



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

 Centre for
Equality and
Justice

ABBREVIATIONS

- **CBO** - Community-Based Organizations
- **CEJ** - Centre for Equality and Justice
- **CIABOC** - Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption
- **CSO** - Civil Society Organizations
- **CRSV** - Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
- **GBV** - Gender-based Violence
- **LKI** - Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies
- **OFR** - Office For Reparations
- **OMP** - Office On Missing Persons
- **ONUR** - Office for National Unity and Reconciliation
- **SB** - Sexual Bribery
- **SCRM** - Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms
- **SE** - Sexual Exploitation
- **WFH** - Work From Home

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WHO WE ARE



The Centre for Equality and Justice (CEJ) is a women's organization based in Colombo. We work primarily on the rights of war-affected women from the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka and the rights of those affected by political violence and other forms of civil unrest.

CEJ also works on issues of democracy, rule of law and social inclusion. We incorporate a gender perspective into all our work. We engage with policymakers, government officers and strengthen grassroots level women's capacities to claim their rights. We also work closely with youth across Sri Lanka on key areas such as preventing violent extremism and reconciliation.

Covid-19 presented an unexpected challenge for our work which is activity and discussion-based and is predominantly carried out in-person. With the support of our dedicated team, stakeholders and partners, most of our projects were successfully carried out online; using virtual spaces to connect and reach wider audiences.

While adapting to virtual spaces, we devised creative methods to ensure that our advocacy work and knowledge-sharing was impactful.

This Annual Report captures the many ways in which we continued to support, educate and strengthen vulnerable communities throughout 2020.

We hope the CEJ Annual Report 2020 offers insight into our approach to achieve gender justice in Sri Lanka.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The Centre for Equality and Justice's objective is to achieve Gender Justice, in order that the society that we live in may be just, equal and free. CEJ was established in late 2017 as a not-for-profit local women's organization, based in Colombo.

Although CEJ concentrates on the rights of war-affected women from the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities, and on promoting Reconciliation and Transitional Justice, the organization has grown to cover more ground thematically over the past three years. CEJ's advocacy efforts include amplifying the voices of women and youth to policy makers and the public, to influence more inclusive policy outcomes. CEJ's thematic expansion now covers working with youth to build more inclusive and resilient communities.

In all awareness and advocacy efforts CEJ uses creative means such as puppetry and art installations to reach various audiences. This creativity is carried through in its advocacy efforts as women's perspectives and research findings are often presented in the forms of art exhibitions and creative media campaigns.

As an organization CEJ is also intent on building capacities of all parties it deals with. The organization has supported the further education and other capacity building endeavours of its staff members, while building capacities of women and women's collectives and CSOs at field level.

The dedicated team at CEJ is led by the inspirational leadership of Shyamala Gomez, the Executive Director. May we achieve Equality and Justice which are the grundnorms of a truly democratic society where the Rule of Law prevails!

Danesh Casie Chetty

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020 is the year that will live on in infamy. In a year when the world almost came to a halt, CEJ's journey towards gender justice and more inclusive policies in Sri Lanka was no exception brought about by the setbacks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

CEJ's staff together with our dedicated partners and consultants worked through repeated lockdowns and work from home directives to ensure our work continued. Borrowing the resilience, we are so often inspired by in the field work CEJ undertakes amid war and conflict affected women, CEJ adapted quickly to ensure smooth execution of our tasks and making best use of the circumstances.

While continuing our work to strengthen women's collectives at the grassroots through virtual capacity-building sessions, a highlight for CEJ was featuring international experts such as Professor Ruth Rubio Marin in our virtual panel discussions. CEJ also engaged virtually with a variety of stakeholders such as healthcare professionals as well as those working in academia.

2020 also brought many firsts for CEJ as we expanded thematically and worked on Preventing Violent Extremism with youth. Applying our personal experience of increased screen-time into our work, CEJ was also able to recognize the opportunity and timing to execute a successful digital campaign on Sexual Bribery.

Although we are still in the thick of pandemic-imposed uncertainty, my team and I are filled with gratitude for the year that was and invite you to follow CEJ's progress in the years to come.

Shyamala Gomez

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Danesh Casie Chetty is a retired senior Sri Lankan diplomat in the Sri Lankan Foreign Service. Since his retirement he has held the post of Executive Director for several Sri Lankan non-governmental organizations and think tanks.



