

Online Care Leavers Café

26 -06 – 2022

Dealing with the Economic Crisis: Voice of Youth from Sri Lanka

Date
26/06/2022

13:30 GMT

Dealing with the
Economic Crisis:
Voice of Youth
from Sri Lanka

ONLINE
CARE LEAVERS
CAFE'



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Introduction

The June cafe session set the forum for initiating a conversation about the crisis situation in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has defaulted on a multi-million-pound foreign debt payment, deepening the nation's worst economic crisis since independence in 1948. The young people from Sri Lanka wanted to use the podium to address the issue and seek support from their peer Care Leavers across the globe.

42 young adults registered from different countries (India, Rwanda, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, Poland, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Iceland, Namibia, Ghana, and Nepal.) 30 young people joined the session actively. The meeting started with Judith Johnson (Secretariat, Global Care Leavers Community) briefly introducing the Sri-Lankan economic crisis. Ms. Judith welcomed the team from Sri Lanka to lead and moderate the cafe. Iresha, a care leaver from Sri Lanka further moderated and led the café facilitating the conversation. Lasantha, another Care

Leavers from Sri Lanka, translated the sessions for the speakers who were not comfortable speaking in English.

Program Agenda and Speakers

1) Background Information /Situation by Nimmali

2) Session speakers

- Wasanthi - Care Leaver
- Amandi Ranush – Care Leaver
- Ms. Hashi – Teacher
- Nimmali kumara (Care Leaver)
- Ms. Ruwanara - Counsellor for Government CCI
- Lasantha – Translator
- Iresha - Moderator

3) Open Discussion

4) Thank you note by Dhanushka – President, Generation Never Give Up

5) Handing over a meeting to a moderator from ICLN & End up the session

Session Details:

Background Situation

The session started with a video showcasing the current crisis in Sri Lanka. The video set the pace for Nimmali (Care Leaver from Sri Lanka) to share further about the situation in the country.



Sri Lanka has defaulted on a multi-million-pound foreign debt payment, deepening the nation's worst economic crisis since it gained independence in 1948. The wrath of the current issues is falling on the common people affecting their livelihood. People are waiting in long queues for fuel and gas. Schools are closed due to transportation issues. The prices of goods and commodities have become higher causing a situation of inflation-making citizens pay the price for it.

These issues deeply affected some Child Care Institution (CCI), and are in need of basic commodities like milk powders, medicines, dry rations, etc.

Nimma shared, that as a care-leaver myself, I have seen my fellow Care Leavers lose their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis, and now they are suffering even more due to the current financial crisis in the country. Citizens are showing their agitation through protest for over 70 days now and many care leavers are actively participating and echoing their voice against the corrupt situation in Sri Lanka.

Iresha welcomed each speaker to share how the situation in Sri Lanka is impacting the citizens, with a special focus on Care Leavers, CCIs.

Wasanthi (Care Leaver)

Wasanthi shared her experience of her journey due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and her current situation facing the economic crisis. It has been 15 years since she left her village. She had a salon she started 4 years ago in 2018. She opened the salon with the help of the SOS Children's Village. It was challenging to start her own business, but with hard work & determination, she established her salon.

The covid-19 pandemic hit her salon as it was in its blooming stage. She bought her home through a loan, but with the pandemic hitting the business, it became difficult for her to sustain the salon and pay for the loan and she ended up losing her home. Even with all hardships faced, she pushed herself and revived the salon to sustain her livelihood. With the escalation of the current situation, she is hitting the rock bottom again. 50% of her business is failing because of financial difficulties and also the prices of the products used by the salon have increased by 80%. She is unable to increase the charges for her services because the customer is also facing the same difficulties.

She is currently staying in the same building as her salon. Due to the cash shortage, there is no option of a fire store for her because her landlord does not allow for the same. The frequent power cut affects her salon work which in turn makes it difficult in paying rent, electricity bill & water bills. She loves her salon very much and wishes to scale it up, however, the current situation is making it gravely difficult for her to sustain and maintain a decent livelihood. She shared her gratitude for offering the café space to share her difficulties and she hopes to receive advice and support to continue her business.

Amandi Ranush (Care Leaver)

Amandi is a Care Leaver preparing to be a chartered accountant. She shared that the global factors are triggering the current economic crisis in her country. She is living in the boarding house and she cooks food for herself. With her minimal monthly expenses, she struggles to manage traveling costs for training and for other daily expenses. The boarding and tuition fee have increased by 50%. The young adults are protesting and voicing their concerns on a

daily basis but she seeks inner peace and happiness for everyone and hopes that soon they will see a positive turn of events.

Ms. Hashi Munasinghe – Teacher

Hashi is a teacher at Club University. She wanted to share her point of view now she explains how the education system is aggravating due to the current crisis.

She shared the problem that the youth are facing in the education sector.

