

MEDIATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN SRI LANKA



The Asia Foundation worked with the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) on initiating a Mediation Community of Practice in Sri Lanka with support from the Supporting Effective Dispute Resolution (SEDR) program implemented jointly by The Asia Foundation and British Council with support from the European Union. The Mediation Community of Practice was designed and facilitated from 2024 – 2025 resulting in a unique approach to stimulate discussion and capacity building on strengthening mediation in Sri Lanka.

A Community of Practice refers to a group of people with shared interest and passion, working towards achieving a common goal of collective learning. It provides space to share ideas, knowledge and expertise and fosters a sense of mutual support.

WHY A MEDIATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

To create a much needed space for key actors driving mediation on the ground in Sri Lanka- Mediator Training Officers and Mediation Development Officers of the Ministry of Justice, and volunteer Mediators – to reflect on mediation practices to gain new perspective on knowledge and practice, facilitate peer learning, to enable a platform to discuss challenges and find solutions, and to remain up-to-date with global and local trends.

The Mediation Community of Practice was a successful pilot initiative. The process comprised several activities:



Initial brainstorming discussion with the MTOs to kindle and retain high interest levels from the participants, leading towards ownership of the activities and decisions taken, combined with identification of tangible benefits.



A series of **Knowledge sharing and strengthening sessions**, both in-person and virtual, in order to maximise participation, learning and accommodate logistical and resource limitations.



A **regional workshop** and two-day **residential workshop** on skill development and knowledge enhancement



A **Policy Dialogue** on “Community mediation practices across the globe” bringing in mediation experiences from other countries



A **conference** titled ‘Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice: Advancing Community Mediation Dialogues for Dispute Resolution’

A RANGE OF TOPICS WERE DISCUSSED



- › Understanding cycles of violence to address contemporary conflicts
- › Reflective practices in the mediation process
- › Knowledge sharing in community mediation
- › Communication in the mediation process
- › Design, select, use, and assess case studies for group work and role plays in training
- › Understanding of conflict and conflict analysis for community mediation
- › Understanding and mediating financial disputes especially those involving cultural sensitivities and power dynamics

KEY LEARNINGS



- › Centrality of Reflective Practices in Effective Mediation: Reflection contributes to more effective conflict resolution outcomes helping mediators to navigate complex disputes
- › Effectiveness of Case Studies and Role Plays: A hands-on approach in skill building is more effective than passive learning methods, this enabled participants to practice mediation techniques in simulated environments
- › Communication in mediation as a crucial skill for effective dispute resolution

THE FUTURE OF MEDIATION IN SRI LANKA



The Mediation Community of Practice contributed several key areas to be explored in the future.

- › The need for more research enhancing, institutionalising, and evolving mediation processes
- › Focus on children in community mediation to provide a child friendly dispute resolution mechanism
- › The potential role of mediation in environment and climate related disputes in Sri Lanka

TAKING FORWARD THE MEDIATION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



- › Allocation of sustainable funding and resources to continue a structured yet flexible platform (perhaps digital) for ongoing knowledge sharing, peer learning, and skills development
- › Scaling Up and expanding to sub-national levels and including multi-faceted content
- › A database of external resource persons who can assist with specialized knowledge
- › Placing the Mediation Community of Practice within institutions such as universities and professional institutions and service providers

Part of the programme



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