors; and assess the outcomes/achievements of the project and develop 10 case studies to showcase the impact of the project on participating youth groups. In order to achieve these objectives, study employed a mixed-method data collection approach with both quantitative and qualitative methods. The primary data collection included a survey of 173 youth participants of social media literacy boot camps in 5 provinces, 14 Key Informant Interviews with a selected sample of implementing staff of Search, the Consultant who developed the program, trainers/mentors and district level coordinators, 10 In-depth interviews with individuals/youth groups and 34 social media content analysis. The data were collected in April to June 2021 using remote data collection methods such as phone interviews and zoom interviews due to COVID-19 crisis. Quantitative data analysis was done using MS Excel. The qualitative information from KIIs and in-depth interviews were coded under common themes and used in the analysis. Contents created in social media platforms were analysed using suitable manual coding sheets.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were primarily due to remote data collection and socio-cultural barriers that young females face in certain conservative communities. In addition to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) could have been employed to gather qualitative data from the participant youths. Yet, it was difficult to conduct FGDs using remote data collection methods such as over the phone interviews. However, when in-depth interviews were conducted on Zoom platforms, more than one youth took part in the interviews. Poor mobile network coverage, extreme weather conditions of the country, the lack of ownership of mobile phones by young females, difficulty in getting appointments as youth participants are busy with their higher studies, festive season of Ramadan falling within data collection period posed certain limitations in the data collection.

Key Findings

Outcome I: *Increased awareness and capacity among target youth around the harmful effects of hate speech on social media and how to produce positive online content that advances peace and reconciliation*

Through the survey conducted with 173 youth participants, it became apparent that prior to the project the level of awareness of hate speech in social media was very low. Percentage of youth across all regions that indicated their awareness level at 'extremely aware', 'very aware', and 'moderately aware' was only 2%, 3%, and 28% respectively (aggregate 33%). However, post project, awareness levels with those three categories significantly increased to 29%, 38% and 27% (aggregate 94%) respectively. Youth also discussed the increased awareness during in-depth interviews.

Further, this increase in awareness of hate speech in social media has translated to increased use of social media. Prior to the project, the percentage of youth across all regions that indicated their use of social media as 'very active', 'active' and 'average' was 14%, 20%, and 39% respectively (aggregate 73%). Post project, it increased significantly to 24%, 41%, and 28% (aggregate 93%) respectively. Further, this increase in use of social media has led to an increase in active actions being taken by the youth on common matters (social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental) across the regions. For instance, creating own posts, sharing and liking posts increased from 13%, 42%, 66% to 38%, 62%, 74% respectively for the 'very active' and 'active' aggregate percentages.

From a capacity point of view, both technical capacities (i.e. photo and video editing, etc.) as well as knowledge capacities (understanding of pluralistic/peaceful versus hate content) increased post project. The percentage of youth whose level of knowledge and skills in photo and video editing for the skill level categories 'excellent' and 'good' was only 4% and 15% respectively (aggregate 19%) prior to the project. However, post project, it drastically increased to 13% and 61% for the 'excellent' and 'good' categories respectively (aggregate 74%). Likewise, the majority of the content developed was based on themes around unity (58%), minorities (18%), and reconciliation (12%). As identified in the content analysis and in-depth interviews promoting peace and reconciliation was the main theme in the majority of social media contents created by the youth.

Outcome II: *Increased engagement of social media influencers to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities.*

Prior to the project, the majority of youth across all regions ignored hate speech (43%) without taking any action against it. Post project, the youth that ignored hate speech reduced drastically from 43% to 16% as they resorted to more active actions against these hate speech posts. For instance, the majority of the youth reported it (50%), others commented on it (21%) and created social media campaigns to counter it (8%).

Further, almost half (48%) of all youth have said 'Yes' to have already produced or planning to produce social media products that challenge negative perceptions or promote positive narratives towards minority ethnicities and religion. Of the 52% participating youth that haven't produced or planned to produce social media products, the main two reasons were the 'lack of time' (43%) and 'lack of interest' (31%) followed by 'lack of understanding' (17%) and 'fear of backlash' (9%).

Also, the social media products published by the 34 participating youth teams had an overall positive sentiment of 89% with only 5% negative and 6% neutral according to the content analysis. This overall high positive sentiment indicates high levels of technical knowledge and capacities built through the project activities.

Majority of the participating youth (60%) had the opportunity to dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities. Others could not due to various reasons such as fellow participants in the boot camps were either from the same ethnicities and religions or the online delivery of the boot

camp was considered as a limiting factor. Majority of the participating youth were unaware (61%) of the monitoring reports provided by Search. However, the percentage of youth that were aware of the monitoring reports that found it 'very useful' and 'useful' were 30% and 49% respectively (aggregate 79%).

Case studies

Out of ten selected campaigns for this study, the core message of the majority of campaigns is peace, coexistence, and the importance of unity. In addition, some campaigns have also focused on awareness of hate speech and addressing hate speech on marginalised groups such as women and cleaning laborers. The project and campaigns have led participants through a process of learning, challenges, and achievements. Regarding learning, participants experienced project planning, working for deadlines, teamwork and sharing ideas with team members and taking leadership in engaging with the social media campaigns. Further, with creating videos they familiarised with filming, video editing, dubbing, and incorporating subtitles to videos. The main challenge for producing short films has been restrictions and difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The other challenges include boosting, finding video teams, hiring equipment, responding to negative comments and criticisms and time management. The participants have overcome all these challenges and their products have been popularised in social media receiving likes and positive comments. This is inevitably an achievement for participants, which makes them recognised among their peers and in their communities.

Best Practices

- The well-planned and organized three days' online interactive social media literacy boot camps were appropriate to increase knowledge and awareness of youth participants.
- Youth participants had the opportunity to practically apply knowledge gained into practice through the 3C approach – Content Creation, Countering and Championing.
- Self-confidence and recognition of the youth were built and improved by creating and recognizing capable youth as 'Champions'.
- The well-organized virtual Award Ceremony held due to the physical movement restrictions posed by Covid-19 was capable of appreciating youth's talent.
- Constant and close involvement of the experienced mentors, district coordinators and Search project team with the youth participants throughout the project encouraged them to effectively engage in the peace and reconciliation process in social media platforms.

Lessons learnt

- Youth may not be social media savvy as popularly believed.
- A stronger persuasion process is needed to change the attitudes of some youth towards the influence of social media on the peace and reconciliation process.
- Due to their lack of technical knowledge and expertise on creating animations and video productions youth had to make exorbitant payments to the professionals.

- Youth need deeper understanding and training on positively handling various reactions they receive for their social media products.
- There is less opportunity for youth to effectively interact and build dialogue with youth from other ethnicities and religions when their groups are homogenous.
- Project administrative and management tasks can be delayed when the regular communication methods and financial channels are restricted due to the COVID-19.

Recommendations

- Distribution of suitable pre-guidance materials and monitoring reports among participants prior to social media literacy boot camps.
- Including 'capability building' component to the 3C approach.
- A critical and in-depth understanding on the 'Countering' component must be provided.
- Digital champions must be sustained and encouraged to continue producing social media content to promote peace and reconciliation.
- Inclusion of bi-lingual youth in majority Sinhalese or Tamil groups during social media literacy boot camps.

1. Background Information

1.1 Context

Since its independence, the Sri Lankan case of hate speech shows that nationalism and extremism can be filtered through periods of history. Post-war Sri Lanka has seen significant growth of hate speech primarily directed against a minority ethnicity and their religion (Samaratunge & Hattotuwa, 2014). From as early as 2012, there have been numerous instances of hate speech and violence against this particular community. For instance, on 20th April 2012, a 2,000-strong mob stormed a mosque in Dambulla, Central Sri Lanka, during Friday Prayer and damaged both the building and property. The mob claimed that the mosque was situated within their sacred religious area and had been constructed illegally. The reality was that the mosque, a small, corrugated iron structure had been used by the local Muslim community for over half a century without question or incident (Garland, 2013).

Increasingly, extremist nationalist groups have resorted to online platforms to fan the anti-Muslim fervor. On 2014, Aluthgama and Beruwala, Southern Sri Lanka, anti-Muslim riots were a gruesome manifestation of how months-long social media rumours preceded actual mob violence (Senaratne, 2021). Likewise, four years later, Facebook's failure to immediately counter hate speech and disinformation prompted a fresh outbreak of violence in Digana and surrounding areas in Kandy.

Twelve years since the end of the civil war, the government has disavowed promised steps toward truth, justice, accountability and reconciliation (Ganguly, 2020). Post-war, there have been public consultations on reconciliation in which ordinary people spoke of preventing the recurrence of hate. Yet after the Easter Sunday bombings on April 21, 2019 in which about 250 people were killed, the government again adopted discriminatory policies and made arbitrary arrests.

Fast forward to pandemic times, COVID-19 has only intensified manifestations of racism and discrimination against minorities (IMADR, 2020). On social media, there have been calls to boycott businesses of minority ethnicities and false allegations of Muslims spreading COVID-19 deliberately. For instance, in April 2020, there was disinformation that Muslims were breaking the police curfew to conduct religious activities (IBID, 2020). The video of a religious service that took place at a mosque in 2019 was circulated on social and mainstream media, suggesting that Muslims held a large religious service during the curfew (Groundviews, 2020).

Discrimination was apparent even in the decision-making of the Government of Sri Lanka. In March 2020, the government published guidelines requiring that the remains of all COVID-19 victims be cremated, which goes against Islamic tradition and is a violation of freedom of religion (Al Jazeera, 2020). Therefore, whilst the Sri Lankan Cabinet might have approved amendments (early June 2019) to the country's Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code to take action against people spreading fake news on social media, the prejudiced and insufficient implementation of the law is a major reason for the impunity for perpetrators of hate speech in Sri Lanka (Library of Congress, 2020).

Furthermore, in April 2020, Sri Lanka's Acting Inspector General of Police, stated that he would "arrest those who disseminate false or disparaging statements about government officials combating the spread of the Covid-19 virus". As a result, there has been an increase in arrests of individuals for mere criticism of public officials and policies. This is unconstitutional on the front of freedom of speech and is an incorrect application of the Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Computer Crime Act (No. 24 of 2007) to prevent hate and fake news.

Therefore, hate speech and fake news on social media has become an ever-increasing problem especially in the Sri Lankan context. The lack of political will, undermining of rule of law, limited awareness of legislations, and limitations on the technological front has led to alternative approaches to be explored and practiced to deal with this problem. One such approach is implementing youth focused projects on peace and reconciliation. The following section describes one such youth focused project, the implementation and the challenges associated with implementation during COVID-19.

1.2 Project Description

The **'WT2: Work Together, Win Together'** project aimed to enable youth to engage in real discourse about reconciliation, empowering them to be the national drivers of change. This project targeted youth to contribute to a more vibrant reconciliation process through a focus on development and dissemination of positive stories of peaceful coexistence through social media. Phase I of the project was implemented from December 2018 to August 2019 which worked with youth across Sri Lanka. The project focused on development and dissemination of positive stories of peaceful co-existence through social media. At the same time, Search implemented the Cyber Guardians project[1] in March 2019 to February 2020 to empower youth to combat online hate speech in Sri Lanka. The Phase II of the WT2 project was designed with the lessons learnt and successes of Phase I and Cyber Guardians project. The project aims to further strengthen peace and reconciliation in the country by helping youth to recognize hate speech and advance peaceful co-existence and reconciliation on social media.

The expected results of WT2 Phase II are twofold; (a) increased awareness and capacity among target youth around the harmful effects of hate speech on social media and how to produce positive online content that advances peace and reconciliation; and (b) increased engagement of social media influencers to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities.

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[1] The Cyber Guardians Project aimed to empower youth to combat online hate speech in Sri Lanka and it was implemented in Central, Eastern, Uva and North Western provinces, which are known to be hotspots for racially and religiously motivated hate speech on social media. The project's aim falled under two aspects. On one hand, it aims to empower youth to be champions to play a positive role in the social media space in promoting reconciliation and pluralism, on the other, it will facilitate a collaboration with external stakeholders to share lessons learned and ideas for improving Sri Lanka's social media environment The project had two specific objectives to develop skills of youth to combat hate speech via social media and create social media contents that promote pluralism and peaceful messaging; and to create opportunities for collaboration among participating youth and with key external stakeholders in the peacebuilding and online arenas.The project was funded by USAID and implemented by Search in partnership with Association of Youth Model United Nations (Guaranteed) Limited (NYMUN).

1.3 Target group and implementation

The project focused on youth 18-25-year-old in five provinces: Northern, Eastern, Central, Western and Southern. The project planned to get representation from all major ethnic religious groups. Further, a 40% quota for female representation was also considered.

Project Implementation Partners

The main implementer of the project was Search for Common Ground (Search) . Search also coordinated the project in Western Province. To implement the project in other four provinces, Search partnered with Prathiba Media Network (Southern Province), Fodyce Youth Club Hatton (Central Province) and Sagacious Youth Lead Consortium (Eastern and Northern Provinces).

Project Implementation and Challenges

The project was initially planned to be implemented in 2020. However, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic not only delayed the implementation but also significantly impacted project activities throughout the project cycle. The 1st wave of COVID-19 pandemic hit Sri Lanka in March 2020 and an Island wide lockdown was imposed. Therefore, the project activities got delayed 3-4 months. The planned activity of mobilizing events with physical gaming activities of the project was amended to a social media marketing campaign due to COVID 19 lockdown and travel restrictions. In mid-2020, adapting to the pandemic, Search increased the number of boot camps from 5 to 10 to reduce the number of participants for one training session with respect to government restrictions for the pandemic.

However, the 2nd wave of COVID-19 hit the country in October 2020 and a quarantined curfew was imposed for Western Province. With this situation, Search planned to conduct the boot camps online and the number of camps was increased from 10 to 20 accommodating around 20 youth in one boot camp considering bandwidth, retention of knowledge and sustaining motivation. This amendment delayed the project another 2-3 months to revise the training manual into an online curriculum and to reorganise the participants based on digital literacy and infrastructure. Refer Annex 1 for planned and amended project activities.

