



LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND THE CITIZENS' APPROACH

A Programme Review 2011-2014



CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
வினாடி அறிவுரை மையம்
மாண்புமிகு அமைச்சு நிர்வாகம்

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NB: This English language report is a draft only for information purposes. The final report will be available by January 31st 2015. Please request your copy by writing to Vibhasha@cpalanka.org.

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Policy Alternatives has been of the strong belief that if Sri Lanka is to move from a post-war to post-conflict situation – that is one in which the sources of conflict are not sustained or reproduced and reconciliation achieved– addressing the language issue is of paramount importance. Language is at the heart of the ethnic conflict and therefore addressing the language issue will have great symbolic and more importantly practical significance for the peoples of Sri Lanka. It is fundamental and the resources involved far outweigh the benefits that would accrue short, medium and long –term in restoring trust and confidence in full citizenship for all and genuine respect, trust and confidence amongst them.

CPA's Language Programme seeks to make a difference in this respect. It involves citizens in the fulfillment of their constitutional rights and thereby speaks to their duties as well, as citizens and their responsibility for securing those rights.

CPA records its appreciation of the cooperation provided to it in the implementation of this programme from the state sector and urges that the issue receives the policy prioritization and requisite resources it deserves. The ultimate objective after all is to embed language rights in the institutions and processes of governance and government, as well as in the popular culture to the point at which it no longer requires special mention and attention as a source of conflict, diminished citizenship and/or feelings of marginalization.

We believe we have made some inroads as a programme; we believe that there is still a longer journey that must be made as a country determined to achieve its full potential.

Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Executive Director
Centre for Policy Alternatives
December 2014

LANGUAGE IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT: SELECTED ARTICLES

The Language of Harmony

In multi ethnic societies, language rights take on special significance, the case of Sri Lanka being no exception. Language has played a major role in the ethnic conflict and the resultant violence that besieged the island for 30 odd years and so, a solution to this discord should also contain language at the core. In the post war period, its importance continues to be emphasized by the highlighting of language rights in such policy documents as the All Party Representative Committee Report (APRC) 2009 and the most recent and contentious Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Report.

Following extensive interviews with communities who are most affected by language issues, Centre for Policy Alternatives has submitted a number of applications to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), the Official Language Commission (OLC), the Consumer Affairs Authority and Fundamental rights cases with the Supreme Court. In terms of procedures, it must be noted that the Official Languages Commission, whilst it can "conduct investigation into non-compliance of Official Languages Policy according to the provisions of the Act," cannot in practice summon parties to a case, mediate or issue any directive. The OLC has issued formal notices outlining the required changes, and a number of answers were obtained, although results are not obvious to date.

The HRCSL which is mandated to upholding Human Rights and provisions of the constitution can carry out an inquiry, summon parties and discuss issues, as well as produce a circular stating details of the violation and recommended solutions.

In this manner the Ministry of Private Transport Services and the Sri Lanka Transport Board were instructed to ensure passenger buses operate with destination boards in all three languages which the former agreed to do from 13 April 2012 and the latter within two months. Following another submission, the Transportation Authority's office has issued a circular dated February 28, 2012 emphasizing the need to make railway announcements in all three languages at all railway stations in adherence to State Language Policy. Following an OLC submission the Ministry of Finance has given the assurance that all currency notes printed from this point onwards will contain the following notice in Tamil too: 'This currency note issued by the Government of Sri Lanka is legally valid in paying any amount of money within Sri Lanka'. In response to a query on the non-availability of documentation in both languages, the main office of Eastern Province Water Board in Trincomalee has made all arrangements to function and provide forms in Sinhala and Tamil languages, although no official complaint was made in this instance.

Monitoring follow-up

With both the HRCSL and the OLC, one drawback is that the plaintiff actually has to monitor follow-up, which is regrettable. Some monitoring is admittedly carried out by the state appointed Language Societies, which can draw attention to developments or lack thereof.

