

## A Study of Effectiveness of Peace-building Programs of Non-Governmental Organizations: With Special Reference to Beruwala Divisional Secretariat Division in Sri Lanka

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**ABSTRACT :** Main intention of this article is to analyze the effectiveness of peace building programs of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for achieving sustainable peace in order to creating or empowering an effective future sustainable mechanism in Sri Lanka with special reference to after the violence incidence between Muslim and Sinhalese Buddhists in the town of Dharga, Beruwala, Aluthgama in Kalutara district in the June 2014. This empirical study was conducted in Beruwala Divisional Secretariat division in Sri Lanka based on survey method and functional method. Data have been collected from 20 persons based on semi-structured interviews and observations. The sample was selected based on purposive sampling method. Mainly using empirical data, the authors have further analyzed the main the weaknesses, and strengths of peace building process to enhance the sustainability of programs. Based on findings, it has suggested some recommendations such as introducing effective community network through Community based organizations, Youth based cultural events and public events, cross community activities and School program in order to raise community awareness and to promote the peace in innovative ways against any kinds of violence.

**Keywords** -Community Awareness, Non-Governmental Organizations, Peace-building, Violence incidence, Youth Leadership

### I. INTRODUCTION

The violence incidence between Muslim and Sinhalese Buddhists in the town of Dharga, Beruwala, Aluthgama in Kalutara district in the June 2014 based on religious and ethnic factors. As consequences the violence incidence has damaged to people both individually and society as a whole. Even though there were some threat to spread of the riots in island wide, fortunately, government urged the media not to control publishing news about the riots for the reason that it can cause 'disharmony' among the religious groups in the country. At international level, former United Nations secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed concern at the communal violence & urged the government to ensure the safety of all Sri Lankans. After the riot, many social healing programs have been held, to avoid tendency of past memories lead to another riot.

Peace-building infer the idea that "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict"[1]. Peacebuilding is performed by a wide range of actors, ranging from government, religious leaders, business leaders, the media, women and youth. Peace-building process includes three interventions as high, mid and grassroots. Among them, NGOs are one of significant alternative intervention in the modern scenario of development path. "NGOs are self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people"[2]. NGOs function their programs in variety of fields with specialized roles such as peace-building, conflict resolution, cultural preservation, human rights, community development. Peacebuilding process of NGOs in Sri Lanka inclined to religious peacebuilding, in which, religious leaders play a significant role in encouraging other actors including women, youth, and children. They have a history of carrying out peace building programs such as intra-faith dialogues, inter-faith dialogues, youth camps and workshops. NGOs have played a key role in promoting peace through their activities in Beruwala division through the project "Mobilizing religious leaders to stop the increasing trend of interreligious conflicts and attacks on holy sites in

four hotspot districts in post-war Sri Lanka. Timeframe for project was from May 15, 2015 to June 30, 2016. Objectives of the project was to educate the people about living in harmony through attitudinal changes and prevent hatred so that the religious places would be protected by extending a hand of friendship among various religious groups and to create strong and sustainable mechanisms in the inter-religious conflict hotspots in Sri Lanka through intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue among the different religious groups to protect holy sites and religious institutions. Accordingly, objectives of this research were to examine effectiveness of building peace and co-existence in Beruwaladivision including women participation, youth participation, emerging inner peace and outer peace.

This research has recognized some methods for rebuild the relationship between religious groups. Those methods may be suitable for resolving religious conflict elsewhere. The research has revealed some facts regard to peace building and has provided a future vision for conducting sustainable peace building mechanism in particularly in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the research will pay the way for creating a long-term peace process aiming a sustainable peaceful society.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Research is a systematic endeavor in order to generate intellectual knowledge and practical answer to social problems with the application of scientific method. Therefore, research methodology is a crucial factor in the research process. Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Its aim is to give the work plan of research[3]. It refers to the structure of procedures and transformational rules which used social scientist shift information up and down this ladder of abstraction in order to produce knowledge. Survey method and functional methods were used to investigate effectiveness programs of NGOs regarding peace-building after the crisis of Beruwala in Sri Lanka. The empirical study was conducted in three town areas namely, Beruwala-Moragolla, Dharga Town and Aluthgama in Beruwala Divisional Secretariat Division in Sri Lanka. Data were collected from 20 households based on purposive sampling method. semi-structured interviews and observation were used as primary data collection techniques. These three areas were specifically concerned to measure the effectiveness of peace building process of NGOs, those are the places riot happened and related to riot.