- Adapting to distance learning tool- she explains that Sri Lanka is a developing country. Due to

The covid-19 pandemic pushed the education system to opt-out of the physical mode of learning. Now the crisis has again made it difficult to open schools and will have to resort with an online mode of teaching. Due to the varied challenges, they are unable to adapt the distance learning because it is a new thing for them and it will take time to adapt to this type of learning

- Devices and technical issues - Sri Lanka is a developing country therefore they did not get the privilege to use the devices and also struggle to operate them. Poor Networks and frequent power outages are posing challenges for the students to connect online and sustain their education.

- Due to the constant crisis situation and gap in continued learning and classes, many children and youth have lost the motivation to continue their studies further and dropped out of the same. The dropouts are also due to the failure of not being able to maintain the basic livelihood and struggling to sustain it.

Due to the current economic crisis - Schools are shutting down, exams are postponed, standing in queues for long hours just for fuel and food, soaring prices of commodities and transportation, and Immense mental pressure.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main window displays a PowerPoint presentation titled 'Education in Sri Lanka'. The presentation content is as follows:

- Education in Sri Lanka**
 - Free Education
- 2019 - Corona**
 - Adapting to distance learning tools
 - Learning how to handle video conferencing
 - Device issues
 - Data issues
 - Increased issues
 - Getting used to online sessions
- Economic crisis**
 - Schools were closed
 - constant power cuts
 - Everybody in queues
 - transport cost
 - Mental imbalance
 - uncertain about future
 - Exams getting postponed
 - Soaring price in general commodities

The Zoom meeting controls at the bottom show 25 participants, and the meeting title is 'Presentation2 - PowerPoint'. The system tray at the bottom indicates the date and time as 6/26/2022, 7:34 PM, and the weather as 84°F Partly cloudy.

Nimmali Kumari

Nimmali further shared their background and shared a few alarming facts.

- A probation officer shared that they are unable to re-integrate the youth who turn 18 years of age into society due to the current economic crises.
- Some children in CCI did not receive milk powder and it's more than 2 months now.
- The price of bread has soared from 50 to 180 SLR rupees.
- Bus fare minimum is starting at 42 SLR. 80%CL used to be in rent and Boarding places. Earlier it was 5000 minimum now they have to pay more than 15000.
- As a Network, Generation Never Give Up (GNGN) started supporting CL during the COVID period. And we are helping now also with some CL with Skill training / Counselling/job Offering, Searching, etc.
- She is attending the Protest every day to make a difference.
- Many Care Leavers lost their jobs. Many are struggling to sustain livelihood with minimal wages and the soaring prices in the country. Youth are not able to afford even the basic necessities.

Ms. Ruwanara - Counsellor for government CCI

- Ruwanara is a professional in the mental health sector. She explains how in the last couple of years after the covid-19 pandemic, the whole world is going through a socio-economic-wise challenging period. With this global crisis, Sri Lanka is currently facing its worst-ever economic and political downfall.
- The administrators at CCIs are facing challenges such as lack of funding, donations, and external volunteerism.
- Inevitably and evidently, this situation has paved the way to deterioration of the mental health of the people this is the most common issue of concern. In the past couple of years, Sri Lanka due to intermittent covid-19 pandemic schools were closed and it affected them mentally. Through the online classes, the spirit of learning has vanished from the student.
- Further in rural areas of the country, this online method had no success at all due to a lack of infrastructure, technology-wise and knowledge-wise both. Out of the frying pan into the fire, with the ongoing economic crisis, school children are not able to buy their essential things for the school, but also traveling to the school become unbearably costly due to recent fuel prices, especially in rural areas, children missed the school education, some temporary and some permanently.
- Above all, the biggest challenge CDCs face is the socialization of their inmates. Almost all the parents and guardians of children at CDCs represent the lower to lower-middle-income layer. Due to the highest ever cost of living and shortage of even the most essential items therefore parents are in a continuous struggle to fulfil the needs of their families.
- There is a natural tendency for this rehabilitated child to get involved in shoplifting, robbery, and even organized crimes to overcome the situation. Further, he or she might soon become a victim of sexual abuse, a drug addict, a thug, and many more. CDCs are currently facing this issue with their already socialized children in the recent past, thus making further socializing inmates a problematic task.
- He shared some incidents. In rural areas where extra-marital unprotected sexual relations, having soon after getting to know each other would result in domestic violence, the spread of sexually communicable diseases, and many more socio-economic predicaments.
- Several incidents were reported where one of the parents, in some cases both, committed suicide after killing their children, just because of their inability to feed the family.

- How would a mentally and physically rehabilitated child mix with, react to, and survive in such a chaotic, ill-affected society. How could we assure that a child sent fcentreentres to such a family would not be victimized by this insane Society In contrast, how could not we expect more and more children from such families would enter our centres as a result of domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug addiction, etc.

Open discussion:

The discussion time opened a forum for all the participants to exchange their thoughts and suggestion on how can they can help their peers from Sri Lanka from this worst situation as soon as possible. There were quite a few suggestions and inputs extended.

- List down all the care Leavers' names and seek if they are capable to arrange some donor who may facilitate some help.
- Share the list of the essential things that they require and a few can try to ship it to Sri Lanka.
- Build a proposal to raise the fund for the Care Leavers of Sri Lanka.
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Note of thanks:

Dhanushka, President of GNGN felt immensely grateful and happy to receive a platform to share their sorrows and seek support. He felt overwhelmed seeing all the love, warmth, and good wishes coming their way and expressed his gratitude for taking out time and extending support in all the ways possible.