The current problem is the difficulty in monitoring practical progress in such cases, for example it is now 24th April though what the Private Transport Service Ministry agreed has not yet come into practice. No matter what solutions/ or directives are issued, there is a problem if these aren't put into practice or enforced. This is a big issue, which may lead to very real disillusionment about these institutions. If there is no practical enforcement the amount of statements, orders, circulars or directives is of no real worth.

Humanity, not just human rights

Language rights are not just a matter of legal rights, they have to be understood as a matter of humanity and of empathy. People, starting from school children, have to learn to understand the problems of others and empathize with their discomfort in the case of an administrative culture, which suppresses his identity and penalizes him for simply wanting to communicate in his own mother-tongue.

For example, take such noble development drives such as Gama Neguma, MagaNeguma and DiviNeguma , which are powerful ideas in Sinhala. The meaning is not translated to Tamil, and the whole concept is completely lost to someone who does not think in Sinhala, resulting in a sense of exclusion!

Violations in the pharmaceutical industry

Another area of serious violations of language rights in practice is in the entire pharmaceutical industry, where most drugs, equipment and medications are currently labeled in English only. Sinhala and Tamil speaking consumers, who are the majority in this country, will have no idea of the quantities, dosages, side effects, alternative brands or other relevant information which is very important to patients and caregivers. This adds to the inconvenience in government hospitals in the North and East in particular where some doctors, nurses and other medical staff too do not speak Tamil. So for a person who is already insecure, in pain and fear due to illness or injury, having to deal with ineligible information about medications is further misery. However the response from the Consumer Affairs authority to a complaint on this has been far from satisfactory, and this matter has subsequently been submitted to the HRCSL in the hope of more effective response. A positive point to note is that the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration headed by Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara has a genuine commitment to positive change and now he has the chance to make the difference that he always wanted to.

Language Societies.

A careful detailed and long term plan is needed to reach the targets of ensuring language rights for all within a reasonable time frame. For example, the Education Department needs to budget for training the required number of language teachers, and the institute which trains, certifies and monitors the standards of translators and translations of both languages, in the country should be strengthened, and given a much wider scope than the existing one. A very positive development is almost a thousand "Language Societies" which have been established in the bilingual divisions. "Language societies" are groups of local community representatives coming together periodically to discuss language related issues, and are a good concept to take awareness and advocacy on language rights to the communities. They must be strengthened and promoted which will lead to a non-political, unbiased, culturally sensitive civil society network promoting inter cultural and, inter religious tolerance and harmony. Knowledge is empowerment, and the rights to communicate and to access information are some of the most fundamental requirements in ensuring social justice and human rights among people. Language policy implementation is a social issue which calls for widespread awareness, and a great deal of sensitivity.

(from an article published in 2012)

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS IN SUPPORT OF LANGUAGE EQUALITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH LIONEL GURUGE, SENIOR RESEARCHER, CPA

Lionel Guruge is Co-ordinator of a project Promoting Language Rights, which, in its latest phase is conducting a language audit in the North and the East to reach an understanding of the extent to which language policy is implemented in these areas. Below, from a recent interview, are some of his observations from the field.

Historically, the issue of language divided this country, and over the last 30 years the importance of ensuring language equality in Sri Lanka has come to be gradually accepted by policy-makers and stakeholders alike. The Constitution in Article 12 (a) and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka have ratified the right to language equality. Similarly following the Cabinet decision on 2009/2/3, the Gazette Notification No. 1620/27 of 2009/9/25 declares that it is compulsory that all State institutions must carry out work and make available documents in both languages. Much publicity has been given to the LLRC Report, which also sets aside substantial sections on the subject of Language.

Nevertheless some State institutions and officials do not take into consideration, either the Gazette Notification or the Language Policy but work in Sinhala and some English, some Local Government institutions and Provincial Councils do not work in Tamil. In the North and the East, in practice, there is a situation where they work in Tamil or English, so people on both sides, (in the South, Sinhala only and in the North, Tamil only,) including State officials and political parties in power continue to violate the language policy. This is the finding of substantial research carried out by us (during the course of the PLR project.)