Amidst these challenges, Search implemented 20 social media literacy boot camps in all five provinces from January 2021 to February 2021and 379 youth participants were trained (232 males and 147 females). Out of total youth participants, 36 youth groups/individuals were finally selected to create social media content on peaceful coexistence through innovation funds based on the selection criteria of concept, marketing strategy, budget and trend. After the dropout of two teams, 34 youth groups/individuals created content within a limited time of five weeks again with the challenges of COVID 19 restrictions as 3rd wave of the pandemic started from April 2021. The main thematic areas of social media products were hate speech and peace building. In addition, some social media products also focused on areas such as war widows, suicide, gender-based

violence, sexual minorities, and road accidents. Finally, the award ceremony for the 10 winning teams was also held virtually at the end of June 2021.

Evaluation findings suggest that even though Search was able to adapt the project activities amidst the challenges of the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 still reflected in many sub areas of the project such as developing criteria for selection of participants and social media products of youth participants.

2. Introduction to the Study

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to document achievements of the r Project and to identify successful approaches and methods which can be included in designing future project activities. Thus, this study will help Search to understand whether this approach has proven itself as more effective against some of the other approaches (as explained in the section 1.1: Introduction) and also inform areas of improvement.

The objectives of the project are:

● To document lessons learned and recommendations to inform future work and planning to Search and its partners and donor; and
● To assess the outcomes/achievements of the project and develop 10 case studies to showcase the impact of the project on participating youth groups.

2.2 Research Design, data collection method and sampling

2.2.1 Research Design

Considering the aim and objectives of this project, the philosophical underpinning of this study is interpretivism as it facilitates examination of how individuals make meanings of actions carried out for a particular purpose and how interpretations are formed from culture and historical situations (Burrell & Morgan 1982; Crotty 1998). This enables researchers to identify and understand the attitudinal and behavioral changes and underlying reasons for those changes of the participating youths of this study.

The assessment used a mixed method approach which follows both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (in-depth interviews, Key Informant Interviews - KIIs, content analysis) data collection methods in order to address the key questions of the assessment. Hence, the data collection involved methodological triangulation of using more than one data collection method in the study (Denzin 1970; Neuman 2011; Silverman 2006). This enhanced the validity of the study allowing data to be gathered from different methods and perspectives of the members of the target groups and stakeholders to make a more objective and accurate representation of their experiences and to provide a multifaceted and more holistic view of the findings.

2.2.2 Data Collection

Since Sri Lanka is still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection was conducted by employing remote data collection methods.

Review of Secondary Data

Prior to the assessment, the consultancy team studied background materials including the project proposal, M&E plan, phase 1 project's related documents such as lessons learnt and best practices report, training modules etc. The purpose of desk review is to ensure that at the beginning of the project both the project team and Consultant team expectations are set, agreed and is working towards achieving the objectives of the project.

Other required secondary data was collected by conducting a literature review – past academic research articles, reports, projects conducted by INGOs, NGOs and government institutions etc. Full list of literature can be found in Annex 5.

Quantitative Data Collection

The survey

The survey was conducted over the phone, interviewer-administered interviews using a structured questionnaire and the responses were entered to Google forms to gather quantitative data required to mainly answer the key questions of Objective I: to assess the outcomes/ achievements of the project.

The population of the survey is 311 (at the time of approval of the inception report) youth participants aged 18-25 years old from five provinces (Northern, Eastern, Central, Western and Southern) who participated in social media literacy boot camps. Based on the population of the study, the sample size for the survey is calculated as 173 youth individuals with 5% of margin of error and 95% of confidence level. This random sample size was obtained from the Raosoft statistical computing software. Hence, in order to obtain a representative sample, a proportionate sample was drawn from each province considering the total number of participants in each of them and their gender, religion and ethnic compositions. Consequently, 30 individuals from the Eastern province, 21 from the North, 33 from the West, 44 from the South and 45 from the Central province were selected using a simple random sampling method (Profiles of the survey participants can be found in Annex 6).

Qualitative Data Collection

In-depth interviews

Ten (10) in-depth interviews were conducted with selected youth groups/individuals (Profiles of the in-depth interview participants can be found in Annex 6). Purposive sampling method was employed to select a representative sample. They were mainly conducted in order to develop 10 case studies to showcase the success of the project on participating youth groups (under Objective I). These one-to-one open-ended interviews were conducted over Zoom using a semi-structured interview guide.

Key Informant Interviews

Additionally, 14 KIIs were conducted with the stakeholders of this project over the phone and the Zoom meeting platform: implementing staff - Search (03), the Consultant who developed the program (01), trainers/mentors (06) and district level coordinators (04) (Profiles of the key informant interviews participants can be found in Annex 6). Four separate semi-structured interview guides were developed for each group of stakeholders.

Social media content analysis

Search selected the top two products from all 34 participant youth groups/individuals based on their engagement and reach via the used social media platform. Some groups have created only one product. Accordingly, 41 social media products were selected as the sample for this analysis including 20 Sinhala medium and 21 Tamil medium products.

The sentiment analysis methodology, a technique that measures the opinions of the audience towards content, was used to conduct the content analysis. These opinions are categorized as positive, neutral, or negative. There was a group of six independent experienced analysts, three Sinhalese and three Tamils analysts. Each product (Sinhala or Tamil) was analyzed by three analysts to avoid any biases on interpretation of the results.

A scoring system was developed by analysts to score on two fronts; 'Content' and 'Engagement' of the social media products.

For 'Content', the scoring was based on the following criteria:

1. *Messaging*
   ● Simplicity
   ● Attractiveness
   ● Authenticity (How does audience feel: Artificially generated campaign or natural)
   ● Credibility (Used Sources)

2. *Technical*
   ● Image Sizes, Colors, Fonts, Video length
   ● Community Standards of the SM platform
   ● Copyrights and Intellectual property rights

Based on the scoring system, the impact of each product was assessed in percentages on the sentiment scale (positive, neutral, and negative).

For 'Engagement', the scoring was based on the following criteria:

3. *Comments*
   ● The sentiment of the engagement was measured through comments. Comments of each product were counted and categorized by analysts.

Comment categories:
- o Positive (Supportive to content)
- o Negative (Criticisms for content)
- o Neutral (Not related to content)

The impact of comments was also assessed in percentages on the sentiment scale (positive, neutral, and negative).

The process of the content analysis was as follows:

The initial step of the content analysis process was developing a set of criteria (mentioned above) to rank contents based on their impact to the audience. The subsequent step was to rank each content by the independent group according to the scoring system (based on criteria) provided by the evaluation team. Sentiment for each content was measured next based on the results gathered from an independent group. Finally, overall sentiment of the campaign was measured using manual analysis techniques employed by an independent group according to the scoring system (based on criteria) provided by the evaluation team.

2.2.3 Research Ethics

Throughout the research project, consultants remained mindful of the following key areas of ethical considerations to be maintained. In order to avoid harm to the research participants, no sensitive information or issues were discussed with them. Further, considering certain cultural and gender barriers that might affect young girls of all three ethnicities, young female enumerators were appointed for the questionnaire interviews. The survey participants were not required to provide their names during the data collection and they are not identified by the names in the report. The consent of the interview participants was sought to mention their names in the report if needed. The informed consent forms were read to the participants and their oral consent was sought for their voluntary participation and to record their interviews (for in-depth and KIIs) before the commencement of the interviews. Further, the research participants were informed the purpose of the study, why their inputs are sought and how their details and information provided would be protected in the informed consent form. All data were securely stored in password protected laptops and external hard disks of the consultants.

2.3 Data Analysis

To interpret survey data, they were analysed at different levels of measurement scales such as nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio. This helped to do cross tabulations and trend analyses. Data was analysed using MS Excel. For qualitative data analysis, the transcripts were prepared for each in-depth interview and KII. Then, initial coding or identifying common themes was carried out and these categories were conceptually named. Then, axial coding was carried out to examine the connections between categories and subcategories of opinions within the themes. Finally, identified

categories were compared to identify a core category and to come up with answers for key questions of the project assessment study.

Reports prepared by social media content analysts on contents created in social media platforms were analysed using suitable coding sheets. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted under the content analysis technique.

2.4 Limitations

- The limitations of the study were primarily involved with the remote data collection and socio-cultural barriers that young females face in certain conservative communities. For instance, in addition to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) could have been employed to gather qualitative data from the participant youths. Yet, it was difficult to conduct FGDs using remote data collection methods such as over the phone interviews. However, when in-depth interviews were conducted on Zoom platforms, more than one youth participant took part in the interviews. Further, as social media literacy boot camps were conducted in Zoom platforms, the research team members had to observe them in the on-line environment. This might have limited the richness of the qualitative data collected.
- Further, only 41 social media products of 34 selected youth groups/individuals were chosen for the content analyses which limit the generalization of findings.
- As informed by few of the district coordinators, some youth participants, particularly young females did not own their own mobile phones and they have relied on their parents or guardians mobile phones. Hence, some of these female participants could not be contacted directly and appointments had to be fixed based on the availability of their guardians at home.
- Hence, in some cases the appointments had to be fixed early morning or in the evening, a time period that their parents would be at home before going to work or after coming home from work. The lack of ownership of mobile phones by young females also reflects the gender power imbalances that exist in culturally sensitive communities. The consultants ensured to recruit young female enumerators to conduct interviews especially with the female youth participants in Eastern and Northern provinces. This decision was taken considering the cultural and gender barriers that young females face in culturally conservative societies and this was already experienced by the consultants in a remote data collection conducted among the women in Northern and Eastern provinces.
- Poor mobile network coverage, extreme weather conditions of the country, tide schedules of the youth participants due to their higher studies and employment and festive season of Ramadan period (from April 13 to May 13) that fell during data collection period were some of the other challenges that had to be managed during remote data collection. However, the research team made several attempts in reaching participants to make appointments for the interviews. Hence, the survey could be completed with the total number of participants selected for the sample.

3. Findings

The findings section will be broken into three main sections; (1) Outcome-related findings, (2) Summary of case studies, and (3) Lessons learnt and Recommendations.

3.1 Outcome-related findings

Outcome I: *Increased awareness and capacity among target youth around the harmful effects of hate speech on social media and how to produce positive online content that advances peace and reconciliation*

Indicator 1: % of trained youth who indicate increased knowledge to identifying online hate speech and to conduct an effective social media campaign to counter it

Through the survey conducted with 173 youth participants, it became apparent that prior to the project the level of awareness of hate speech in social media was very low. For instance, ***Indicator 1.a***: percentage of youth across all regions that indicated their awareness level at 'extremely aware', 'very aware', and 'moderately aware' was only 2%, 3%, and 28% respectively (aggregate 33%) (see below Graph 1). ***Indicator 1.a*** was the lowest in the Northern Region (aggregate 19%) and highest in the Western Region (aggregate 45%).

Graph 1: Awareness of hate speech in social media
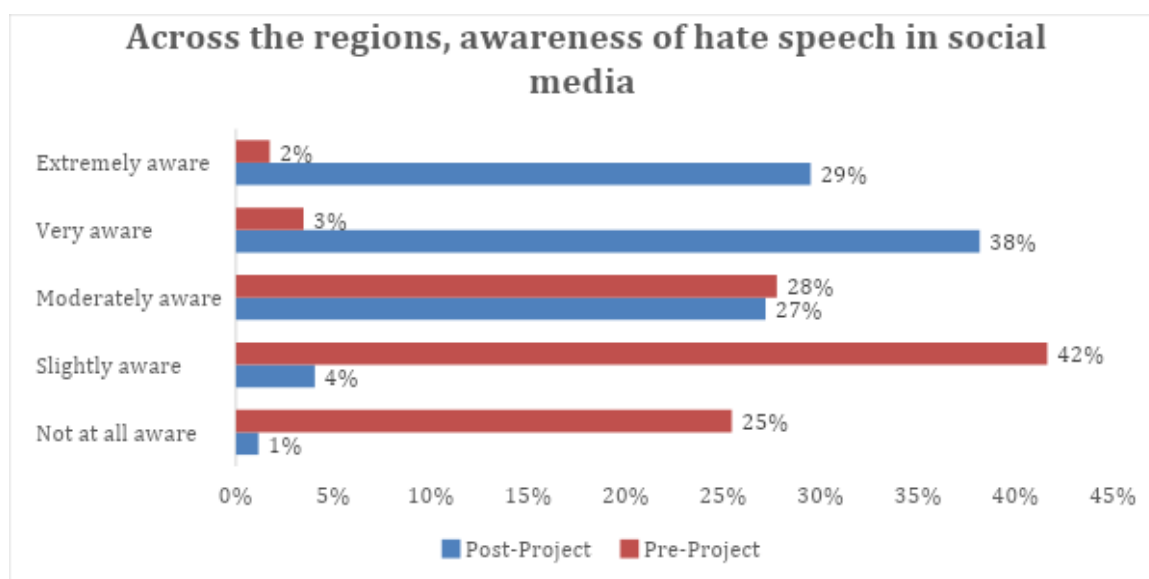
However, post project, ***Indicator 1.a*** significantly increased to 29%, 38% and 27% respectively for the 'extremely aware', 'very aware', and 'moderately aware' answer categories (aggregate 94%).

The region with the lowest percentage for **Indicator 1.a** was in the Southern Region (91% aggregate) whereas the highest was noted in the Eastern Region (100% aggregate). This increase in awareness is reflected during in-depth interviews conducted with youth and KIIs as well.

> *"After the project, I have a habit of thinking and trying to understand who is behind a post when I see hate speech in social media, why they have shared, and what is their agenda. Before I react, I try to analyze and understand the content better" - Participant from Central Region*

> *"During the training I learned tools and techniques on how to create content, we did exercises as groups and individually and created content. I create content now using this learning"- Participant from Eastern Province*

> *"I witnessed more than 90 per cent of young people had greater interest to use the knowledge in their respective projects."Trainer*

> *"Here, participants are taught on how to create responsible content, express it, and become champions of their message in the process. Young people would not have really known about it if they had not had the opportunity to participate in a project of this caliber." - District Coordinator*

The findings of the content analysis also revealed that the overall positive sentiment of all 41 social media products created by 34 youth groups/ individuals was at a very high score of 88.5%.

Further, this increase in awareness of hate speech in social media has translated to increased use of social media. For instance, prior to the project, **Indicator 1.b**: percentage of youth across all regions that indicated their use of social media as 'very active', 'active' and 'average' was 14%, 20%, and 39% respectively (aggregate 73%) (see Graph 2 below). **Indicator 1.b** was the lowest in the Northern Region (52% aggregate) and highest in the Western Region (91%).

