

# **Youth – Inclusive Citizenship and Participation in Post-War Eastern Sri Lanka**

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**ABSTRACT.** This study on youth is part of a larger research and capacity building programme titled *Post crisis recovery: researching and teaching across boundaries*. The overall objective of our study – Mobilising youth for recovery and reconstruction in situations of displacement – spaces and places of social inclusion – is to explore how different groups of young people in different situations experience and are affected by and strategise upon displacement and recovery. It is evident that, with the extensive transformation in socio- economic, political and religious environments after the war, Eastern region of Sri Lanka is exposed to rapid change. In order to understand the voice and agency of youth, we conducted field work in Batticaloa and Amapara districts of the Eastern province. The research was conducted through the use of group discussion and in-depth qualitative interviews with youth from various backgrounds and key informants. During our visits to the East, we have been able to understand the willingness and ability of youth to bravely endure the past and contribute to build their future lives and societies. At the same time, we have observed negotiations between youths' role in the social, political, economic, ethnic, cultural and gender spheres continue to be difficult and represent a constant struggle for Eastern youth. Our research findings reveal that youth, are not meaningfully included in development processes of the region. We argue that, rather than pushing the youth to the margins of the society again, it is important to bring them centre stage in order to sustain the expected development outcomes.

**Key words:** Youth, Post War Development, Inclusion.

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