

The Role of Caritas-EHED in Fostering Interreligious Dialogue in Batticaloa District

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Sri Lanka, an Indian sub-continent nation, is home to four major world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. The civil district of Batticaloa, located on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, has experienced a three-decade civil war that has led to a significant gap between the ethnic and religious communities. This research aims to resolve this situation, foster harmony, and encourage ethnic dialogues among various communities living in the district. The quantitative and qualitative methods research methodology is applied to grasp the ground reality more comprehensively and work further on it. The relationship between religions was cordial until the escalation of the civil war in the late 80ties. Since then, relations have become at stake, leading to divisions and violence. Causes include border village clashes, land issues, religious fundamentalism, forced conversion and the use of public address systems at worship places. The archaeological department has also identified some places in the region as Buddhist worship, creating tension. These unhealthy practices jeopardize the smooth functioning of people's day-to-day living in the Batticaloa district. To unite all people of various faiths, an organization was formed with the participation of all four leaders from important religions of Sri Lanka. This group eventually became an interreligious dialogue group, where leaders of each faith could express their grievances and collectively make decisions to foster religious harmony and dialogue. The post-war situation worsened the religious amity and dialogue in the Batticaloa district, prompting Caritas-EHED Batticaloa to strengthen the district's interreligious group and foster peace and religious dialogue among various faiths.

Keywords:

Harmony, Religious Dialogue, Suspicion, EHED-Caritas, Batticaloa District.