Graph 2: Engagement on social media
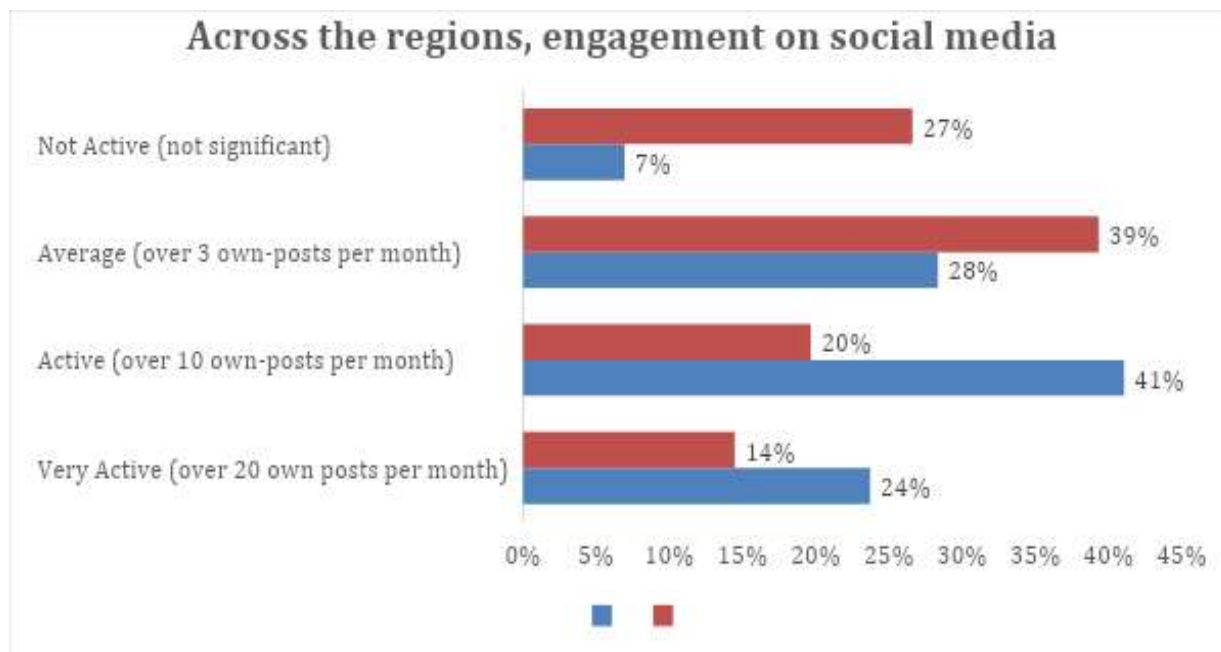
Post project, ***Indicator 1.b*** increased significantly to 24%, 41%, and 28% respectively for 'very active', 'active', and 'average' answer categories (aggregate 93%). The region with the highest percentage for ***Indicator 1.b*** was the Eastern and Western Regions (100%) whereas the lowest was in the Northern Region (71%). There is a positive relationship between awareness of hate speech and use of social media. This is most evident in the case of the Eastern Region that had high levels of awareness of hate speech amongst its youth participants. And as a result, also had the highest levels of use of social media post projects. This is evident through the following quote:

> *"Prior to the boot camp, when there were contents such as posters or images or videos I tended to believe but now I know how to verify them. I use web-based tools to verify them. I look for evidence and ask the person who shares for evidence" - Participant from Northern Region*

> *"Only after I participating in this boot camp, I got to know the interesting and useful parts of social media and it made me to create accounts in social media and still I want to learn more regarding the technical knowledge in social media and smartphone usage" - Participant from Eastern Region*

Further, this increase in use of social media has led to active actions being taken by the youth on common matters (social, economic, cultural, political, environmental) across the regions. For instance, ***Indicator 1.c***: percentage of youth who were 'very active', 'active' and 'average' in

creating own-posts related to common matters was only 3%, 10%, and 29% respectively (see table 1 below). Post project, **Indicator 1.c** increased drastically to 10%, 28% and 40% which demonstrates that the project has motivated, empowered and provided the confidence to the youth to take active action. While participants were enthusiastic about their positive change, trainers and district coordinators have also observed that the youth have become empowered.

"We should counter Hate speech., After attending the boot camps and doing our own project on creating content to counter hate speech, I have developed confidence that hate speech can be defeated" - Participant from Eastern Region

"It is interesting to see the comments they have received and as admin they too respond to those comments. I could see a growing healthy dialogue there. This is in a way they capture others view on hate speech, so, overall, they run this project to counter hate speech."- Trainer/Mentor

"During earlier times, they would simply share content they would have come across and liked on social media. Now, the project has given young people the confidence that any negative content that comes up on social media can be countered." – Trainer

This is a significant achievement given that there are easier options of reacting and sharing posts of other social media users.

Table 1: Engagement of youth in creating posts, sharing and liking posts on common matters

Across the regions, activeness in:	Creating own posts		Sharing posts		Liking posts	
	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Pre-Project	Post-Project	Pre-Project	Post-Project
Very Active (over 20 posts per month)	3%	10%	12%	17%	39%	40%
Active (over 10 posts per month)	10%	28%	30%	45%	27%	34%
Average (over 3 posts per month)	29%	40%	38%	30%	25%	22%
Not Active (not significant)	57%	21%	20%	9%	9%	4%

Likewise, it is evident that popular means of advocating on social media such as sharing posts related to common matters have also experienced an increase in their level of activeness. **Indicator 1.d:** percentage of youth who were 'very active' and 'active' in sharing posts on common matters increased from 12% and 30% respectively to 17% and 45% after the project.

And when it comes to liking contents on common matters posted by others, **Indicator 1.e:** percentage of youth who were 'very active' and 'active' demonstrated a modest increase from 39% and 27% respectively to 40% and 34% post project. It is clear that the project interventions have led to more active means of engagement in social media which is the objective of the project. The quote below evidences the above finding:

> *"When we saw content promoting hate speech in social media, we liked and commented on the posts prior to the project. Now, we are knowledgeable to react to those posts in social media after the training"- Participant from Southern Region*

Overall, **Indicators 1.a** to **1.e** affirms that the project interventions have been successful in increasing youth's awareness and understanding of social media's role in spreading negative and positive messages. The increased awareness of the participants is also confirmed through the social media content created by them (i.e. refer to section 3.2 Summary of Case Studies) and the positive responses of the trainers and district coordinators.

> *"... from the idea generation to the execution stage I can see that they have carefully analyzed social media's role in spreading negative and positive messages and their projects have increased their understanding. I would say they have a far better understanding of the role of social media after participating in the project." - Trainer*

From a capacity building point of view, the participating youth's ability to create pluralistic and peaceful content was limited prior to the project. This limitation boils down to technical capacities (i.e. photo and video editing, etc.) as well as knowledge capacities (understanding of pluralistic/peaceful versus hate content). From a technical capacity point of view, **Indicator 1.f:** the percentage of youth whose level of knowledge and skills in photo and video editing that was 'excellent' and 'good' was only 4% and 15% respectively prior to the project (aggregate 19%) (See Graph 3 below). It was the lowest in the Northern Region (10% aggregate) whereas it was the highest in the Western Region (33% aggregate). This is expected given that the Northern Region faces multiple challenges in terms of computer literacy (19.3% in 2019 which is the second lowest across Sri Lanka) and limited accessibility to smartphones, computers and internet (Computer Literacy Statistics - 2019 (Annual), Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka).

Graph 3: Level of knowledge and skills in photo and video editing

Across the regions, level of knowledge and skills in Photo and Video Editing
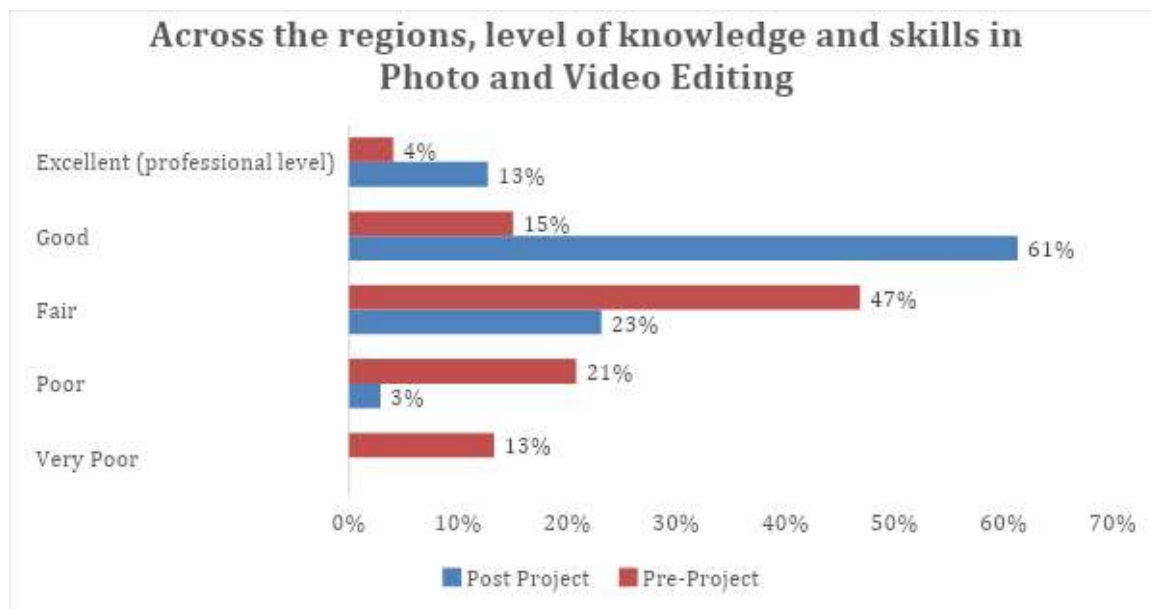
However, post project, the ***Indicator 1.f*** drastically increased to 13% and 61% for the 'excellent' and 'good' categories respectively (aggregate 74%). The Northern Region continued to have the lowest percentage (aggregate 62%) whereas the Western Region continued to have the highest (aggregate 88%) Therefore, there is significant improvement still required for the Northern Region whereas the region that improved the most was the Eastern by +66% to 83% aggregate. Almost all ten youth participants/groups participated in in-depth interviews claiming that they could apply the knowledge and skills gained during the training sessions.

> *"During the boot camp, we learned several tools like Canva and Adobe Spark to create social media content. And we learned about memes and collage creation. It was useful to learn that all these can be done using a mobile phone also" - Participant from Central Region*

> *"During the training I learned tools and techniques on how to create content, we did individual as well as group exercises and created content. I create content to counter hate speech now using this learning" - Participant from Northern Region*

Trainers also appreciated the closely knitted, gradual process of the 3C approach which allows youth to apply the knowledge they gained to create social media content.

> *"The strength of the approach is that it helps and makes young people action oriented, they have to engage in a practical exercise using the knowledge they gained in the training." – Trainer/Mentor*

"Even certain sessions on general social media awareness in a way directly linked to the 3C approach. The approach is very much integrated into the training from the beginning."- Trainer

From a knowledge capacity point of view, **Indicator 1.a** clearly demonstrated an increase in awareness of hate speech on online media amongst the youth participants. This awareness has translated to pluralistic and peaceful content being developed by the youth participants. **Indicator 1.g:** This is most evident in terms of the themes of the content that the youth participants covered in the social media campaigns they were planning to or already produced (see Table 2 below). Majority of the content centered around unity (58%), minorities (18%), and reconciliation (12%).

Table 2: Themes of Social Media Content

Themes of Content	%
Unity	58%
Minorities	18%
Reconciliation	12%
Gender	5%
Languages	2%
Confidential	2%
Social Media Literacy	1%
Politics	1%

Some of the quotes from the participants' highlight this understanding for pluralistic and peaceful content (also please refer to Section 3.2. Summary of Case Studies for examples of this type of content):

"We aim to create a poster that will showcase the message of harmony and understanding and promote it amongst members of the public" – Participant from Central Region

"My theme will be "Unity". There are some people who create violence between religious groups. So, against that I want to create posts" – Participant from Central Region

> *"If you notice the way these young people handle Facebook now, their posts and writings it is evident that they are champions. For example; one of the youth participants uses Canva to create content and if you review these contents they really promote coexistence and reconciliation, I would say this is a great achievement." - District Coordinator*

Further, as found in the content analysis, the main theme of almost all the social media products (97.5%), for instance, is on peace building among the ethnicities in the country. In general, the majority of these products have been positively received (89%) in the social media platforms by the social media. While youth participants positively discussed about their efforts in creating peace related social media contents, project implementing staff, trainers/mentors and district coordinators also shared their observations and views as follows;

> *"The youth knew that there's a conflict between ethnicities in our society. And, through content creation, they tried to address this issue. For example, the youth who have not visited a Kovil, went to Kovil and some youth went to a Muslim village to create content. Although, we couldn't get youth from different ethnicities to participate in boot camps together, through creating content, youth researched about other ethnicities and other religions." - District Coordinator*

> *"There is a Sinhalese and Muslim mixed village in Hambantota and our participants went to that village to research on that. Even five of these participants make an impact as they share their experience with family members also. So, the positive message has already communicated to the society."- District Coordinator*

> *"I witnessed high interest and engagement from participation in creating content related to peaceful coexistence and countering hate speech. It's quite interesting that even their own topics were around these lines. Their content was very informative, what I felt was they were prepared and expecting to create content." - Project Team Leader, Search*

> *"I observed content that was generated from the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Central Provinces. Everyone performed very well."- Trainer/Mentor*

> *"Now they have started to work on two Facebook pages, the contents they have produced are very powerful and professional." – Trainer/Mentor*

The consultants also observed that the youth participants have attempted to disseminate a strong peace-related message through their creations and the findings of the content analysis of their products and the views of the trainers, district coordinators and the Search staff also reflected that the youth have become successful in their effort.

Hence, with respect to the Outcome 1 which is on increased awareness and capacity among youth on hate speech in social media and producing positive online content, it must be mentioned that

youth became digital champions bringing them respect, self-esteem, self-confidence, status and recognition.