## III. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Introduction:

The research identified variety of programs related to peace-building process of NGOs after the violence incidence between Muslim and Sinhalese Buddhists in 2014. They include awareness programs, regards to rights and violation of women and children, inter religious dialogues, Iftar programs at Kechchimalai mosque, cross religious events, art competitions based on peace theme. Among them, inter religious dialogues have been held in many times. All respondents in the sample greatly concerned Iftar programs at Kechchimalai mosque was greatly concerned as effective programs which conducted by NGOs. It has provided the chance to strength the relationships between Sinhalese and Muslim. Further details regarding efficient peace-building programs can be illustrated as followings.

### 3.2. Efficient Peace Building Activities:

Since post conflict period, NGOs in the area have been doing diverse peacebuilding programs in Beruwala division. However, respondents highly mentioned a few activities. Most of Women participants highlighted those awareness programs based on women and child violation and their rights. They further explained that these programs are necessary for these areas, because nowadays, Beruwala secretariat division became a foreign tourist paradise. All participated persons discussed about inter-religious dialogue programs. This is crucially shed light on reducing the polarization and on rebuilding the good relationships between religious groups. Iftar programs have supported to the hold the art competitions with joining two communities. Many participants highlighted whether art competitions are effective and are interesting, because both Muslim and Sinhalese children participated it. It was held in temple. Muslims also have come to the temple. It played the way for repairing the good relationships again. NGOs have conducted programs with South Asian policy research institute (SPRI) which is appreciated mostly by many Muslims, because they have received a good chance to give the answers for anti-Muslim sentiment and gained the opportunity to learn Buddhists, philosophy and appreciated Buddhism.

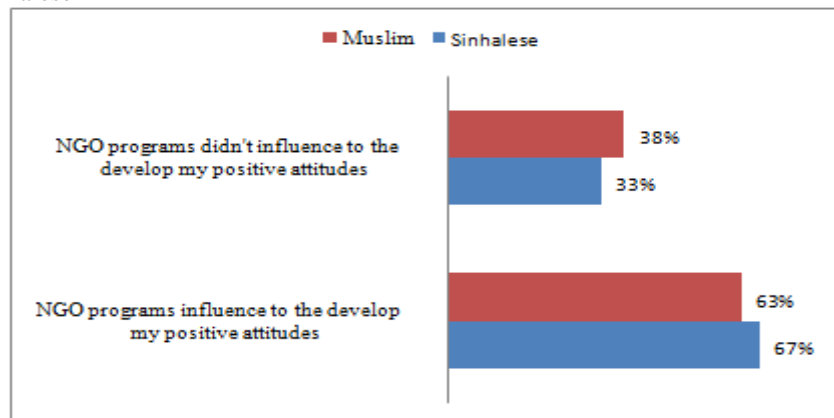
According their explanation, Iftar programs at Kechchimalai mosque was a highly discussed event and a cross cultural programs. It was based on Hajji Festival. During the Hajji Festival, Muslims invited to Sinhalese to participate their festival in mosque. Many Sinhalese came and took the foods with Muslims happily. It was a really energetic incident to both sides to take long steps to acquiring lasting peace. It is clear

that these programs, activities such as inter faith dialogue, art competition, awareness programs regard to women and children were identified by respondents as peace building events were held by NGOs. Respondents of the sample concerned about inter religious training camp in Art with inter religious students involved. Religious leaders and civil activists successfully conduct this activity. BeruwalaGangaramatemple was the center. Inter religious students drew under the theme “Co-existence in Future Sri Lanka”. According to respondents’ point of view, art completion provided the opportunities for expressing inner peace. When we review deeply it could be identified that this activity slightly helps to promoting peace, because it may no power to address the root causes of the conflict.