Dr. Dinusha Panditaratne is an academic specializing in public international law and international human rights law. She recently served as the Executive Director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKI) and is an Advisor to Verité Research.



Nishandeny Ratnam is an Attorney-at-law with a LLB from the University of Colombo and a LLM from the Ohio Northern University. She also has a Master's in Human Rights and Democratization from the University of Sydney. She was called to the Bar as an Attorney-at-Law in December 2011.



Iromi Perera is a Colombo-based researcher and activist. Her research focuses on Sri Lanka's post-war development related issues; specifically evictions and forced displacement in Colombo, spatial justice, contested sacred sites, and eminent domain. Iromi joined the Board of Trustees of the Asia Foundation in January 2019 and she is the founder and curator of the 'Right to the City Sri Lanka' initiative.

ADVISOR



Gehan Gunatilleke is a lawyer and researcher specialising in international human rights and public law. He is a Research Director at Verité Research, and an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sri Lanka) on international human rights treaty compliance. He holds a PhD from the University of Oxford and is a researcher at the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights.

MEMBER

Rasanjali Pathirage joined the membership of CEJ in 2020. She is a disability rights activist.

A SNAPSHOT OF 2020

This year the Centre for Equality and Justice worked on

Sexual Bribery

Preventing Violent Extremism

Women and Peacebuilding

Memorialization and Transitional Justice

Women and Reparations

Our outreach extended across the island through in-person and virtual platforms



OVER 1200

women and youth were supported through projects across Sri Lanka



OVER 72

in-person workshops and capacity building sessions were conducted



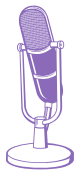
OVER 30

virtual workshops, trainings and dialogues were held



OVER 6

social media campaigns were completed



4 TV & 2 RADIO

spots were utilized to raise awareness on sexual bribery



15 ARTICLES

on sexual bribery were published

1 REPORT

on women and reparations was produced

We worked with long-standing and new partners

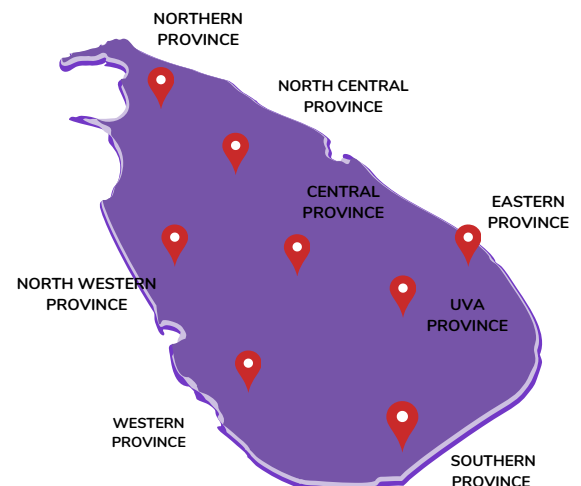
- **Kilinochchi** Siragugal
- **Ampara** War Affected Women's Forum
- **Polonnaruwa** Sunila Women & Children's Development Centre
- **Puttalam** Muslim Women Development Trust
Praja Diriya Padanama
- **Hambantota** Women Development Federation
- **Jaffna** Jaffna Social Action Centre
- **Kurunegala** Women's Resource Centre
- **Anuradhapura** Rajarata Prajaha Kendraya

CEJ works with an all-woman staff.

This year, we worked with several regional CSOs, women development officers, healthcare professionals, activists, academics, child protection officers, CIABOC, state university students, marginalized women and youth.

We reached 11 districts across 8 provinces

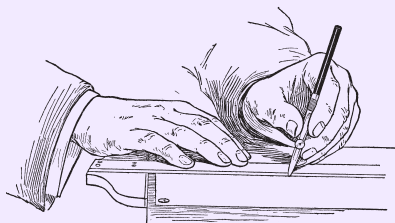
Colombo, Ampara, Kilinochchi, Kurunegala, Kandy, Anuradhapura, Puttalam, Polonnaruwa, Moneragala, Hambantota, Batticaloa



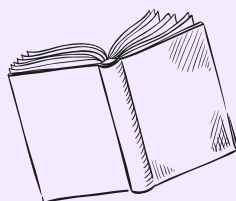
CAPACITY BUILDING

We are committed towards capacitating the communities we work with and we incorporate training and skills development into all areas of our project activities