> *"All the social media users, particularly youth, need attention, image building and an alternative identity. It's a good thing as I see, by creating content on an issue, they grab attention, build an identity. For instance, if there is an issue on drugs, you create content and you build an online identity in your village as the one who raises voice and acts on these issues. This is a good thing this approach creates." – District Coordinator*

Further, this opportunity extended to the youth to create their own social media content and to promote them in order to counter fake and hate speech shared in social media enabled youth to be liable, responsible and proud of their own actions while learning their own lessons.

> *"The participants were the Directors of the story/video. Their names were also included in the video. They have never done a short film and with the project they were able to do it. First, they wrote the project proposal. And then they decide whether their content is a video or animation…etc. Then they searched in social media who are the people that they can outsource. And, then, they prepared the budgets. This is done through an organization in other projects and in this project, participants themselves did these. Also, these groups are small teams and they themselves have conflicts and issues. However, they learn to overcome these and finally they create a good product. Some participants did this for the first time in their life." – Trainer/Mentor*

Creating 'Champions', the highlight of the whole 3C approach, enables participants to gain self-esteem as they have a positive feeling of their achievement. Even though youth participants did not call themselves the champions, during in-depth interviews, it became evident that they are proud and self-satisfied of their achievements and the whole experience of becoming champions in social media platforms. District Coordinators and trainers who closely work with the youth have also observed the enhancement of self-esteem and self-confidence that youth have gained.

> *"I remember, one participant messaged me that, now 'we are digital champions' because of the project" – District Coordinator*

> *"What is more appropriate is the area of championing because it's where they tend to make some impact rather than sticking to knowledge building, and it's the application side of it." – Trainer/Mentor*

> *"...currently these groups are doing well, if they continue their efforts continuously for at least 6-8 months, they will become champions in countering hate speech and fake news." - Trainer/Mentor*

Additionally, small grants, support from the trainers, district coordinators, coaching and mentoring from mentors and the Search project team were positively impacted on the success of the 3C approach.

However, despite the increased awareness on the use of social media to counter hate speech and to produce social media creations, it was found that the certain youth groups/individuals have faced challenges in producing their social media contents particularly in finding technical expertise to create their animations and video productions. This challenge was reflected on their social media productions as well. In some instances, the duration of the products was lengthy as they have been unable to edit the content as they wished. In some, the sequence of shots was not arranged in a logical order to bring out the intended message and in some cases, subtitles were not placed correctly.

When discussing the challenges the youth had to face in creating the content, according to one group, they had to hire a three-wheeler and make a long journey to hire required cameras and lighting equipment to shoot their video production. According to youth participants, their physical movements in search of these resource people have become difficult due to restrictions in movements imposed due to Covid-19. Further, some had negative experiences as the resource persons who agreed to develop their animations refused to take up the task at the last minute. This fact was confirmed by the mentors and district coordinators as well.

> *"...for two teams, the video teams increased the price even after the participants agreed on a price. For one team, the participants gave the video preparation for a university student and that student had exams and at the last moment, he said he can't do the video." – Trainer/Mentor*

> *"I saw on several occasions that they struggled with the time and resources. So, when they struggle like that the idea may not come to the proposal level or it became difficult sometimes to achieve the climax in certain products."- District Coordinator*

Hence, due to their lack of knowledge in producing different types of social media productions they have reached out to outside resource people and spend a considerable amount of money.

> *"It's good if the project included more technical knowledge on editing videos. How to do dubbing for a video. We spent a lot of money on that." - Participant from Eastern Region*

However, a very few youth groups have been capable of using available resources within their teams.

> *"We edited these videos on our own, I had some knowledge on editing before and during the social media boot camp, I sharpened my knowledge. Our team members did the production of video, we did not use professional cameras, since we had quality mobile phones, used them for shooting"- Participant from Central Region*

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Hence, even as admitted by some of the trainers and the Search staff members, skills needed to create social media productions must be extended to the youth.

Outcome II: *Increased engagement of social media influencers to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities.*

Indicator 2: # of social media products produced by the participating youth challenging negative perceptions or promoting positive narratives towards minority ethnicities and religions.

To understand the improvement of ***Indicator 2***, it is important to analyse how youth participants responded to hate speech prior to the project. Prior to the project, (***Indicator 2.a)*** majority of youth across all regions ignored hate speech (43%) without taking any active action against it (See Table 3 below) while 20% commented on it, 19% reacted to it and 18% reported it (aggregate 57%). Whereas, no one created social media campaigns to counter hate speech.

**Table 3:** Response to hate speech in social media

Response to hate speech in social media	Pre-project	Post-project
Ignored it	43%	16%
Reacted to it	19%	5%
Commented on it	20%	21%
Reported it	18%	50%
Created social media campaign to counter it	0%	8%

Post project, the youth that ignored hate speech reduced drastically from 43% to 16% as they resorted to more active actions against these hate speech posts. The majority of the youth reported it (50%), others commented on it (21%) and created social media campaigns to counter it (8%). The youth that simply reacted to it (19%) prior project also reduced to 5% post project as they opted to voice out their concerns. However, an interesting point to note, the Western Region had the highest percentage (30%) of youth who continued to ignore hate speech related posts even after the project, whereas the Eastern Region had the highest percentage (20%) of youth who created social media campaigns to counter it. This could be because participants from the Eastern province who belonged to all three ethnicities (Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims) have had more experiences on the consequences of hate speech.

That being said, this is a significant achievement from the project outcome point of view as youth are championing different means to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities. The transition from being a passive consumer of social media content to becoming active participants of the ecosystem that upholds freedom of speech but doesn't tolerate hate speech is a key step forward.

Further, to answer *Indicator 2*, the survey also asked the participating youth whether they have already produced or planning to produce social media products that challenge negative perceptions or promote positive narratives towards minority ethnicities and religion. Interestingly, across all the regions, *Indicator 2.b:* almost half (48%) of all youth have said 'Yes'. As observed earlier in *Indicator 1.g*, an overwhelming majority (58%) have produced or planned to produce on the theme of 'Unity'. This is an encouraging finding given that the objective of the project is to empower youth to counter hate speech with content that unites rather than divides ethnicities and religions. Likewise, the two other major themes were 'minorities' (18%) and 'reconciliation' (12%) which revolved around pluralistic and peaceful messaging as well.

Graph 4: Have you already produced or planning to produce social media products?
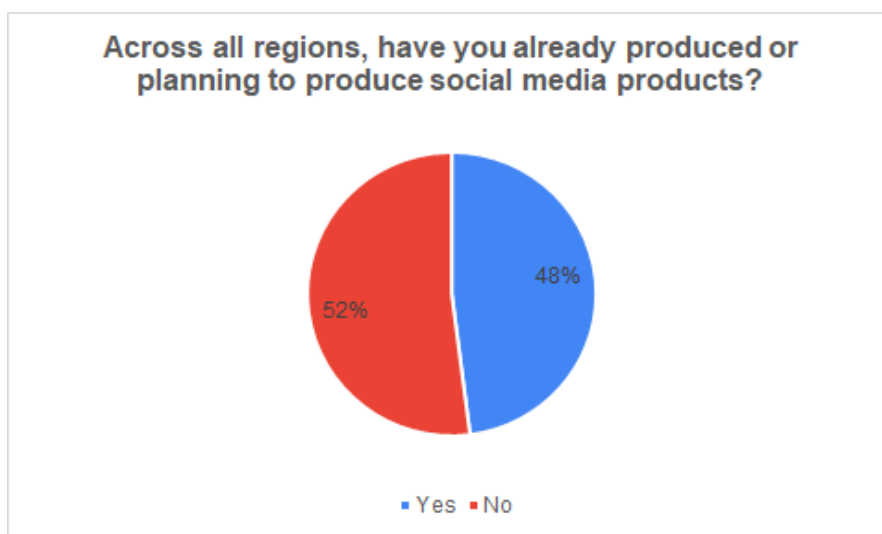
Of the 52% participating youth that haven't produced or planned to produce social media products, the main two reasons were the 'lack of time' (43%) and 'lack of interest' (31%) followed by 'lack of understanding' (17%) and 'fear of backlash' (9%). *Indicator 2.b* was the lowest in the Western Region (36%) and the highest in the Northern Region (57%) in terms of youth who said 'Yes'. Especially in the Western Region, the 'lack of interest' (43%) dominated in terms of reasons and this correlates with the findings from *Indicator 2.a* whereby a significant percentage of the Western Region youth continued to ignore hate speech even after the project.

However, attention must be paid on this 52% of the survey participants who admit that they have not produced or planning to produce social media content after the training sessions and the lower percentage of increase (8%) of participants who created social media content to counter hate speech. They have provided several specific reasons for their refusal of content creation. One reason was that their belief that they would not be able to change the attitude of the people saying that "We cannot change others mind", "I do not want to engage with other peoples' beliefs", "Whatever we say sometimes it leads to a bad way in the mind of affected people. That's why I didn't create", "I have fear to give a voice or support to minority people", "don't like to open our ideas with unsuitable people"," I think if I talk about other religion that could lead to a bad situation", "If I do that I do not know how people will react to that". These sayings indicate that even after the training sessions, they are less confident in countering hate speech and negative comments that they might have to confront in the social media platforms. Further, during the in-depth interviews, although youth discussed enthusiastically about their social media production, they did not discuss in-depth their experience of countering negative comments or hate speech. However, as indicated by the content analysis, this could be because they had to deal with a fewer number of negative messages.

Therefore, from the findings and observations, it is quite evident that the 'countering' component needs more attention and emphasis in order to enhance the countering skills of the youth.

Through the content analysis conducted (sample of 41 social media products from 34 participating youth teams), it was evident that almost all (40) of the social media products focused on 'unity' and 'peace' whereas there was one that focused on gender. This finding supports the findings of *Indicator 1.g* and in section 3.2 Summary of Case Studies, there are examples that detail the different approaches taken by the youth to promote 'peace' and 'unity' in Sri Lanka.

The overall sentiment towards these social media products was measured based on 'content' and 'engagement' of content. 'Content' was judged based on simplicity and easiness to understand, attractiveness to pay attention, relevance and acceptance, technical soundness and complicity with the community standards of the social media platform. Whereas, 'engagement' was based on the comments received (positive, neutral or negative). The social media products published by the 34 participating youth teams had an overall positive sentiment of 89% with only 5% negative and 6% neutral (See Graph 4 below).

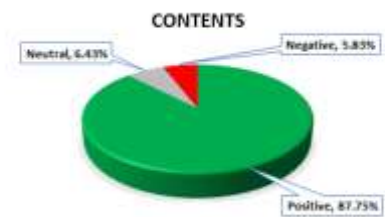**Graph 5:** Sentiment towards social media products of youth
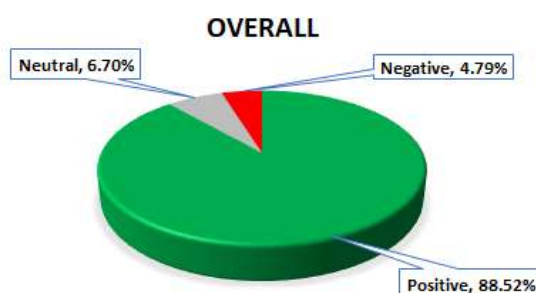
This overall high positive sentiment (i.e. Apita Api (93.3%), Infinity අපි (93.2%), No Racism (86.7%) to name a few campaigns that scored high overall positive sentiment) indicates high levels of technical and knowledge capacities built through the project activities. The below quotes supports this indication:

> "We produced articles emphasizing peace and spread it on social media. A balloon trader belonging to the Muslim religion at Gandhi Park in Batticaloa, delights all, regardless of race or religion. We produced and staged street dramas based on this. We made his story and the message behind this depiction clear to the people through social media" - Participant from Eastern Region

> "Your project activities are great. It was very useful which gave the knowledge of social media, editing and hate speech" - Participant from Central Region

Looking at the 'content' alone, 88% scored positive (see Graph 6 below) implying that an overwhelming majority of the social media products were simple and easy to understand, attractive to pay attention, relevant and acceptable, technically sound and complies with the community standards of the social media platform.

Graph 6: Sentiment on Contents   **Graph 7:** Sentiment on Engagement
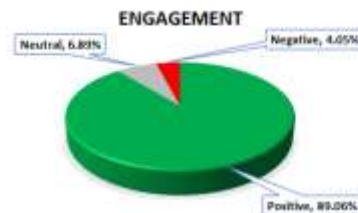
Furthermore, the 'engagement' of the content scored even higher on the positive side (89%) (see Graph 7 above) implying that there were more positive comments to these posts/projects than neutral or negative comments. Therefore, to a great extent the project activities have contributed to create competent and capable youth champions to counter hate/fake speech and spread positive social media messages/ contents that promote peace or co-existence and diversity related messages.

An interesting finding from the content analysis is that the overall sentiment of Sinhala medium social media products is significantly less positive (69%) compared to the Tamil medium social media products (98%). This is largely due to the poor scoring on 'positive' when it comes to the 'contents' (77%) and 'engagement' (56%). Upon further analysis, the Western (72%) and Southern (67%) Region scored the lowest when it comes to overall positive sentiment. Especially in the Southern Region, the 'engagement' of posts had a significantly higher negative (23%) scoring implying there is a higher dissent when pluralistic messages are published in the region. Whereas,

in the Western region, the positive 'content' scoring (75%) was the lowest across all regions and it might be prudent to look at selecting participants who are more interested and willing to learn.

Indicator 3: % of youth surveyed who report that they have engaged in a dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities as a result of the social media campaign.

Indicator 3.a: Majority of the participating youth (60%) had the opportunity to have a dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities (See Graph 8 below). The following quote from a participant in the Central Region demonstrates this inter-religion and inter-ethnicity dialogue:

> *"I made a short film on religious harmony and published a poster on a social networking site. The aim of the story is to bring awareness about equality between the Sinhala and Muslim populations. I pointed out in it the faults and justifications within both parties. But, someone from a particular religion slammed me on social media after noticing this. Then I had the opportunity to talk to him and explain further" – Participant from Central Region*

Further, this opportunity was best exemplified amongst the Central Region youth (71%) and least in the Western Region youth (45%). When probed to understand this limitation in the Western Region, it became clear that 'No Opportunity' (72%) was cited as the main reason. By this, it meant most of the fellow participants in the boot camps were either from the same ethnicities and religions or the online delivery of the boot camp was considered as a limiting factor. Also, this was an issue not only in the Western Province but was found to be present across all regions (61% of the 40% who answered 'No' to the *Indicator 3.a* cited 'No Opportunity').