**3.3. Effectiveness of Peace Building programs for changing**

For transforming the conflict situation emerge in the mind, both removing negative attitudes including distrust, revenge, hatred, suspicion, misperception and developing positive attitudes including sympathy, empathy, loving kindness, compassion should happen in a peacebuilding process. Respondents’ views on influence of peace-building programs for transforming negatives into positive attitudes can be illustrated as followings.

Fig. 1: Effectiveness of Peace-building programs for changing negative attitudes into positive attitudes between Muslims and Sinhalese

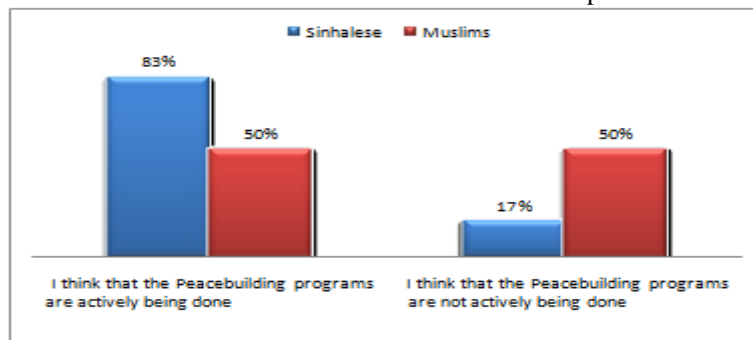


Source: Field Data, 2017

As indicated in the figure, 67% of Sinhalese respondents believe peace building activities of NGOs have influenced to develop positive attitude regarding removing misunderstanding, distrust, hatred attitudes from the mind. Similarly, almost 63% of Muslims remarkably also have agreed with peace building programs influenced to develop the peaceful attitudes in the mind. In contrast, 33 % of Sinhalese and 38 % of Muslims didnotaccept that activities of NGOs regarding peace-building after the Beruwala violence incidence influence to emerge the peaceful attitudes in the mind.

Any peace building process should be a long term. Therefore, it is valuable to analysis the term of peace building intervention of NGOs. On the other hand, when reviewing the effectiveness of peace-building programs of NGOs, it is significant to analyze the respondents’ view on current position of those programs and data can be illustrated as followings.

Fig.2:Measurement of ideas between Sinhalese and Muslims about current position of SSS programs



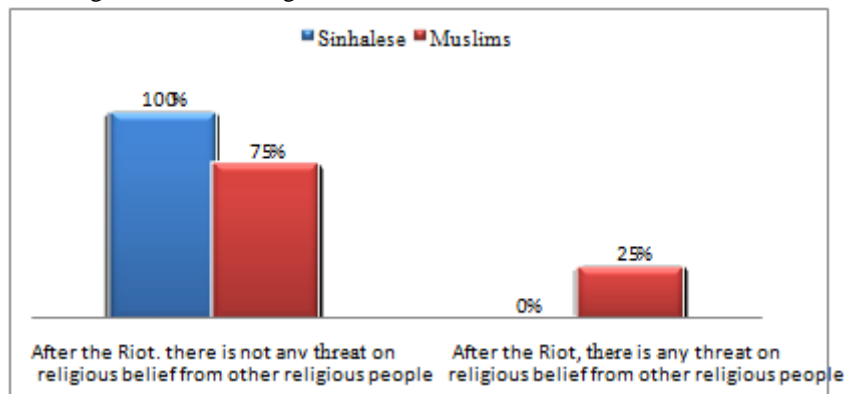
Source: Field Data, 2017

Sharply, 83% of Sinhalese have crucially agreed with the statement is that since the post conflict period, peace building programs have actively been done by NGOs in the research area. It illustrates more than half of Sinhalese opinion. While 50% of Muslims disagree with it, half of Muslims agree with it. A few proportions of respondents (17%) of Sinhalese do not agree with it. As indicated in figure, Muslim respondents have clearly provided an argument about the important of long-term peace building activities in their areas.