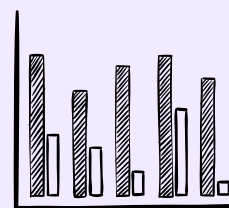
Capacity-building is a component which is present across all our projects
Some of the workshops we carried out as part of our work are:



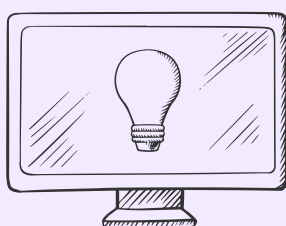
Training government officials to identify and support children displaying behavioral issues



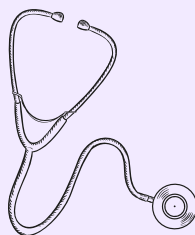
Capacitating women's organizations, CSOs and CBOs on gender and reparations



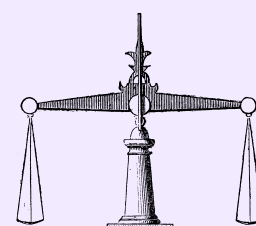
Training partner organizations to reach internal goals and deliver support for communities



Virtual learning sessions for youth on online advocacy and preventing violent extremism



Training medical professionals to support the medical and psychosocial needs of women victims and survivors of conflict



Capacitating CSOs to work within areas of transitional justice and memory

We also ensured that our dedicated staff received the training and capacity-building they needed

- CEJ's Finance Manager enrolled in a Tamil Language course at The Institute of Human Resources Advancement, University of Colombo.
- CEJ's Communications Officer completed a certificate course in Digital Marketing by the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing.
- CEJ's Senior Programme Officer was selected to participate in a series of lectures and trainings by the Disability, Sexuality, and Rights Online Institute, presented by CREA, New Delhi.
- CEJ's Executive Director, Communications Officer, and Junior Project Officer participated in an online course on content to counter violent extremism online by Moonshot. The course was presented by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- CEJ's Project Officer successfully completed her IELTS exams.

PARTICIPATORY WORK

CEJ actively contributed towards several workshops and conferences throughout 2020. We shared our expertise and experiences across multi-sectoral platforms, both national and international.

- CEJ Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez was invited to be at a discussion to contribute to the assessment of [Sri Lanka's CSO Sustainability Index](#), facilitated by Verité Research.
- CEJ Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez delivered a presentation at the [Responding to Sextortion through Anti-Corruption Programming](#) event, which was a part of the International Anti-Corruption Conference organized by Transparency International Sri Lanka which took place in Seoul, Korea.
- CEJ Executive Director and CEJ's Senior Project Coordinator Ando Anthappan presented CEJ's work on sexual bribery during the "Hidden Challenges: Covid-19 and Dealing with Sexual Bribery" event, as part of the [International Day to End Violence against Women and 16 Days of Activism](#).
- CEJ Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez participated as a panelist at the [Preventing and Responding to GBV in South Asia: Expressions and Strategies Conference](#) organized by 'Gender Justice', an organization based in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- CEJ Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez participated as a panelist in the [National Webinar on Eliminating Violence Against Women](#) organized by the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.



HIDDEN CHALLENGES

Addressing Sexual Bribery Experienced by Military Widows and War Widows in Sri Lanka to Enable Resilience and Sustained Peace.

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*"We were pushed to a corner by society. Our opinions didn't matter. **But things have changed now.** We are able to stand up for ourselves and for our families, because we know our rights."*

- Padma, a military widow



The following activities are highlights from our work addressing Sexual Bribery.

Sensitization Workshops on GBV

CEJ worked with Power of Play, using puppetry as a medium to communicate sensitive topics discussed during the workshops. Emphasis was made on sexual exploitation (SE) and sexual bribery (SB) experienced by war and military widows.

360° Awareness Campaign

CEJ reached approximately 3 million Sri Lankan [Facebook](#) users through a trilingual social media advocacy campaign that discussed our work on Sexual Bribery.

[English](#) | [Sinhala](#) | [Tamil](#)

Training on Adolescents Displaying Behavioural Issues

Women Development Officers and Child Rights Protection Officers from Anuradhapura and Kurunegala were trained on how to recognize and respond to adolescents with behavioural issues.

Mental Health Workshops

A series of capacity building workshops were conducted in Kilinochchi and Anuradhapura.



Prevention of Violent Extremism

WEB WALKERS

The following are some of the key activities we carried out as part of the Web Walkers Project.