> *"As I remember all people who took part in the social media boot camp were from same religion as me" – Participant from Western Region*

> *"It was conducted online. I did not have a chance to engage with other people" – Participant from Southern Region*

Graph 8: Opportunity to engage in a dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities
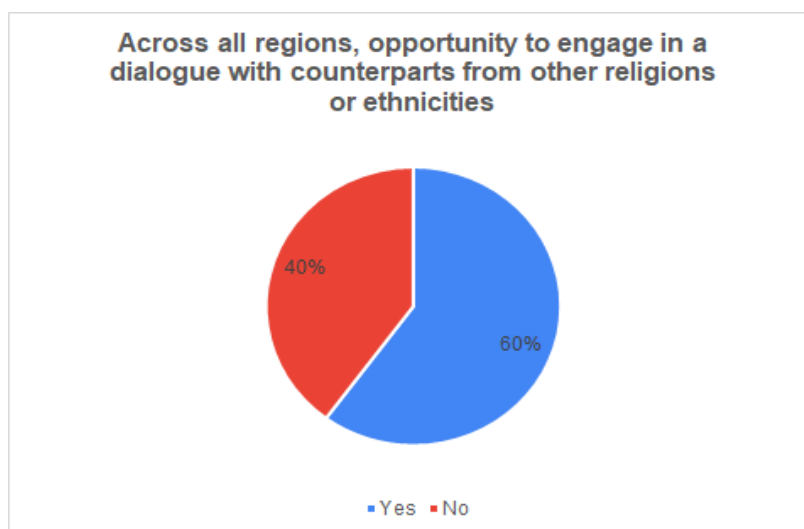
In terms of youth ability to engage in dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities, most of them were able to do so through group activities and the social media posts they created. Therefore, representative youth selection from different backgrounds for these boot camps could be an area that SFCG could look to improve in order to engage more dialogue amongst the youth groups.

Indicator 4: % of participating youth that report the monitoring reports supported youth to address hate speech in their communities

Before probing about the usefulness of the monitoring reports, the survey analysed the level of awareness of these monitoring reports amongst the participating youth. It must be mentioned that the monitoring reports were not provided to the participating youth prior to the social media literacy boot camps in this project by Search. However, according to certain district coordinators, some learning materials have been shared among the youth prior to the training sessions.

> *"I sent some guidance videos and other materials to participants. I also sent out some guiding material regarding the innovation grant." District Coordinator, Southern Province*

Indicator 4.a: However, since the majority of the participating youth were unaware of these monitoring reports, Search can provide pre-training materials such as monitoring reports prior to the social media literacy boot camps and create more awareness of these tools that are available for the youth to address hate speech in their communities.

3.2 Summary of Case studies

The project selected 34 proposals from youth participants to create content that promotes pluralism and peaceful messaging and counter hate speech in social media. The 10 case studies selected from five provinces present the success and changes occurred in youth participants as a result of engaging with the project and their social media campaigns. Out of ten selected campaigns, the core message of the majority of campaigns is peace, coexistence, and the importance of unity. In delivering this core message, the campaigns have focused on sub areas such as promoting rights of minority communities, importance of unity and need to eliminate negative perception of diverse ethno-religious communities. In addition, some campaigns also focused on awareness of hate speech and addressing hate speech on marginalised groups such as women and cleaning laborers. These messages were delivered in a diverse range of mediums such as memes, posters, short films, animation videos with narratives and documentary videos. All campaigns have been launched in Facebook platform while YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram have been used to popularise the created content.

The project and campaigns have led participants through a process of learning, challenges, and achievements. With regard to learning, participants gained knowledge on different types of information, diverse web-based tools to create content and various mechanisms to identify and counter fake news and hate speech online through social media literacy boot camps. Participants also experienced project planning, working for deadlines, teamwork and sharing ideas with team members and taking leadership in engaging with the social media campaigns. Further, with creating videos they familiarised with filming, video editing, dubbing, and incorporating subtitles to videos.

Participants had to face different challenges in carrying out their social media campaigns. The main challenge for producing short films has been the COVID-19 pandemic. The video teams had to follow guidelines and take relevant approvals to produce the films. There had also been challenges from families of participants due to societal norms. For example, girls in Northern Province were advised not to engage in video productions conforming to traditional gender norms in the community. In addition, all teams highlighted that boosting had been challenging and teams resolved this with the guidance from their mentors. Some other challenges were, finding video teams, hiring equipment, responding to negative comments and criticisms and time management. The participants have overcome all these challenges and their products have been popularised in social media receiving likes and positive comments. This is inevitably an achievement for participants, which made them recognised among their peers and in their communities. Refer Annex 2 for case studies.

3.3 Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

3.3.1 Best Practices

- The well-planned and organized modules and their sequence in three days' online interactive social media literacy boot camps are effective to increase knowledge and awareness of youth participants on hate speech and fake news spread in social media platforms and their impact on a multi-ethnic society.
- Interaction between the trainers and the youth participants was well maintained during the total virtual social media literacy boot camps using group discussions and activities, question and answer sessions, having two trainers in a session and encouraging youth to practice certain skills during the demonstrations of the trainers.
- The process of 3C approach – Content Creation, Countering and Championing – enabled youth participants to practically apply knowledge gained in social media literacy boot camps into practice.
- The role of Mentors was significant for the youth participants as they could seek necessary advice and assistance from the mentors to create their social media content.
- Creating and recognizing capable youth participants even from remote areas with less opportunities as social media 'Champions' is effective as it builds and improves the self-confidence and recognition of the youth among their peer groups.
- The talent and commitment of the 'Champions' were appreciated at a well-organized virtual Award Ceremony despite the restrictions on physical movements due to the 3rd wave of COVID-19.
- As multi-ethnic participants were selected from five provinces in the country, youth from remote areas with fewer opportunities were able to be aware of the use of social media for peace and reconciliation, to create content and to be recognized as Digital Champions among their peer groups.
- Constant and close involvement of the experienced district coordinators with the youth participants throughout the project supports the successful continuity of the project.
- Physical encounters made by the Search project team with the district coordinators and the youth participants during the field visits strengthened the trust and certainty between stakeholders of the project.

3.3.2 Lessons Learnt

- The eagerness of youths to learn technical aspects of social media and hate speech and fake news indicate that they may not be social media savvy as popularly believed and they may not get adequate opportunities to enhance their knowledge on the functionality of social media platforms.

- Making youth aware of video and photo editing software, creating memes, social media marketing etc. is vital for them to create their own social media products as well as to keep their interest during online social media literacy boot camps.
- Attitudes of the youth towards the influence of hate speech in social media on the peace and reconciliation process in the country are at different degrees of a spectrum. Hence, a stronger persuasion process is needed to change the attitudes of some of the youth participants.
- Due to their engagements with educational, employment and other activities, some youth participants are unable to make required commitments to regularly participate in three days, online social media literacy boot camps and then to create social media products.
- Youth participants faced difficulties in making final social media products due to their lack of technical knowledge and expertise on creating animations and video productions thereby making exorbitant payments to the professionals.
- Adequate time period must be allocated for social media content creation, to implement social media marketing techniques to boost them in social media platforms and then consequently to popularize them among social media users.
- Not all the youth participants were able to use a laptop or a desktop computer to join virtual social media literacy boot camps as some used smart phones which may pose difficulties to be actively engaged with the training sessions.
- Most of the social media content was presented as memes and video/animation productions even though other forms such as digital storytelling and photography storytelling are options.
- The process of 3C approach, continuous support extended to the youth through trainers, mentors, district coordinators, the Search staff and the competitive financial assistance encourage youth to produce effective content and to circulate them in social media platforms.
- Some of the social media products were unable to emphasise the main theme of the project, peace and reconciliation. This could be because most of the participating youth were in their early twenties and thus they did not have adequate understanding of the civil conflict that prolonged in Sri Lanka for more than thirty years.
- Since youth faced various reactions from the public for their social media productions, handling these reactions correctly is an area that Search could further work on with the youth.
- Youth whose social media products were selected for the final best 10 products were from remote areas of the country. They found their virtual participation at the Award Ceremony to be more convenient than making a long journey to the Capital, Colombo for a physical participation.
- When the youth participants of the social media literacy boot camps and content production groups are from the same ethnicity and religion, there is less opportunity for them to interact and build dialogue with youth from other ethnicities and religions.

- When the physical movements and conventional communication and financial channels such as postal and banking services are restricted due to a crisis situation such as COVID-19, project administrative and management tasks can become delayed.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Win Together, Work Together: Phase 2 project was initiated targeting youth to contribute to a more vibrant reconciliation process through a focus on development and dissemination of positive stories of peaceful coexistence through social media. The expected results of WT2 Phase II are twofold; (a) increased awareness and capacity among target youth around the harmful effects of hate speech on social media and how to produce positive online content that advances peace and reconciliation; and (b) increased engagement of social media influencers to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities. Amidst the challenges posed by the first, second and third waves of COVID-19 pandemic, Search implemented 20 social media literacy boot camps in five provinces, Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western, from January 2021 to February 2021and 379 youth participants were trained. Out of total youth participants, 34 youth groups/individuals were finally selected to create social media content on peaceful coexistence. The total reach of the social media creations produced by the youth were recorded as 3,496,429, a remarkable achievement of these 34 youth groups/individuals despite numerous limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the award ceremony for the 10 winning teams was also held virtually at the end of June 2021.

The objectives of this particular study were to assess the outcomes/achievements of the project and develop case studies to showcase the impact of the project on participating youth groups and to document lessons learned and recommendations.

The first outcome of the project was successfully achieved because it was found that the percentage of trained youth who indicate increased knowledge to identifying online hate speech and to conduct an effective social media campaign to counter negative messages has significantly increased after their participation at the social media literacy boot camps. Hence, the awareness of youth participants on hate speech in social media and their active use of social media (creating their own posts, sharing and liking posts) have increased. Further, the theme of most of the social media content created by the youth participants is on peace and reconciliation.

The second outcome was the increased engagement of social media influencers to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities. According to the findings, after their participation in the social media literacy boot camps, youth participants were motivated particularly to report hate speech content in social media and to create social media campaigns to counter negative messages. Further, they have become more critical and careful before sharing or reacting to such content after the social media literacy boot camps. This is a significant

achievement as youth are championing different means to challenge negative perceptions towards minority religions and ethnicities. The social media products shared by the 34 participating youth teams/individuals also had an overall high percentage of positive sentiment with very lower levels of negative and neutral sentiments. However, there were a considerable number of youth participants who did not intend to produce social media content due to lack of time, interest and fear of backlash. Further, there was an opportunity for some youth participants to engage in a dialogue with counterparts from other religions or ethnicities during the boot camps and content creation, however, a considerable percentage of participants were unable to have such an opportunity.

Case studies selected from five provinces present the success and changes occurred in youth participants as a result of engaging with the project and their social media campaigns. As discussed above, a number of best practices and lessons were learnt on social media literacy boot camps, 3C approach, social media content creations and boosting them that must be taken into consideration for the success of similar future projects. Hence, based on the findings and lessons learnt, following recommendations can be suggested.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Recommendations for social media literacy boot camps

- Suitable pre-guidance and pre-materials can be provided to the participants along with the monitoring reports.

  o Prior to a week or two to the training sessions, participants can be introduced to the required on-line platforms and request them to download certain software.

  o Audio-video materials such as examples of hate speech and fake news, social media monitoring reports on hate speech, social media products of past champions etc. can be shared among the participants.

- Youth can be introduced to diverse presentation forms of social media content such as digital storytelling and photography storytelling explaining their strengths and weaknesses.

- More deserving youth participants who are motivated and committed to actively participate throughout the project must be identified.

- Develop a work book such that the youth have a document to follow during the boot camps and can be used for group work and interactive sessions.

- Adequate knowledge on protecting one's safety and security while handling social media platforms needs to be imparted to the youth.

4.2.2 Recommendations for 3C approach

- 'Capability' component needs to be added before the 'content creation' component of the 3C approach in order to enhance the necessary capabilities needed for content creation of youth participants.
    - o Knowledge and skills required for video and animation productions such as preparation of storyboards, scripts, editing techniques, sub-titling, dubbing, identifying suitable audiences, social media marketing techniques etc. need to be provided to enable youth to create effective productions.
    - o Given the fact that the youth participants are very young as they are in their early twenties, enough information on the history and aftermaths of Sri Lankan civil conflicts and tensions between different ethnic and religious communities must be provided during the training sessions to fight fake news and hate speech.

- A critical and in-depth understanding on the 'Countering' component of 3C approach.

    - o Real examples can be selected as case studies from social media platforms to discuss the initiation and multiplication of negative messages in social media platforms.

    - o Hypothetical situations of hate speech that youth may encounter once they publish their social media contents can be suggested asking them to form responses to counter them.

- Digital champions created from the WT2 project must be sustained and encouraged to continue producing social media content to promote peace and reconciliation.

    a) Constant touch with the Champions can be maintained through continuous communication and information sharing such as through newsletters, monitoring reports and social media platforms.

    b) Youth participants of the project should be involved in similar future projects as already practiced by Search.

    c) A code of ethical guidelines can be developed and shared among the Champions in order to encourage them to maintain the ethical behavior and professionalism in the digital space.

    d) This particular trained youth group can be connected with other similar youth groups in the country or the region to share their experiences and to better perform their role as social media champions to enhance peace and reconciliation among diverse ethnicities.

4.2.3 Recommendations to develop inter-ethnic dialogue among youth participants

● Youth who are literate in a second language (Sinhala/Tamil) can be included in majority Sinhalese or Tamil groups during social media literacy boot camps.

● Interpretation and translation services available in online meeting platforms such as Zoom can be employed to overcome language barriers that may occur during training sessions of social media literacy boot camps.

4.2.4 Recommendations for project management

● Some background information of the participants can be provided to the trainers prior to the commencement of training sessions enabling trainers to gain better understanding of their trainees.

● Regular participation of youth in social media literacy boot camps must be encouraged in order to effectively achieve project outcomes.