In some institutions, granted, there is respect for the official language policy. However, State officials in the South in particular do not consider that there exists another language; they continue to flout the laws and regulations outright, for example the police, the Road Development Authority, Fisheries Ministry and indeed this problem exists in almost all ministries. In fact if you consider the Supreme Court, itself, even the signage is in English or Sinhala for example, Don't sit on the Stairs, the Inquiries Counter, Push this door, Silence !, up to the 'Do Not Spit' sign is in Sinhala/English only.

What can be concluded from this is that the authorities responsible for implementing Language Policy have not been effective, and also people have no habit or attitude of accommodating the language rights of other peoples. Consider the law; there is the Constitution, a number of Gazette Notifications and Circulars and an Act. If the violation of these is continuous and there is no one to prevent this, this has to be considered a common malaise.

There is some improvement, the situation is better than it was previously, but this is just not enough. For example on the subject of the police, it is not enough to say you are enrolling police officers and things will change; for example on principle the order to work in both languages, should be common to all police stations, regardless of where they are, for example, Maharagama, as if a person is in trouble and needs the service of the police station, it applies even if there is just one person who needs help in his mother tongue.

“For example considering just the signage, 'Crimes Section', 'Minor Complaints', 'Charge Room' where one obtains extracts of complaints, 'Traffic Department', various departments, when you look at every police station you don't see that even this signage is available tri-lingually or bilingually. In the case of notices, exhibitions, criminal investigations, complaints, all these and more, the information is available in Sinhala only/or Sinhala and English. So apart from claiming to recruit so many personnel, there has to be a tangible change in the Police/Military, something that shows you that language rights are respected (this has not happened – we do not see such a situation). At least the visible items have to be in the three languages.”

Official languages

Also I emphasize that this is not regarding the population of an area, or the percentage using a language. The country has two official languages and these should be available anywhere in the country. We do not see such a situation at all.

In the case of police stations, I can give the clear example of Guruparan's case in Batticaloa, and similar cases. I have submitted about 20 cases to the Human Rights Commission; for example in Mannar there are so many police stations without even a single Tamil speaking officer. Some of the officers trained have not been deployed to the areas where they are really needed.

Leave aside the police, all institutions are supposed to be working bilingually (or even trilingually) but this situation does not exist in practice, it is not apparent. Just one example is the Land Action Procedure Code which has no Tamil translation. When you ask why, they say they don't have funds to translate it! These are very important documents. If you visit a hospital, the boards are in Sinhala and perhaps English; these problems are seen very often.

I'm not sure how Ms Navi Pillay could have been happy about the situation; people may have shown her only the good side. Yes there is some improvement, in language classes, training, translations, and so on, but this is proceeding at a very slow rate, not at all commensurate with the scale of the problem. I can only see about a 10% improvement in the situation with 90% remaining to be done, according to my experience.

To properly analyze the extent of implementation it is important to carry out a nationwide Language Audit. All State institutions, all private enterprises, all common areas, have to be audited, only then will we be able to reach a correct conclusion on the state of implementation of the Language Policy.

At the moment (as part of our project) we are trying out a pilot programme, auditing 21 Divisional Secretariat Divisions. This initial exercise can be expanded to other areas.

Recommendations:

1. Most importantly the Human Rights Commission and the Official Languages Commission (OLC), currently do not/cannot exercise their authority and need to be given more manpower, more resources more areas to act. The power/effect and reach of the OLC is not sufficient; the power to issue orders, to implement language policy and its legal clout need to be strengthened, and setting up of District level offices can be recommended as it is currently a Colombo centric institution (as its attention is required more in the provinces than in Colombo). State institutions do not currently recognize the OLC and the latter is not assertive enough. The LLRC recommends various Commissions to be set up but they are useless if they have no authority.
2. A comprehensive nationwide language audit is required and resultant recommendations have to be implemented for short-term and long-term solutions. The State institutions should be audited. Beginning at the Divisional Secretariat Level there should be discussion and a practical plan of action formed. This is how you can reach a realistic estimate of the situation.
3. An addition to Education Policy/Syllabi: A common paper on Language Rights should be included with the three Language subjects for children from grades 6-11(O/Levels) – a gradual education of children so that at least the next generation will understand the importance of the issue, including the recognition given to language in the Constitution and by Gazette Notifications , circulars, laws and regulations and so on. This is a way to bring about attitude change and make sure that future generations respect each other's languages, just as much as they learn their own language.
4. Support for language teachers: As there are Training Collages for English teachers; there should be Training Colleges for teachers of Tamil and of Sinhala, who teach these languages in Sinhala and Tamil schools. Special arrangements and coordination need to be arranged among Training Colleges, to meet the need for training the cadre required for teaching Tamil and Sinhala languages.
5. A media strategy promoting language rights: The media has a very important role to play in raising awareness on Language Rights among the people as well as in promoting social cohesion. For example Sinhala audiences should understand and be able to reach the media that Tamil audiences reach. Again reaching out to Tamil audiences for example is something local media can work on, rather than having Tamil viewers continually seek out Indian Channels. This needs careful analysis and attention.