Virtual Course on PVE Through Youth Engagement Online

The course was carried out in collaboration with members of local academia, student groups and university-based networks. Youth participants were selected through an online application process.

The course engaged with six key topics:

- Theory on PVE
- Freedom of speech and hate speech
- Role of youth in PVE with a focus on the role of women
- Ethical messaging
- Basics of social media usage in PVE and online safety
- Awareness on existing laws and cyber security complaint platforms

Make a Friend, Send a Message

A trilingual youth-lead campaign was carried out online to advocate towards PVE. Participants received training on how to use creative platforms to produce content.

The final selection of creative visual personal statements and virtual pledges were disseminated online.

The Web Walkers campaign will continue into 2021 and intends to expand its outreach to new audiences online

Women and Peacebuilding

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING IN SRI LANKA

The following is a highlight of our support towards women peacebuilders in Sri Lanka.

CEJ started work on a research report on the role of women's leadership in peacebuilding activities in Sri Lanka. A series of 25 interviews were carried out as part of the research process.

Main themes in the report:

- Women's decision-making during various peace initiatives
- Challenges related to fundraising women peacebuilders face from communities and families
- Recommendations from women peacebuilders to other peacebuilders



THE MISSING LINK: WOMEN AND YOUTH UNITE TO RECONCILE THROUGH MEMORY



Young girls and women representing different communities in Sri Lanka were asked to share their experiences and memories of war and violence, and how they believe the country could move towards achieving lasting peace. These were developed into short clips and shared through a social media campaign to provide insight into how memory is connected with reparations.

The following key activities on Memorialization and Transitional Justice were carried out in 7 districts across Sri Lanka and reached over 400 participants and stakeholders.

The Missing Link – A Roundtable Discussion

Attendees included representatives of higher education institutions and academics. The discussion was moderated by CEJ Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez and facilitated by Dr. Malathi De Alwis, Socio-Cultural Anthropologist and visiting lecturer, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo.

Participants examined methods of incorporating 'Transitional Justice and Reconciliation through Memory' within Sri Lankan university curricula.

Self-compassion and Stress Releasing Workshops

The sessions saw the participation of young persons affected by conflict. They were guided to understand the value of 'self-compassion' and use it as a tool to steer through personal challenges.

Discussion with CSOs working on Transitional Justice and Memory

The discussion brought out various approaches to memorialization, future plans of CSOs and

how they can collectively derive tangible results from targeted planning by connecting with women and youth.

Memory as a Form of Reparations

A series of district-level discussions led by Dr. Ganga Dissanayake drew links between reparations and memorialization for women and youth. The sessions helped unravel how past memories impacted the lives of women and young people and also to understand the concept of memorialization as a form of reparation.

“Unlike the single narratives presented in textbooks, it is only through personal accounts that real experiences can be shared with the next generation. [...] therefore, inter-generational dialogue that builds empathy is the best way to deal with it.”

-Radhika Hettiarachchi, Independent Consultant

WOMEN'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND REPARATION: ONE STEP CLOSER TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY



CEJ worked with over 300 participants across the Northern, North Western, North Central and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, to educate and capacitate stakeholders on reparations. Featured here are some of the key activities carried out this year.

Webinar on 'Women and Reparations'

25 academic representatives from various state and private institutions participated to advocate towards building a research and information archive that reflects the ground realities of women's needs in terms of reparations.

Capacity-building for Health Sector Professionals

Twenty medical health professionals including mental health professionals participated in a virtual capacity building session to highlight the crucial role of the health sector in facilitating a gender sensitive reparations process and identified how to best support the medical and psychosocial needs of women victim survivors of conflict.

Lobbying to Include Gender Dimensions in Reparations

A meeting was held between a Commissioner of the Office of Reparations, Dr. J.M. Swaminathan and CEJ's Executive Director, Shyamala Gomez.

CEJ emphasized the urgent need for academia and educational institutions to include theoretical, conceptual frameworks and research evidence in curricula.

National-level Virtual Dialogue on Women and Gender-sensitive Reparations

CEJ worked to emphasize the importance of viewing reparations through a gender-sensitive lens; to enable the participation of women in the design and implementation of reparation policies. Participants included representatives from the Office for Reparations, Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM), the donor community, and government institutions (ONUR, Ministries).

Women and Reparations (contd.)