● The involvement, expectations and responsibilities of the Mentor's role should be well outlined and specified. The relationship between the mentor and the assigned participants need to be regularly monitored enabling participants to acquire necessary advice and guidance.

● Separate district coordinators have to be appointed to each of the districts as their activities and constant involvement is needed for the success of the project.

● Clear and up-to-date guidelines and instructions must be provided to the District Coordinators facilitating them to plan their activities in advance.

● On-site physical meetings between the district coordinators and the Search project team must be further encouraged.

● Digital communication channels and financial methods must be employed to the maximum for administrative and documentation processes of similar virtually conducted projects.

5. Appendices

Annex 1: Planned and Amended activities of the project

Planned Activity	Amended activity
1. Marketing Campaign:	
Launch a marketing campaign, both online and offline, to mobilize youth with the potential to advance peace and reconciliation on social media.	The mobilization coordination to be launched with the support of regional service providers.
2. Mobilising event through gaming and social media:	
Half day mobilisation event to invite youth in target provinces (Two locations in each province) Output: *10 Mobilization events reaching 1500youth in 5 regions of the country conducted.*	Social media marketing campaign to be launched through Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and TikTok to promote the boot camps in all five provinces. Output: *30 to 50 posts reaching 1500youth in 5 regions of the country conducted*
3. Social media literacy boot camps	

Invite youth participants to two-day boot camp to raise their social media literacy as well as prepare them for producing social media products for peaceful co-existence through building their skills. Output: *5 two day social media boot camps conducted* *175 – 200 young people trained on social media literacy and reconciliation*	Around 400 youth to be shortlisted. Increasing the number of bootcamps to 20 – Each region will have 4 online camps (each online camp will consist of 20 youth due to bandwidth, retention of knowledge and sustaining motivation). Output: *20 online social media boot camps conducted* *20 one day face to face social media boot camps conducted* *375 to 400 young people trained on social media literacy and reconciliation*
4. Innovation Fund Innovation Challenge: Positive content generation	
Invite participants who attend social media literacy boot camp to send their creative ideas for a positive social media campaign that advances peace and reconciliation. The 20 best project ideas will be supported with financial and technical support. Output: *Up to 25 teams supported for developing social media products* *Up to 25 social media products available*	Around 20 social media products to be selected. 30 % of the innovative fund total towards open calls from individuals/experts/groups to produce SM products based on positive messaging/countering hate speech/peace building Output: *Up to 20 teams supported for developing social media products* *Up to 20 social media products available* *Up to 3-5 independent social media products available*
5. Coaching and Mentoring	

Selected teams will have access to intensive coaching to produce high quality and effective social media products. Based on the type of product the team proposes, each team will be coupled with an expert to support them with aspects such as script development, photo or video editing, music subtitling, and how to advance positive messages for peaceful co-existence.	In addition to planned activities, Search will invite winners from Phase one to mentor the youth during the online boot camp sessions.

6. Social media campaign

Launching the social media campaign attracting youth and the broader communities' interest in the project objectives and activities. Output: *3 month long social media campaign, 10 best products selected*	In addition, Search will be adding National Champions from previous projects to counter hate speech based on their own findings as well as the social media report being developed. In addition, Monitoring tools will be used for the reports.

7. Social Media Monitoring for Ethnically and Religiously Motivated Hate Speech.

At the start of the project, Search will select a group of 3-4 social media experts that have access and the ability to monitor social media for racially or ethnically motivated hate speech. Both Sinhala and Tamil media will be monitored. Output: *3-4 social media experts have been identified, Bi- monthly monitoring reports prepared*	In addition, Search will be adding National Champions from previous projects to counter hate speech based on their own findings as well as the SM report being developed. Further, monitoring tools will be used for the reports.

8. National learning and reflection workshop

A two-day final Learning and Reflection Workshop will be organized in Colombo bringing together the top ten teams that have reached the largest number of people. Output: *One National event held, top teams awarded*	Due to Covid 19 crisis and lock down regulations, Search will be reducing the participants from 175 to 100. This will include stakeholders, District Coordinators, trainers and the final winners for the 10 products selected.

Source: Work Together Win Together Project Phase II, Amended Proposal to GIZ, Search

Annex 2: 10 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Ideal Enforcers - Strange ants living in a beautiful small island divided

Keshan (24), Sudesh (18) and Shamlal (21) are three friends from Hambantota of Southern Province. They are active in numerous social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and Viber. And, Keshan is passionate about making a positive social change through social media, he spoke,

> "We use many social media platforms today. But, it's good if we can give a message to society through social media. We can also use social media to understand social problems and find solutions to those. And also, we can get to know many people through social media and through that we can do a social change"

Fake news and hate speech against ethnic minorities is very common in Sri Lankan social media. The team members also have shared, liked and commented on fake news and hate speech without understanding the truth and consequences.

After seeing a post in Facebook on WT2 - Phase II, they applied for the project, as they were keen on improving their social media literacy and its content creation. In applying they did not know they would be able to learn, not only about social media literacy but also about hate speech, fake news and the impact of those to the Sri Lankan community.

After social media literacy boot camps. The proposal of the team was selected by Search to receive the innovation grant to produce a social media product as an alternative to hateful messages in social media. They were delighted by the news as this was the first time to win this kind of grant to do a social media product. As outlined in the proposal, three friends chose to do an animation video production as their final project. Keshan, the team leader expressed core message of the video,

> "In the boot camp we learnt about hate speech as a barrier for peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Many conflicts in the country have aroused as there's no peace between different religions and different ethnicities. Politicians also use this ethnic and religious divide for their benefit, victory and to get votes. We already knew this issue and after participating in the boot camp we got to see these issues in society clearer. So, the three of us wanted to highlight the need for peaceful coexistence through our video."

As an attempt to make their audience curious about their animation video, Keshan and his team named their video as "Amuthu Amuthu Koobiyo" (Strange Ants). Story is about a group of ants who live in a small beautiful island peacefully but as time passes, they get divided among themselves due to conflicts created by ants from other islands. The story emphasises the importance of unity and coexistence among different ethnicities and religions.

They commenced creating the animation video and soon they realised that this creation and its popularisation was not going to be an easy task. However, they sought advice and guidance from their mentor, Mr. Madhava, their District Coordinator, Ms. Madhushi and one of the teachers of Keshan. They wrote the script, as the second step, and looked for people to outsource to create the animation video. The team was disappointed when Keshan's friend who agreed to do the video said no in the midst of the project and this made the team look for another video producing team.

To make their video viral in social media, the team created a Facebook page and uploaded the video and used different social media platforms such as WhatsApp to popularize the video. They also did a boost on Facebook. They learnt these skills from the three-day online boot camp on social media literacy. Within one and half months, their video had around 500 likes and around 400 shares and around 300 comments. The team received many positive comments in accepting and understanding the message they tried to deliver. There were also negative comments and one such negative comment was "if people can be changed by telling stories, there's enough time for people to change". They have successfully responded to these kinds of negative comments as learnt in the three-days boot camp on how to counter negative comments in social media platforms. Keshan said, comments were received from few people from other ethnicities and religions and they also have grasped the message of the video.

According to Keshan and his team members, this whole project has contributed to change and improve many of their skills not only to produce social media content to promote coexistence and address hate speech, but also their life skills.

In a final remark,

> "We have never done a social media campaign as we did for the video. We learnt, how to plan a project, how to work for deadlines, how to share our ideas with others, how we need to incorporate ideas of others to success of the project, how to identify the social problems make a campaign, how to do a video, how to do dubbing, how to do boosting, how to make the video viral in social media. We learnt all this through this We Lanka project. We hope we can do many social media campaigns using this knowledge in future".

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/Idealenforcer/videos/479538133321481

Case Study 2: IBridge - We are children of one mother

Mullathivu District in Northern Province was severely affected by ethnic conflict for more than 30 years and the final days of the conflict was concentrated mainly in this district. Kalaiyarashi (21), from Moongilaaru, Udaiyaarkattu village of Mullathivu, is a girl who experienced the conflict as a child and who grew up in a post conflict environment. Today, she has a degree in social science. Thushanthini (20) and Chandravathan (20) were also from Mullathivu and both of them were waiting for their university entrance.

Kalaiyarashi has not been active in social media before joining the WT2 – Phase II project. She has used her father's phone to engage in social media. Therefore, her social media literacy has been minimal before joining the project. She has not commented or reported on social media content and has not created Facebook pages. She admits that her awareness to differentiate fake and true content on social media has also been limited. And, she has not been proactive in collecting evidence when there is fake content in social media. She shares her views,

> *"Hate speeches are all over social media and it's quite disturbing, day by day it increases, and many people get affected and many of them do not know how to deal with and counter them. I decided to join this project to learn about how to counter hate speech on social media and share the learning with my friends and peers so that we can take it to society."*

After completing three days of social media literacy boot camps, Kalaiyarashi is thankful to the project for improving her social media literacy. Today, she is skilful to verify fake news through web-based tools and knows how to look for evidence for shares. Most importantly, she is skilled in producing social media content to promote coexistence and address hate speech.

In the post conflict context, the people in Northern Province have experienced the occupation of religious sites by other ethnic communities. Kalairashi and her team wanted to launch their social media campaign iBridge to talk about these issues. The theme of their campaign is to promote the ethno-religious rights of minority communities and promote the concept of "we are children of one mother". At first, two girls Thushanthini and Chandravathan were not allowed by their parents to be involved in video production due to traditional gender norms in the Northern area. However, Kalaiyarashi has convinced their parents and has involved them in the project.

For their social media campaign iBridge, Kalaiyarashi and her team has already created five posts, three posters on hate speech and two promoting peaceful coexistence. The team has hired a cameraman from Mullathivu, Mr. Nilavalahant to shoot and edit the videos. The six videos the team has created, presents the need of protecting religious rights of minority communities and their symbols and different perceptions on peace building. The speakers in their videos are social activists, religious leaders (Christian father) and common people. Within one month and one week, their Facebook page has received around 270 likes and around 270 people follow the page and their video on peaceful coexistence has received 29 likes, 6500 views and 22 shares. Thus, their message for coexistence has reached more people than they expected, and they optimistically say that they have already started to change the perceptions of the society.

Living in Northern province, Kalaiyarashi grew up with fear for other minority and majority ethnic groups. However, today she is able to perceive the truth clearer. She shares her experiences of hate speech,

> *"Incidents have occurred in Jaffna and Mannar where garbage was thrown inside a Hindu temple or statues were damaged and immediately the next day you get social media posts saying that Muslims did this, but they were done by people those who involve in anti-social activities within the same religion"*

Moreover, in joining the project, Kalaiyarashi has extended her network of friends. She expresses that now, she has friends from Killinochchi, Mannar and Batticaloa.

> *"We live in a vast geographic area and are quite disconnected with those who belong to other ethnicities and religions. Except for the knowledge I gained from the We Lanka project, I liked this project a lot because I got introduced to new friends, now I have friends from other ethnicities and religions".*

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/ibridge.lk/?ref=page_internal

Case Study 3: Mother Lanka - A message to end the "cold war" in the society

Isuru (23), Akila (23), Dinuka (23), Upeksha (23) and Harsha (23) are students at University College of Matara. The team members are active users of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Tik Tok. Before joining the project, they had skills in creating and maintaining Facebook pages and in boosting. During three days of social media literacy boot camps of WT2 – Phase II project, they improved their knowledge on social media literacy and now they are particularly skillful in reporting pages and using online applications such as Canva. Most importantly, they have learnt about fake news and hate speech. They say that earlier, they shared posts in social media without thinking about consequences.

> *"After the project, we knew that we needed to report on hate speech as hate speech should not be shared and promoted. We received this understanding through the project. We share only good news now. Even sharing posts, now, after the project we do some research whether it's true"*

The team members joined the WT2 – Phase II project from Southern province, a province which was not directly impacted by the conflict in the country. Thus, young team members have dearth of experiences of the conflict. However, the team experienced the ethnic religious tensions in the society that heightened post Easter Attack (April 2019) period. With this experience, they thought of producing a video as their content to counter hate speech in social media. Akila expressing his views on current Peace and reconciliation in the country,

> *"Although war is over, conflicts within people created by war have still not finished. This was clearly visible in the community in the post Easter attack period. We wanted to capture this context of the country to a video"*

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In having this view, the team submitted a proposal to search to produce an animation video and the team named their campaign as Mother Lanka. In getting the assistance of their friends in the university and with their ideas, the team developed two scripts and combined both to develop the narrative for the video. The narrative is developed with rhetorical questions for the audience to reflect the current context of peace and reconciliation in the country with the message "*although the war finished in 2009, the conflicts among people on different issues such as religions, ethnicities, castes, education is still not over*". In order to support this message, the team presents commonalities in Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam at the end of the video. Finally giving the message that, as taught in all religions, peaceful coexistence is important.

> "*In our university, there are students from different religions. Once we finished writing the narrative, we requested those students to review the content we wrote about different religions. They verified our content, and they liked the video too. Now, they are very good friends of ours. We were connected with them thanks to the project*"

Producing the video has been challenging. The team shared their work among themselves. They planned the video for four minutes and they had to edit the video several times and had to do dubbing two times. Support from their network of friends also have been immense in creating the video and incorporating subtitles on time. The team uploaded the video to their Facebook page and started their social media campaign on 20th April 2021. Although they had to face issues in boosting the video to make it viral in social media, they completed all tasks on time. Their message to the society is,

> "We should respect each other. And we must live peacefully. We already had a war, we should not create another. In society there is a "cold war" between different ethnicities and religions. Although there is no war, there is a war. We, as young people in this country, need to stop this cold war".

They shared the video with their family and friends through WhatsApp groups. The team received positive comments from their friends for the video. Within one month and three weeks, the video had around 100 likes and 30,000 views. They also have 400 members on their page.

The team believes that the WT2 project should target more young people and make them knowledgeable on peaceful coexistence.

Facebook Video Link: https://www.facebook.com/KimbulaOriginal/videos/1109777976166687

Case Study 4: No Racism - A call to build a peaceful country for young people

Kasuni (25) from Gampaha district of Western province is in fourth year of her social works degree in National Institute of Social Development. She is an active social worker volunteering Tharunodaya program of Sarvodaya and two other programs. Although, she uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Viber and Messenger, she has not been very active in social media. Her photo editing skills has also been minimal. Kasuni expresses that after joining WT2 – Phase II project, she is skilful in Canva, hashtags and about reporting pages in social media. Most importantly, she has learnt about hate speech.