**3.4. Status of Religious Interference after the violence incidences**

Mutual understanding and respect for other ethnic and religious practices are essential components of long-term peace-building process. Therefore, through this study researchers investigated the status of religious interference after the Beruwala violence incidences and opinions of respondents between two ethnic groups can be shown as followings.

Fig.3: Status of Religious Interference after the violence incidences



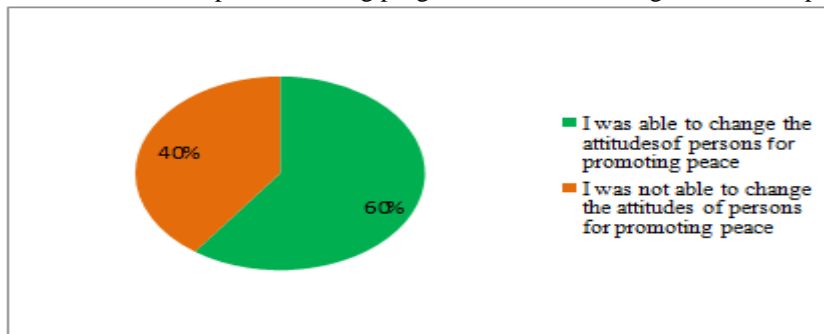
Source: Field Data, 2017

According to the statistics, after the riots, whole Sinhalese respondents said that there is no anyone threat or interference for their religious beliefs or religious practices. More than half of Muslim about 75% have stated the evident to that there is not any threat to their religious practices. Most of Muslims live with Sinhalese. Neighbors are Sinhalese. However, after the riots, about 25 percent of the Muslim respondents have stated that their religious practices were interfered by other religious groups. Those Muslims critically claim that in public places, some Sinhalese did not respect their dress code. Sometimes, Sinhalese accused the school in Dharga Town, some Muslim girls study in Schools with Sinhala majority. They are not led to wear hijab inside of the school. In this case, many Muslims are unhappy. They think it is a challenge for religious practices. After the riots, some Muslims are afraid to go to the mosques with the anxiety regarding another attack in their mosques. It indicates that the gossips still sow the seeds for increasing tension between religious groups.

**3.5. Contribution of peace-building programs for conflict resolution**

In a conflict situation, attitudes of people can cause to emerge violent behaviors. If negative violence attitudes can change into positive way, it is significant to spread those positive attitudes to others. Data related to evaluation of effectiveness of peacebuilding programs for Transforming negative attitudes into promoting peace can be illustrated as follows.

Fig.4. Evaluation of effectiveness of peace-building programs for transforming attitudes for promoting peace



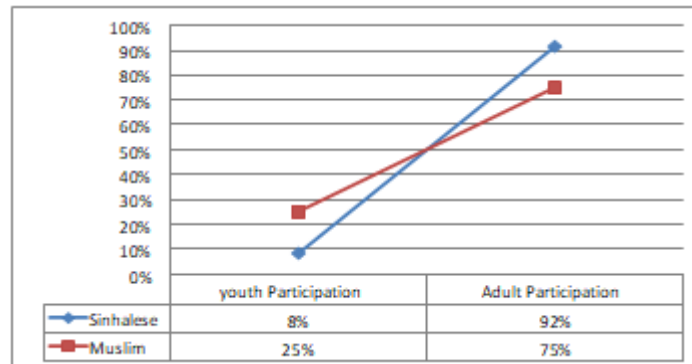
Source:Field Data, 2017

According to statistics, almost majority of respondents have accepted that they have received skills, ability and knowledge to change other people for promoting peace as well as addressing the challenges come from the society. 40% of respondents claim that they could not change the others yet and peace building activities provide enough. It gives the evident to rethink to the process of NGOs in order to create future peace building plans.