(2013)

CITIZENS' LANGUAGE RELATED GRIEVANCES

Regardless of the number and apparent force of regulation, legislation, and institutions set up to promote the Official Languages Policy- the actual ground situation with regard to language rights, as studied in the numerous field visits, interviews and other research carried out during the project - is demonstrably dismal and has serious implications on the following:

Access to Justice

At any stage of the judicial process, where an accused is unable to defend him/herself in his/her mother tongue and is forced to rely on inaccurate translations, a serious miscarriage of justice arises. As found from interviews, among other issues, complaints made by Tamil citizens are recorded in Sinhala at Police Stations, and the complainants are subsequently asked to sign these statements(Vavunia, Trincomalee, Mannar and Ampara), Tamil citizens in the Eastern Province receive summons in Sinhala, and court transactions and case hearings in many areas of Sri Lanka are conducted in only Sinhala.

Access to Education

Sri Lanka's public education system has included teaching in both Sinhala and Tamil even since colonial times. However In practice many areas have no schoolteachers in the relevant language. Letters issued by zonal education offices are in Sinhala alone. Tamil teachers have been sent Teaching Guides in Sinhala. Translations are sent very late, often too late to be of any use. In schools in bilingual areas such as Colombo, student assemblies are held only in Sinhala. School children often have no access to official translations, and any communications from their school are sent to the parents in Sinhala. Sometimes the parents cannot even enter school premises because they do not speak Sinhala. Universities host certain courses only in English and Sinhala thus violating minority rights to equal access to education.

Access to Information:

Signage- Though accepted that all government institutions, particularly in bilingual areas, should have all sign boards, street nameboards and official documentation in all three languages, the ground reality is that a number of government institutions do not display such nameboards or provide official documents in all three languages. For example in the Colombo district DS divisions such as Thimbirigasyaya and Kotahena are not implementing this policy to any extent recognizable resulting in sections of the minority communities receiving some of their most essential documents such as birth, death and marriage certificates in a language not their own.

Product Information- Pharmaceutical industry violations:

Another area of serious violations of language rights in practice, is within the pharmaceutical industry, where almost all drugs, equipment and medications are currently labeled only in English. Sinhala and Tamil consumers, who make up the majority in this country, when they purchases drugs have no idea of the quantities, dosages, side effects, alternative brands or other relevant information important to patients and caregivers. This adds to the inconvenience in government hospitals in the North and East in particular where some doctors, nurses and other medical staff too do not speak Tamil. So for a person who is already insecure, in pain and fear due to illness or injury, having to deal with ineligible information about medications is further misery.

Administration and Daily Life

Numerous cases exist among Government officials including Grama Niladharis not knowing the language spoken by the people of their own division, resulting in the lack of an official whom one can address in one's own language, when visiting government department

Routine procedures from lodging a complaint at a police station, seeking health care at a govt. hospital, applying for compensation or pensions, obtaining licenses, registering a birth, death or marriage, or traveling are made experiences of anxiety for any Sri Lankan who does not know Sinhala.