Messages from Care Leavers across the globe

The Care Leavers during the café session expressed their love and concern through heartfelt messages.

Message from Aditya Charegaonkar.

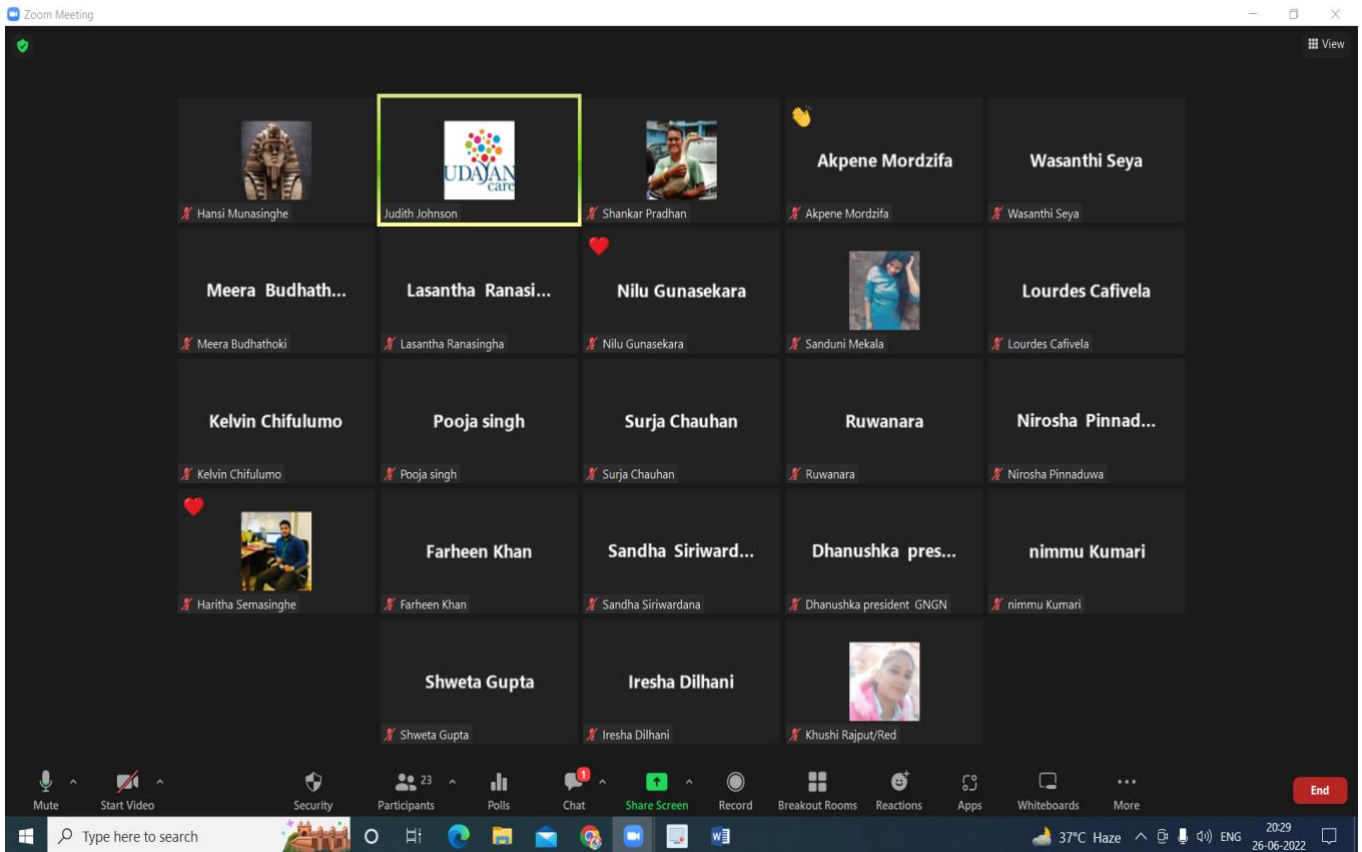
Dear All, I can understand and feel the pain of what Sri Lankan Care Leavers and their citizens are going through in this economic crisis. I hope we all should keep praying and keep handholding support to each other. Let's be united and keep supporting each other.

Message from Lourdes Cafivela.

It is truly a challenging time for people in Sri Lanka and I am touched by the difficulties care leavers are going through, am hoping we can all reach out to them in one way or another.

Message from Rayees Ahmad Bhat.

Toughest times give birth to the greatest personalities but hearing the experiences of all these speakers I and many believe they already are on the path to greatness we all know Sri Lanka is facing the worst crisis but it will Rise again we all pray and believe that.



End up the session.

At the end of the meeting, everyone greeted each other with hopeful expectations and promised to the extent the best possible support for the youth and children in Sri Lanka. They sent out prayers to get out of this problem as soon as possible and strengthen the economy towards development. With these wishes, the meeting, eagerly looking forward to the actions and the next café.