Round Table Discussion

Discussions on the way forward for women and reparations were held to advocate for the urgent need for reparations for women victims and survivors of war and civil unrest. The discussion saw the participation of members of the OFR, CSOs, academics and activists. CEJ conducted two discussions in Sinhala and Tamil. This helped collect feedback from the participants themselves on best practices to be used moving forward.

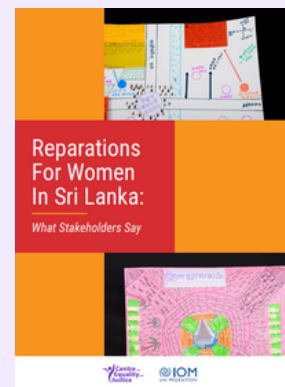
Online Capacity-building Workshops

CEJ conducted two virtual sessions with women and CBOs. The virtual sessions raised awareness on gender, women and reparations while capacitating district-level women's organizations, CSOs and CBOs working within these areas. Sessions were conducted in Tamil and Sinhala by Ranitha Gnanarajah and Danushka Medawatte from University of Colombo respectively.

A collective statement was formulated based on this discussion and posted on CEJ's social media channels

[English](#) | [Sinhala](#) | [Tamil](#)

CEJ also Produced a Report on Stakeholder Perspectives on Reparations in Sri Lanka



We Developed Visibility Materials on the Concept of Reparations



English

Sinhala

Tamil

CEJ continues to raise public awareness on women and reparations via our social media platforms

Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Sri Lanka

The following are key activities carried out to develop awareness and mitigation of Gender-Based Violence in Sri Lanka, linked with reparations.

Developing Trilingual Infographics on GBV

CEJ produced an infographic on 'Definitions of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in all three languages to educate and create awareness around GBV.

[English](#) | [Sinhala](#) | [Tamil](#)

GBV Workshops

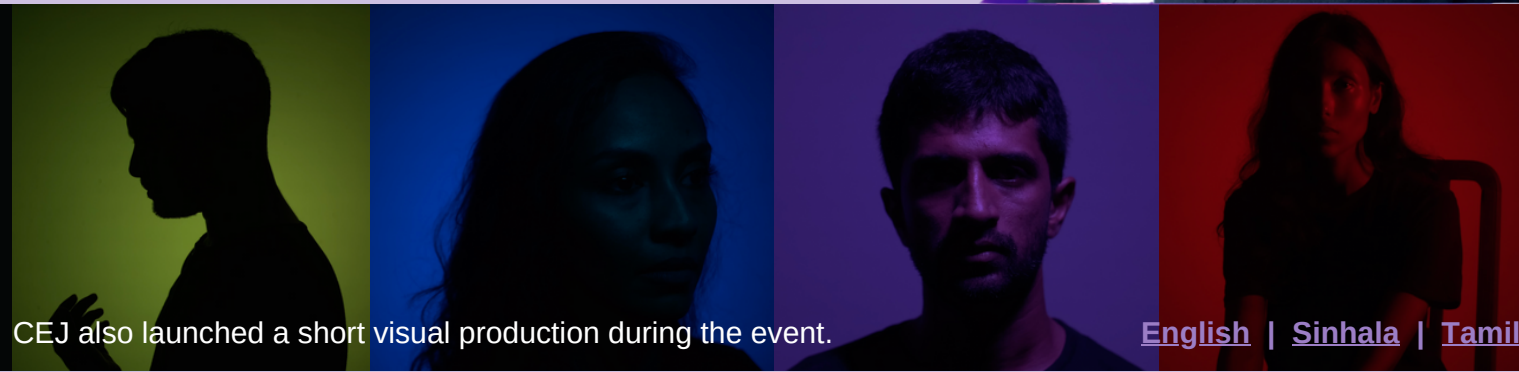
CEJ held awareness-raising workshops on GBV with survivors of violence and the Office For Reparations (OFR).

CEJ held a High-level Dialogue on Raising Awareness on Reparations

The discussion aimed to create a common platform to spread awareness on the need to provide reparations for victims of GBV.

Participants included representatives from the Office on Missing Persons (OMP), Office for Reparations (OFR) and civil society organizations.

The keynote speech was delivered by Professor Ruth Rubio Marin, Professor of Constitutional Law from the University of Seville.



CEJ also launched a short visual production during the event.