### 3.6. Youth and Adult Contribution for Peace-building

Youth participation highly influenced not only for erupting deadly conflict but also for achieving the sustainable peace. Therefore, in peacebuilding processes, youth is considered as a key actor. Participation

Fig.5: status of youth and adult participation for peace-building process



Source: Field Data, 2017

This line chart illustrates youth participation and adult participation with separating as Sinhalese and Muslims. 25% of Muslims were youth who involved building peace. Although youth of Muslim is lower than adult, majority of Adult of Muslims (75%) actively contributes their time, knowledge for creating peaceful society. Sharply 8% Sinhalese youth have given their contribution for peacebuilding programs which conducted by NGOs. It is a considerably lower percentage. In contrast, both communities illustrate higher percentage of adult participation for peacebuilding activities. Although increased adult participation represented, less youth participation may cause to arise unavoidable barriers for building a co-existence society.

## IV. CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the research, some unambiguous points were acknowledged. According to statistically, peacebuilding process related to NGOs after the violence incidence in Beruwala is effective and successful. Since starting, many persons in Beruwala division have been joining with the peace process. All respondents remarkably accepted that peace building activities built the strong bridge to connect two communities. They include inter-religious dialogues, cross cultural activities, Iftar program at kechchimalai mosques, Art competition regard to peace theme, awareness program of women, children rights and violations. Taking contribution of involved persons and effected persons from the violence incidence can be recognized as a prominent fact of conforming successful of peace-building programs. More than half respondents were used to buy any foods or goods from the shops of other religious groups. It may be included to effectiveness of peacebuilding process. More than half respondents claimed that peacebuilding programs are being actively done. It gives the evident that NGOs have conducted the long-term process to achieve the positive peace. After the violence, majority of respondents accepted that there is not any religious interference. But, majority respondents could have changed the mind of others. Consequently, effectiveness of the peacebuilding of NGOs is challenged. It pays the way for rearranging the framework for achieving sustainable peace.

The following recommendations are meant for all these recommendations include, Community based organization need to be established in order to empower the effective community network. Youth based cultural events and public events need to be organized. Fund rising sources should be found for implementing long term peace building projects through the external bodies such as INGOs, Businessmen. Long term effective programs ought to be created with communities for addressing root cause of conflict. Relationship between Sinhalese Buddhists and Muslims need to be empowered through the cross cultural and cross community activities. In which, religious leaders should play greater role. Media would be used and performed to promote the peace in different ways such as announcing in public event in these areas in way promoting peace against any kind of violence. School community-based programs such as peace education, entertainments for peace, promoting coexistence through the sports need to be developed and played in different ways. Any resources would be distributed impartiality, because some Muslim respondent persons accused whether NGOs have provided some

physical resources for Sinhalese than Muslims. In Beruwala division, people face social, health, economic challenges, including Drug addiction, spreading HIV AIDs. Therefore, for addressing these issues, effective programs should be initiated.

When reviewing limitations of the study, first, after the violence incidence in Beruwala in 2014, many organizations have implemented their project for peace building in Beruwala and Aluthgama. Among them, the researcher only focused on peacebuilding activities of NGOs. Secondly, this research was done through the only interviewing actively participants for peacebuilding programs in Beruwala division in order for measuring effectiveness of this post conflict peacebuilding process in Beruwala secretariat division. Last, twenty actively participated persons were chosen among participants. They have bearded leadership in their area.

Future research can explore the role of youth and female in peacebuilding and in conflict prevention, study based on usage of religious teaching by religious leaders for peace and addressing religious interference and to examine models of religious based peacebuilding for achieving sustainable peace.

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