INTERVENTIONS BY CPA TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE RIGHTS

Begun in 2011, CPA's programme "Promoting Language Rights of Minorities," addresses language inequality in Sri Lanka, considered by many as a significant underlying cause of this country's ethnic conflict spanning many decades. This programme was operational in 13 districts of the North, East, Central, and Uva Provinces.

The Promoting Language Rights of Minorities (PLRM) Project addresses language inequality in Sri Lanka by securing fundamental rights of minorities with a focus on language rights in Sri Lanka

Activities of the project include

- Creating enhanced respect for and understanding of minority language rights amongst government officials
- Building local civil society capacity
- Creating Legal precedent/utilizing existing instruments
- Raising public awareness & involvement
- Contributing to Policy reform through recommendations
- Systematic Language Audits assessing the level and gap in official language policy implementation within government and private institutions and public locations conducted in 210 GN Divisions through existing Language Societies (LSs)
- A targeted 3000+ instances of actual change on the ground, including signboards, notice boards, designations, documentation and street sign boards
- Publicity was given for the Ministry's 1956 hotline for complaints on language rights violations through the installation of public billboards

Training

CPA worked with a number of regional civil society organisations and built their capacity to effectively engage with government, private sector and media to highlight language rights issues and create positive change. Local partners were selected for their capacity, commitment and credentials; every effort was made to give them due autonomy in their work, and for CPA to play the role of facilitator.

Trainers selected from these organisations were invited to the specific Training of Trainers Workshops to strongly develop training capacity of partner organisations representative trainers. Trainers were thoroughly briefed on the nature, extent and implications of the issue of language and learnt about the background of the language issue in Sri Lanka, the official language policies, Acts, legal regulations and constitutional provisions covering bilingual rights, the scope and mandate of Language Societies, advocacy initiatives on language rights issues at the grassroots, and the legal procedures for recourse such as filing cases in Human Rights Commission and the Official Languages Commission.

Language Societies

Language Societies are groups of concerned citizens aware of the language implications of information, documentation and public notices, who collectively draw attention to violations of language rights, and negotiate correction of these at a regional level. A total of 347 Language societies have been established in 12 districts with a combined membership of 7569.

The objectives of Language Societies include:

- Bringing together community members with diverse backgrounds who will unite towards a common goal of promoting and protecting language rights in the area. (The Committees provide strength in numbers for advocacy which individuals alone may not have.)
- Educating and empowering members on language policy, the relevance of language rights, the recourse available, where there have been violations
- Ensuring that members, including the younger generation develop a healthy respect for each other's languages, cultures and literary heritage.

In the course of the project Language Societies came up with a number of innovative ideas to achieve such objectives. These included:

- Negotiating for cases to be handled in the language of choice.
- Ensuring that all local signage respects the two state languages
- Pressurizing for a bi lingual school with Tamil language teachers
- Playing a role in communal harmony, cultural unity, beginning with children's libraries, cultural events, poetry, dance, drama events etc and conducting inter-school learning exchanges
- Hosting monthly meetings to discuss community issues along with language issues
- Being aware, and creating awareness that it is justifiable to request official documentation in their respective languages and appearing for the right to have documentation in the language they understand
- Involving in community welfare issues, by working in various ways to support and mediate in community issues where community harmony may be affected.
- Promoting appreciating of cultures by organising such events as a multicultural Avurudhu ceremony at the April Sinhala /Tamil New Year, tri lingual children's libraries, cultural music and drama festivals, initiating a pre-school, teaching Tamil or Sinhala
- Networking with other committees island wide to form a strong base for promotion of language equality

Language Societies actions and Exchange Programmes

Language Societies meet periodically and organize various local events to support language equality and also to promote social integration in the regions. These programmes have a lasting impact on participants who in some cases have never had interactions with people from another ethnicity and harbored unfortunate misconceptions about them

COMPLAINTS MADE REGARDING LANGUAGE RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Language societies working with CPA have also submitted more than 17,000 cases to various administrative departments in connection with language rights during the last 12 months, and have received a number of replies from these departments as shown