[English](#) | [Sinhala](#) | [Tamil](#)

Social Media Campaign on GBV

CEJ produced a series of short videos, featuring several guest-speakers, on how to address stigma around GBV.



CEJ'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

When Covid-19 was first detected in Sri Lanka, we took immediate measures to ensure the safety of staff and participants of ongoing programmes, while enabling the continuation of project activities.

Alternate Working Arrangements

We implemented Work from Home (WFH) arrangements from mid-March onwards. Whenever CEJ's office premises were open, work was carried out on a roster-basis. Staff were instructed to follow strict health and safety regulations at all times.

Rerouting Towards Digital Platforms

CEJ adapted activities to be carried out through digital platforms. Some activities were merged to increase its impact online and eliminate any need for face-to-face interactions.

Investing in Digital Tools

CEJ invested in a Google Workplace account, activating Google Meets for virtual meetings and discussions. Staff underwent training on digital security and data management to help control large volumes of data being processed digitally.

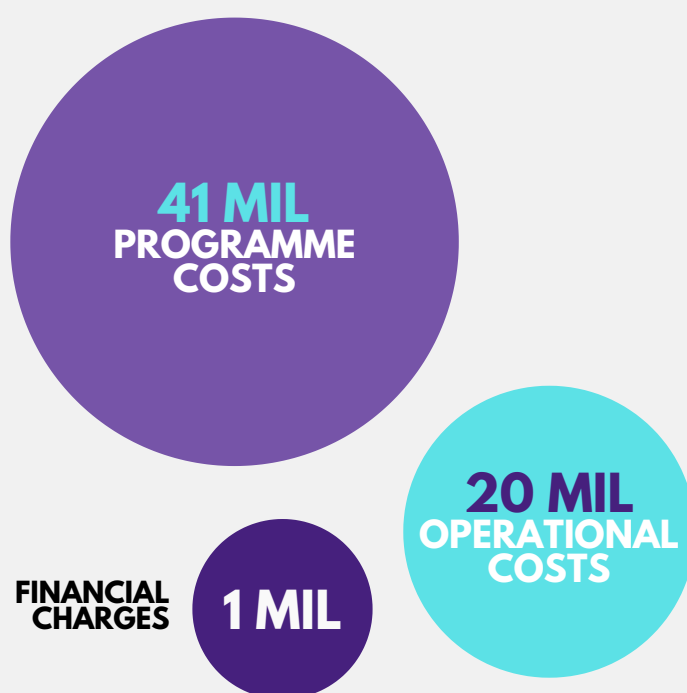
Covid-19 Relief Work

With the approval of our donors, we re-routed funding to increase the provision of rations for vulnerable and marginalized persons who were affected by the island-wide lockdown.

Considering the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, we remain committed towards prioritizing the health and safety of our staff and contributing stakeholders

2020 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	LKR
Salaries	14,083,658
Staff Gratuity	491,000
Rent	1,935,000
Electricity	384,097
Telephone and Internet	247,644
Mobile Allowances	265,255
Water	22,101
Staff Welfare	43,435
Equipment Maintenance	441,963
Office Maintenance	39,980
Stationery and Office Supplies	150,830
Printing & Photocopy	395,000
Office and Medical Insurance	1,122,656
Postage & Courier	117,520
Office Travel	218,230
Periodic Expenses	74,537
Bank Charges & Other Finance Charges	219,019
Audit Expenses	531,000
NGO Tax	550,248
Legal Fees	9,000
Company Secretary	104,585
Total Programme Expenses	41,205,085





LESSONS LEARNED AND LOOKING FORWARD

2020 was a tumultuous year. We reflect on our experiences and are grateful for our incredible team and partners, who were a driving force behind the success of our project activities. We are also grateful to our donors who worked alongside CEJ to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Despite Covid-19, CEJ remained committed towards delivering programmes and ensuring that communities received access to support, information and safe spaces.

In 2020, we provided gender-sensitive training and capacitated over 1200 women and youth across the country. While the pandemic reshaped existing methods of delivery we effectively responded to the challenge by adapting to work via virtual and distance-learning and communication. This has helped us further our outreach with new audiences and developed new partnerships while developing our own capacities.

CEJ is looking forward to the year ahead; to continue to support, capacitate and strengthen communities in Sri Lanka. As we continue to navigate through the pandemic, we focus on our strengths and our commitment towards advancing the rule of law, good governance and democratic principles.



Centre for Equality and Justice

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