> *"I learnt about hate speech in boot camps and that's why I thought of writing a proposal for the innovation grant. I see hate speech practically through my community work. For example, I went to Chilaw in March. For a rural camp for ten days. There are conflicts among Buddhist and Catholic people. All people are innocent, the conflict is due to people with extremist views. After participating in the project, I was able to see these issues in society clearer".*

In Sri Lanka, the compartmentalisation of the school system based on different ethnicities and religions is a barrier for young people to understand about different ethnicities and religions. And, negative perceptions on diverse ethnic communities starts from home. Kasuni recalls, as a child she grew up in Southern province and schooled in a Buddhist school. In coming to the university, she had the opportunity to interact with students from different ethnic religious backgrounds. Kasuni says her negative perceptions on people from different ethnicities and religions changed after she got to know students from diverse ethnicities and religions. As a passionate person for script writing, she wanted to make people aware about the root causes of different perceptions in the society through her social media campaign.

> *"The message of the video is not to give wrong perceptions on people from different ethnicities and religions to children as it will have an impact on society. In university I have friends from diverse ethnicities and religions. During, post Easter attack the unity among us was affected. Our friends were divided into groups, I experienced this myself"*

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After writing the script, Kasuni with the support of her university friends contacted an animation artist to do the video. Her friend Isad did translations for subtitles and her friend Dileepa did dubbing for the video. She submitted her proposal for the content creation in March 2021 and started the social media campaign one month later. She named her campaign "No Racism". Her story presents how a child gets negative perceptions about diverse ethno-religious communities at home and how those perceptions then popularise in the community. The message of the story is to eliminate the spread of negative perceptions on diverse ethno-religious communities as it is a barrier for peaceful coexistence in the country. She faced challenges when boosting to make the video viral, and due to the New Year period, she was not able to reach much of an audience. Within two months, her video had received 10 comments, 59 likes and 5 shares. All the comments she received were positive.

> *"I do work related to peace building with the volunteering organisations I mentioned. Therefore, I think I can do awareness through Facebook. This is the first time I created a page, I have not done it before. All this was a new experience for me. It's because of this project"*

Kasuni wants to continue her volunteering and loves to engage in work related to peace building in future.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/No-Racism-109316474596461

Case Study 5: We4Counter - Addressing deep rooted discriminations in the society

Lasantha Kumara (23) from Nuwaraeliya district of Central province is a participant from We Lanka project – Phase I. He joined phase II in expectation of learning fundamentals, basics, features, and use of social media and how to turn social media towards the benefit of youth as it is essential for youth to learn about use of social media today. Although he is registered in several social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Tik Tok and Instagram, he did not have a practice of commenting or sharing posts. In participating in the social media literacy boot camp, Lasantha is now knowledgeable about the role of social media.

> *"If there is an issue in society, social media is capable of escalating or de-escalating the issue. Even social media can create new issues which never existed in society. At the same time, social media can play a positive role in promoting peace, unity, and reconciliation among diverse communities. I learned about these after joining the project"*

Although it has been difficult for him to join all online sessions with the issues of network connectivity in his area, he has attended all sessions of the social media literacy boot camp. Through the camp, he has been introduced to different tools such as Canva and Adobe Spark to produce social media content and also to memes and collage creation. Most importantly, prior to joining the WT2 – Phase II project, Lasantha has shared hate speech and fake news without having

an idea about the source of the information. Lasantha, in discussing the knowledge he gained about hate speech from boot camps,

"If we publish a post which affects belief, culture, ethnicity, and religion of others it will be categorized under hate speech, so when we upload something on social media, we have to be very careful, during the training I learned very minute and critical matters. For instance: when we upload a selfie, we have to be very careful about what is in the background. If we take a selfie in front of a Buddha statue it will hurt a community, so it's important that we become sensitive and attentive to these areas. During the boot camp, I learned this important matter and I increased my understanding of hate speech quite well, so I like this boot camp experience"

With this understanding of hate speech, he has been able to see the marginalisation of certain people in his estate community clearer. Thus, he and his team Geethanjali (24), Lakshan (20) Thiharika (23) and Shobia (21) received the innovation grant to produce a short film out of 30 proposals from Central province. Theme of their project is reconciliation. In Lasantha's own words the issue they want to address is

"In my society, everyone falls within the middle class, but the people who engage in cleaning work are placed well below the middle class, they are called 'Vaashal Kuttikal'. They are not given equal place, respect, and opportunities in society. And they are still requested to communicate among estate communities if there is a funeral, so they are expected to visit every house and inform about the funeral. So, key focus of our project is to address this division and discrimination."

In producing the short film, they had to face both internal and external challenges. One challenge has been their family members as they produce a film about a discriminated group of people. However, they have convinced their families about the need to address this hatred towards laborers. The external challenge has been the COVID 19 pandemic and people questioning what they are doing. They had to take approvals from relevant authorities to shoot the film following COVID 19 protocols in the country. Lasantha developed the script based on the narrative by Shobia and they hired a video producer Mr. Shankar to produce the video and they themselves acted in the film. The story presents the importance of the work done by laborers even during the time of COVID 19 pandemic and thus, highlights the need for treating all humans without discrimination. The team has also produced posters, memes and videos on hate speech using mobile phones from their learning from social media literacy boot camp.

Within one and half months, their video has received around 300 likes, 30,000 views and 239 comments. All the comments they received were positive. They have also been recognised for their short film from their community and it has been discussed in their local youth forums.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/We4counter/videos/189500503017160

Case Study 6: iReact - Awareness on hate speech in social media

Abdul Basith (21) is from Batticaloa district of Eastern province. He trains young people on photography while following an online course on Visual Content Making in an Australian University. He commonly engages in Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik Tok and LinkedIn and on average, he spends six hours on social media. He is competent in creating and maintaining pages in social media as required in his profession. However, he had no knowledge about different types of information such as mal information and disinformation.

As a member of a minority ethnic group, Abdul Basith has his own experiences of hate speech. He says he was oppressed and unhappy when minority communities were targeted by hate speech. In talking about impact of boycotting of minority owned businesses,

"After the Easter Bomb attack, there was a general perception among the Tamils that Muslims should not be allowed to trade within the Tamil areas, one of my Hindu friends told me that social media is the reason for this propaganda. Because of this, most of the daily wage earners got affected, we should not leave social media posts to be the reason for the loss of livelihood of people or violence in this country"

In joining the WT2 – Phase II project, he has learnt more about hate speech. Now, he is knowledgeable that there are people in the community who create issues for their own benefit.

"Today, social media is full of hate speech and fake news, nothing genuine and reliable. When we study this, we understand that this is done by few individuals purposefully for their benefit. When they share hate and fake speech, even peace lovers are convinced and brainwashed. When this ignorance continues it becomes a common factor and leads to violence and conflict"

With the understanding of the need to address hate speech, Abdul Basith teamed with three participants, Fathima (21), Rishandini (24) and Abilajini (25), from Islam, Hindu and Christian religious backgrounds. Their proposal to promote the message of coexistence to address hate speech in social media was accepted by Search and they named their campaign as iReact. Aim of their campaign is to make young people aware of the need to counter hate speech.

Time management and resources such as hiring cameras and lights had been a crucial factor in engaging with the iReact campaign. However, the team has managed to create videos and posts. In one video, they have interviewed young people to capture their perception and experience of hate speech. They have also started a virtual exhibition (http://www.ireactsrilanka.org/) collecting creative content from youth on hate speech from around the country. The team has created more than 20 posters to raise awareness among youth about hate speech and how to address it. Within a month, their video has around 66000 views and around 80 likes. They have around 1700 followers.

Abdul Basith explains that their diverse team composition is the strength of their team, as then their networks and members in Facebook are also from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds. The team

believes they have already created powerful and attractive content to address hate speech in social media and they thank the project for that.

Abdul Basith says, there's a change in himself after participating in the social media literacy boot camp and interacting with the iReact campaign and he is hopeful that his personal change will create an impact on his friends. He also claims that he now has two purposes for using social media, one for his profession and the other is to address hate speech. In the final remark, Abdul Basith expresses in acquiring basic knowledge from the project, he joined another advanced social media literacy project by UNDP to continue learning about the subject.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/ireactlk/?ref=page_internal

Case Study 7: Voice of Her - Stop hate speech on women

Naduni (24), Prasadini (24), Shashikala (24), Dinali (24) and Kasuni (24) are friends studying at University of Colombo. The team uses several social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Viber. However, their knowledge about creating Facebook pages, hashtags and reporting pages in social media has been minimal. Once they received the news about the We Lanka Project Phase II through one of their lecturers, they wanted to join the project to learn about hate speech. Naduni says,

> *"We learnt a lot about hate speech from the boot camps. Earlier, we didn't know the difference between hate speech and free speech. There's a lot of hate speech on women. People say the place of a woman is at home and kitchen and their knowledge is limited to "handle of a spoon". We believe, where women are discriminated, there is no peace"*

The team expressed that now, they are skillful in different types of tools and methods that can be used in social media campaigns, and they were introduced to various online applications to create content. The team was selected from Western Province to produce content to address hate speech in social media. They named their campaign as "Voice of Her" and through their campaign they hope to counter hate speech on women and promote gender equality. All five of them have been subjected to hate speech as young women.

> *"Today, social media has become a platform for spreading hate speech. We are five girls, and we use social media and we also have faced some incidents of hate speech. Gender wise, the girls are affected more by hate speech in social media than boys"*

The team has initially created a Facebook page and Instagram page for their campaign. Then they have uploaded posts to inform their audience about hate speech and they have also created posts to counter hate speech that went viral in social media targeting some women. The team had face issues in boosting their page, however, they have resolved the issue with the help of their mentor. The team expressed that they have received many criticisms not only from men but also from women. Some have personally messaged them and asked why they do a campaign like this. The

team explained that some of these people had fake accounts. Nevertheless, many have appreciated their work. Within a period of three months they had around 900 followers in their group.

In order to promote their Facebook page, the team has also held an essay competition on "Women and Social Media". They have received many creative posts and they have provided space in their Facebook page for the essays, and they have rewarded the winners. In elaborating more about their project, the team expressed that they represent women irrespective of their ethno-religious background and disability.

> *"We didn't start our project targeting one ethnicity or one religion. We have Tamil, Muslim and also differently able friends. They always help us. When we post a message on Facebook, we post in all three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English. All five of us do not know Tamil. Tamil translations were done by our Tamil friends. We share ideas with them also. With our project, our friendship also strengthened"*

The team continues their campaign to make a social change. In a final remark, the team thanked Search for providing the knowledge, opportunity, and funding to do a project to address hate speech in social media.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/Voice-Of-Her-102712001906455

Case Study 8: We Lanka Peace Builders - Promoting peacebuilding in Sri Lanka

Mahsoom (22) is a student following Agriculture Resource Management Technology degree at university of Ruhuna and he participated in WT2 - Phase II project from Eastern Province. Facebook is his favourite social media platform, and he also uses WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter. Although Mahsoom was aware that social media spread negative and positive messages, he thought that's the way "*social media functions*", Thus, he has not reported pages and he was also not aware of it. He has not been knowledgeable to differentiate fake news and hate speech too. He revealed that as a member of a minority ethnic group, he has felt disappointed about some hate speech in social media. In joining social media literacy boot camps, he has been able to discuss these issues openly.

> *"During boot camp, I presented the incidents accusing certain minority groups of the spread of COVID in this country, it falls under fake news and hate speech. We discussed this in detail since even the mainstream media presented this news. All our group members found this event as fake news and hate speech. I was a bit reluctant to raise this issue, but I felt good after the discussion as all our group members discussed it."*

In engaging with the project, Mahsoom is now knowledgeable about different types of information such as misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. And, he strongly believes that hate speech should be countered as it leads to violence and people have to suffer due to loss of lives and

properties. He is now familiar with online applications such as Canva, adobe Sparks and google slides and skilful in creating content.

> *"There were several sessions and practical exercises which helped me learn how to create content. Social media content creation is a different skill, you cannot write lengthy essays or articles, whatever we try to message should be short and creative. And our content should be supported by images that grab attention and increase interaction. Overall, we learned how to create creative social media content. And also, we learnt how to use mobile phones for video creation at a low cost, which is greatly useful"*

With this new knowledge, Mahsoom and his team, Jaffran (19), Sahana (22), Shafna (22), Ajeefa (20), wanted to launch a social media campaign with the aim of promoting peacebuilding. Mahsoom expresses that there are two messages they want to give to the community through their campaign:

> *"One was to promote unity, peacebuilding, and mutual understanding among Sri Lankans through social media as we can achieve sustainable development only by having peace in our society. The second was to the youth and the next generation of leaders, they must embrace peace as it will create a better future for them."*

The team hired a video editing team, and they shared the work among themselves. As a first step for their campaign, the team has started an art competition under the themes of 'We are Sri Lankan' and 'Don't want hate speech'. They have launched this competition via their social media page calling for drawings from school students. Then the team produced a documentary video with a Buddhist monk who is fluent in both Sinhala and Tamil languages. The monk speaks about peace building and the need for addressing hate speech. One edited video of the team presents speeches of cricketer Kumar Sangakkara on peacebuilding and diversity. Not only videos, but the team has also produced memes on peacebuilding. The main target audience of the team is the younger generation.

> *"We wanted to start our change from young people. It is important for the younger generation to recognize and respect other ethnicities, religions, and cultures, and increase their understanding of hate speech. We organized an award ceremony for winners of the art exhibition. During the ceremony, we conducted lectures in the form of a webinar to educate young people on what hate speech is, what is fake news, and why and how we should counter them."*

The team faced challenges in boosting. However, with the advice of their mentor to change the target audience with different posts, they were able to reach more audiences through the boost. The campaign started on 24th of April 2021 and completed in three weeks. For this period, their Facebook page has received around 1000 likes and around 1000 people follow the page. Their

video on cricketer Kumar Sangakkara which was also shared in YouTube received around 3000 likes 159K views. All the comments received were positive.