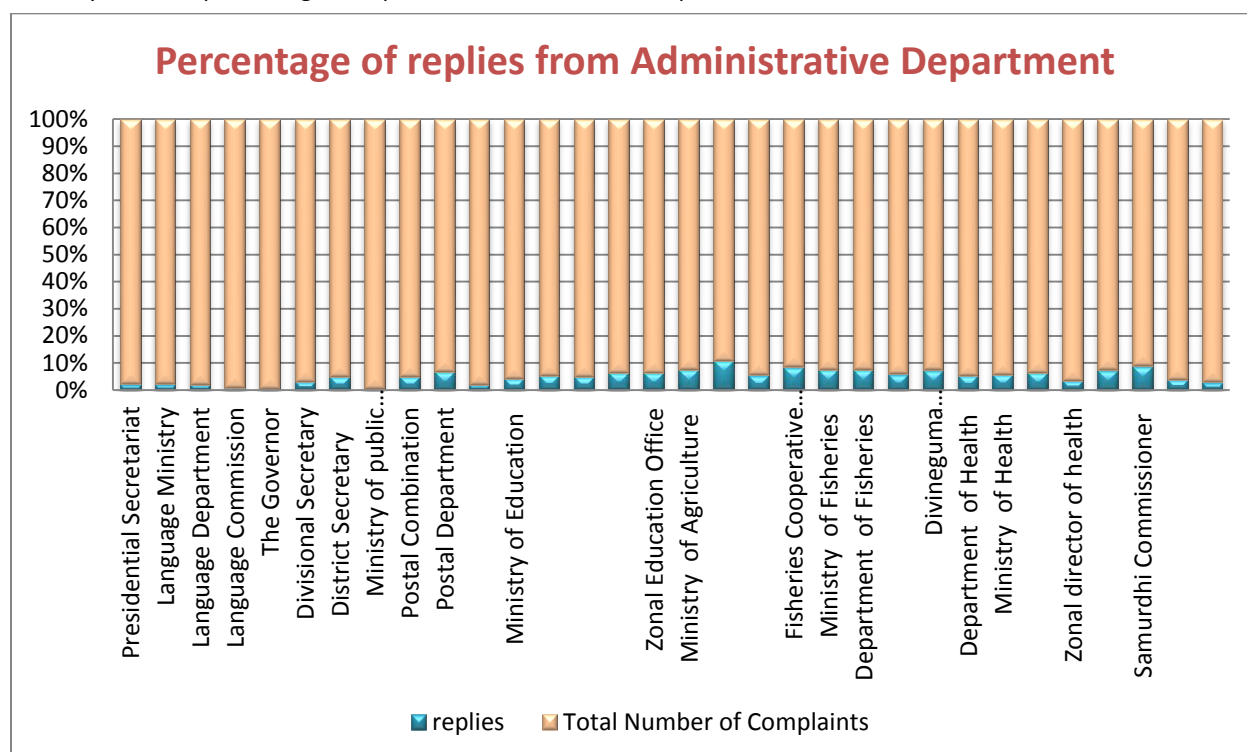
Numbers of complaints filed by Language Societies are shown on the next few pages, against the department to which they were made.

	Administrative Sectors	Trincomalee	Batticaloa	Ampara	Vavuniya	Jaffna	Mannar	Colombo	Total Number of Complaints	Reply
1	Presidential Secretariat	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	40
2	Language Ministry	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	40
3	Language Department	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	38
4	Official Language Commission	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	14
5	The Governor	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	9
6	Divisional Secretary	285	300	300	258	300	300	45	1788	60
7	District Secretary	255	300			300	300	45	1200	61
8	Ministry of public Administration and Home affairs	30	300	300	258	300	300	45	1533	10
9	Postal Combination	30	30	30	20	30	7	6	153	8
10	Postal Department	30	30	30	20	30	7	6	153	11
11	Provincial Ministry of post	30	30	30	20	30	7	6	153	3
12	Ministry of Education	30	30	30	23	30	28	6	177	8
13	Department of Education	30	30	30	23	30	28	6	177	10
14	Provincial Ministry of Education	30	30	30	23	30	28	6	177	9