In a final remark, the team expresses that they had genuine interest to do a campaign, and it's not limited to the project period. They want to continue the campaign including new members from other ethnic religious communities, as then they can have different perceptions.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/peacefulnationLK/?ref=page_internal

Case Study 9: Our Media - Capturing different perspectives on peace

Naushad (21) is from Matale district of Central province, and he joined the WT2 – Phase II project to learn about media. He uses Facebook, twitter and Instagram and he usually spends around 3-5 hours in his favourite social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram. Naushad has not been skilful in creating pages, but he has reported a few hateful content and fake news without much awareness on reporting before joining the project. In explaining about role of social media, Naushad says

> *"Social media impacts everything starting from thinking, behaviors, mindset, and culture of people. Most of the time social media users do not bother to know whether the content that appears on their feed is true or false, they believe as it is. Even later if they come to know it's not true, it will remain in their minds and the damage would have been already done. Social media has changed our culture a lot, how we engage with others, how we behave in society and treat each other".*

Naushad has learnt about hate speech in participating social media literacy boot camps of the project. He says, now he can clearly differentiate categories of information in social media with clarity. Once he sees any post in social media, he reacts immediately blocking the account or reporting the content.

> *"After the project, I learnt that social media can be used for many good things, it can be a tool that spreads positiveness in society and eliminates negative thoughts. However social media is a neutral platform it depends on how people use it, we can change people's mindset by working on positive messaging and countering negative content"*

He and his team members Ahamed (22), Sharmini (22), Aleem (18) and Hudha (19) named their campaign as "Our Media" and their proposal to produce social media content to promote coexistence and address hate speech through innovation grants was selected by Search. Naushad expressing views about the project,

"We need to establish peace in this country. The root cause of all the issues and troubles in society is due to disunity among diverse religions and ethnicities. Main idea behind our project is that there should not be any conflict in this country, people from different religions, and ethnicities should start to understand and recognize each other equally without any hard feelings."

With challenges of COVID 19, because of which they had to plan many activities virtually, the team produced 3 documentary videos and 10 memes for their campaign within one month.

Naushad says they utilize the knowledge from social media literacy boot camps of the project to produce posters and videos. In explaining their experience,

"We edited these videos on our own, I had some knowledge on video editing before and during the social media boot camp, I sharpened my knowledge. Our team members did the production of video, we did not use professional cameras, since we had quality mobile phones, used them for shooting. All these videos carry subtitles, our team member, Huda did all the subtitles in English"

Even in boosting the content, they had to face issues as much time was taken by Facebook to review and approve content. In one of their videos, the team explains their objectives and what they are trying to achieve through their project. In another video, the team presents the experiences of war from two individuals, one from Jaffna who experienced adverse impacts of war and the other is an activist who engages in the peace building process in the North. The most popularised video they produced was filmed in an orphanage. In the video, children from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds present their perceptions on peace.

"These kids live without any proper guidance since they never had early childhood parental guidance and any connection to society, for them their orphanage is the world. We chose them to see how the war and disharmony in this country have impacted them. Further, we aimed at understanding their perceptions on peacebuilding and diversity".

Their video has received around 100 likes, around 20 comments and 12,000 views. All the comments were positive. Naushad shared views about their team members also. Shamini is a Tamil Hindu girl, and the team has not known her before the project. However, after working with her in their campaign, Shamini has become a good friend of the team.

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/ourmedia7/?ref=page_internal

Case Study 10: Oasis of Harmony - Unity of university students

Wasantha (25), from Lahugala area of Eastern Province is a final year student at University of Visual and Performing Arts. He engages in social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. He says he is not very active in social media due to his studies.

Wasantha had ignored or shared fake and hate speech in social media without any knowledge before the project. In participating in social media literacy boot camps of WT2 – Phase II project, Wasantha has acquired knowledge on hate speech. Wasantha in sharing his views about the Project:

> *"The project educates youth about fake news and hate speech. Today's society presents fake as real. Therefore, we need to aim to correct at least one person in the society. This project is, thus, timely intervention."*

Today, his reaction to fake news and hate speech is different. Before sharing posts in social media, he thinks twice about the impact and consequences. This change is due to the new knowledge he acquired from social media literacy boot camps on disinformation, misinformation and hate speech.

Wasantha and his team Asinka (23), Shehan (23), Pathum (23) and Jeewantha (23) were selected from Eastern province to produce social media content as an alternative to hate speech in social media. Their campaign is Oasis of Harmony and the team produced a short film to present the unity among university students from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds. Wasantha explaining the background for the video,

> *"We discussed the destruction of the war memorial Mullivaikal that happened inside the Jaffna university during social media literacy boot camps. Therefore, we selected this topic for our video. I researched this topic personally. I wanted to counter the fake news that destruction of the monument is due to conflicts within Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil students at the university. The people I contacted told me the truth, they said that all students, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim live peacefully in the university. We wanted to present the unity of students within the university as a documentary video".*

To prepare a documentary video, the team needed to find true information about the incident, and they needed to visit Jaffna University. Wasantha contacted Indrajith, Vinod, Manoj and Saliya from university of Jaffna through networking in social media and the team collected all required information. However, the team was not able to visit the Jaffna University to do the documentary due to the prevailing COVID 19 pandemic in the country. Then they thought of producing a short film based on the information they have in hand. The script for the short film was developed and locations in Monaragala were selected to shoot the film. Amidst many challenges to find cameramen, actors for the film and locations to shoot the film with risk and restrictions of COVID 19, the team produced the short film, and they uploaded the film to their Facebook page and YouTube channel on 4th of May 2021. The story is about a new student going to a university for the first time with his family members and other students from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds assisting him when his father had a heart attack. The story highlights the unity among university students regardless of ethnicity or religion. Within a month their video had 52 shares, 147 comments and 177 likes. All the comments they received were positive.

Wasantha in talking about his overall experience of the project:

"We need to have leadership qualities to do a project like this. I faced this practically, implementing the project. Our group members told me that, if they were me, the leader, they would drop the project. There were so many tasks to complete for deadlines and I never gave up".

Facebook Link: https://www.facebook.com/watch/oasisofharmonylk/

Annex 3: Survey tools

Attached separately

Annex 4: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Attached separately

Annex 5: References

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Annex 6: Profile of Study Participants

Profile of Survey Participants

The sample consisted of 173 participants. Out of this, 108 were males and 65 were females. Distribution of participants in five provinces is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Sample of participants of the survey

Gender	Western	Southern	Northern	Eastern	Central	Total
Male	18	32	13	18	27	108
Female	15	12	8	12	18	65
Total	33	44	21	30	45	173

The ethnicity, religion, age, education and occupation of survey participants is presented in the graphs (1 – 5) below.
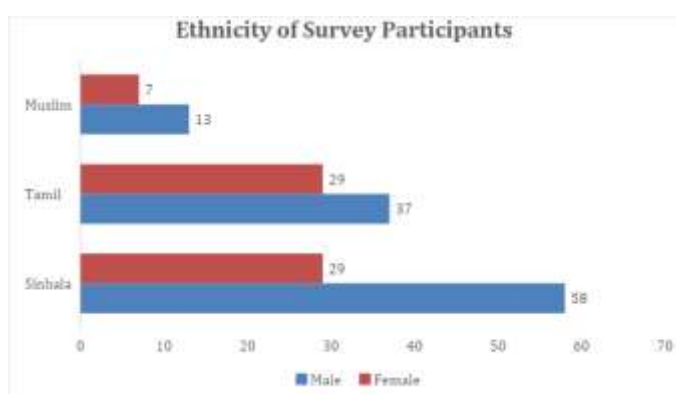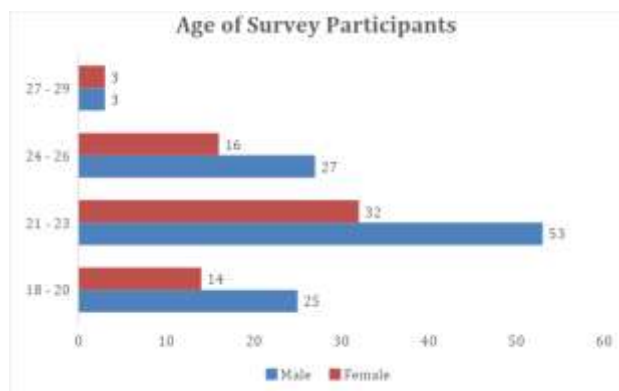

Graph 1

Ethnicity: Majority (87) of participants are Sinhalese while there are 66 Tamils and 20 Muslim participants (Graph 1).
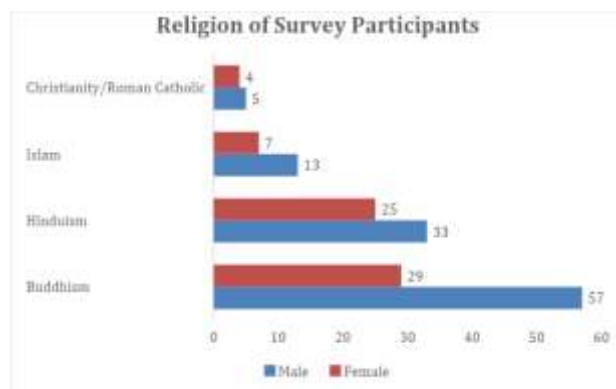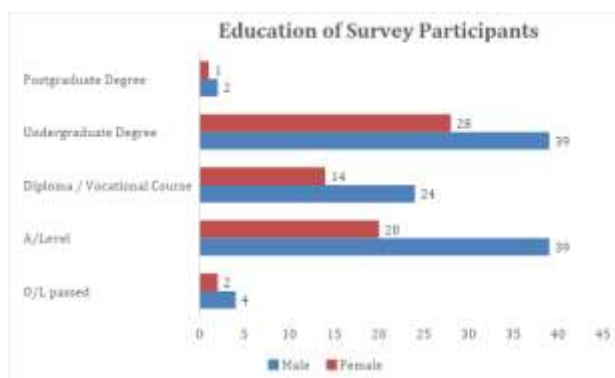

Graph 2

Religion: Majority (86) of participants are Buddhists while there are 58 Hindus, 20 Islam and 9 Christianity/Roman Catholic participants (Graph 2)
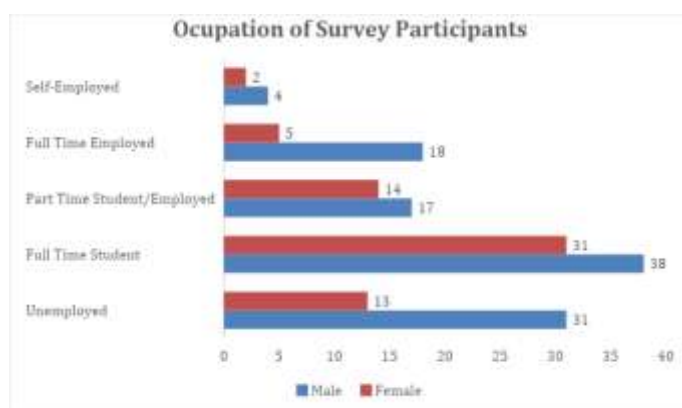

Graph 3

Age: Majority (85) of participants are within the age of 21-23 years while there are 43 participants from the age range of 24-26 years (Graph 3).

Education of Survey Participants

Graph 4

Education: Majority (67) of participants are undergraduates while 59 participants are A/L students (Graph 4).

Ocupation of Survey Participants

Graph 5

Occupation: Majority (69) of participants are full time students while 44 are unemployed. (Graph 5).

Profile of Participants of In-Depth Interviews

The study team carried out 10 in depth interviews with youth groups/individuals from all five provinces and representing different districts (2 from Southern, 1 from Northern, 2 from Western, 2 from Central and 3 from Eastern). Table presents the profile of participants.

Table 1.2: Brief Profile of youth groups/individuals of in-depth interviews

Province/District	Name of the campaign/team	Brief Profile of Group members
Southern Province, Hambantota	Ideal Enforcers	Three Sinhala Buddhist males within the age range of 18 – 24 years. One undergraduate student, other two have studied up to A/Ls.
Northern Province, Mullaitivu	IBridge	Three Tamil, Hindu females within the age range of 20 – 21years. One undergraduate student and two are waiting for university entrance.
Eastern Province, Batticaloa	iReact	Four members (one male and three females) within the age range of 21 to 25 years. Two Muslim and one Tamil Hindu and one Tamil Christian. All follow courses in Management/Engineering.
Southern Province, Matara	Mother Lanka	Five members are 23-year-olds (three males and two females). All are Sinhala Buddhists. All five are following vocational courses at University College of Matara.
Western Province, Gampaha	No Racism	25 years old Sinhala, Buddhist Female. She is an undergraduate student.
Eastern Province, Batticaloa	We Lanka Peace Builders	Two Muslim males and three Muslim females within the age range of 19-22 years old. All are undergraduate students.
Central Province, Nuwaraeliya	We4counter	Five members (two males and three females) within the age range of 23 to 24 years. All are Tamil Hindus. All are Undergraduate/after A/L students.

Western Province, Colombo, Gampaha	Voice of Her	24-year-old, five Sinhala Buddhist females, all are undergraduate students.
Eastern Province, Ampara	Oasis of Harmony	Five Sinhala Buddhist males within the age range of 23 to 25. All are undergraduate students.
Central Province, Matale	Our Media	Three males and two females. Within the age range of 18 – 21 years. Four are Muslim and one Tamil, Hindu. One undergraduate student, two after A/Ls and two sitting for A/Ls this year and next year.

Profile of Participants of KIIs

Trainers/Mentors

Six (06) trainers of social media literacy training (boot camps) for three days who also acted as mentors for the 34 selected youth groups/individuals to assist them to create social media contents were interviewed on their capacity as the trainers and mentors. There were three Sinhalese trainers - one female and 2 males - who conducted training in Eastern, Western and Southern provinces. Other three were Tamil trainers/mentors - one female and two males - who conducted the training in Northern, Eastern and Central provinces. They are within the age of 25-34 years with undergraduate/postgraduate qualifications.

District Coordinators

Four district coordinators who coordinated activities in Southern, Central, Western, Northern and Eastern provinces were interviewed on their capacity as the district coordinators of the project.

The Project Design Consultant

The consultant who developed the content for the three days training sessions was interviewed to learn his insights and experiences in developing the content.

Project Staff members of Search

Three staff members of Search - Head of Programs, Team Leader -Peace Building and the Senior Program coordinator - were interviewed on their experience of implementing the WT2 project.