15	Provincial Department of Education	30	30	30	23	30	28	6	177	12
16	Zonal Education Office	30	30	30	23	30	28	6	177	12
17	Ministry of Agriculture	30	30	30	16	30	30	6	172	14
18	Department of Agriculture	30	30	30	16	30	30	6	172	21
19	Provincial Ministry of Agriculture	30	30	30	16	30	30	6	172	10
20	Fisheries Cooperative Society	30	30	30	15	30	19	6	160	15
21	Ministry of Fisheries	30	30	30	15	30	19	6	160	13
22	Department of Fisheries	30	30	30	15	30	19	6	160	13
23	Provincial Ministry of Fisheries	30	30	30	15	30	19	6	160	10
24	Divineguma Commission er	30	30	30	21	30	30	6	177	14
25	Department of Health	30	30	30	21	30	30	6	177	10
26	Ministry of Health	30	30	30	21	30	30	6	177	11
27	Provincial Ministry of Health	30	30	30	21	30	30	6	177	12
28	Zonal director of health	30	30	30	21	150	30	6	297	11
29	Medical Officer of Health	30	30	30	21	30	30	6	177	14

30	Samurdhi Commissioner	30	30	30	30	30	30	6	186	18
31	Ministry of Economic Development			45	30				75	3
		2655	3060	2805	2275	3180	2937	492	17404	535

An analysis of the percentage of replies received to these complaints is shown below



Government officer's awareness

More than a thousand government officials were introduced to the programme, including Grama Niladharis, Samurdhi Officers, Agricultural Development Officers, Family Health Officers, Postal Officers, Divisional Secretariat Officers Local Authority Officials and Ministers, and through a series of interviews and discussions a significant attitude change was achieved.

Legal precedent

The project has set precedent on language rights as fundamental rights to be filed in court to address serious issues of violation; this came about through the filing of number of cases before the Supreme Court, and submission of complaints before the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRC) and the Official Languages Commission (OLC)

Public Awareness and involvement raised

Among stakeholders affected by violations some were not aware that they were living in a so called bilingual area as stipulated by the government and mentioned that if they could understand and or partly speak Sinhala it was “not necessary to deal in their own language.” This disregards the spirit of the Official Policy on Language which gives each citizen right to transact in his/her own mother tongue.

A number of initiatives were carried out to raise public awareness through one on one interviews and other resource materials, eg: Vibhasha newsletters, booklets, information leaflets,(distributed to members of LS and other CSOs) calls for an essay completion, as well as a number of items of commissioned media coverage.

Media networking

The project also created alliances between provincial journalists and Language Societies so that media sensitivity would be heightened towards issues of Language.

A number of Provincial newspapers and some national newspapers have supported this programme by publishing more than one hundred relevant articles during the project time period.

Synergies

The project made connections with the Ministry of National Languages, other initiatives on language such as the National Languages Project. Recommendations and comments were made on selected aspects of the Ten Year Action Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka and island wide implementation of the provisions for language rights in the LLRC

Language Audit

CPA completed a comprehensive audit of implementation of Language Policy and of compliance with Language related provisions of the LLRC, in all 36 DS Divisions in 14 Districts, in the North, East, Uva and Central provinces, from June – August 2014. The audit aimed to identify the current status in the implementation of bilingual policy across transport and pharmaceutical sectors, government institutions, common public areas and private entities in the areas covered. All government officials belonging to 36 selected categories including Grama Niladaries, Samurdhi Officers and Divineguma officers, in 36 selected Divisional Secretariats were evaluated in total, while a sample was evaluated in categories other than government officials, which included bus signboards, railway station announcements and pharmaceutical outlets. All School principals, police stations and hospital police stations in the areas were interviewed separately.

A series of different formats were designed for the collection of data from the different categories interviewed. The Official Languages Commission issued a letter of authorization for the Enumerators which went a long way in easing their access to the various government sector officials targeted for the audit.

Over a period of three months, the 7000+ forms of the language audit, containing feedback from government officials, government institutions, school principals, public and private sector institutions, public and private sector individuals, the police and hospital police, and OLP compliance in bus boards, train announcements and dispensation envelopes of pharmacies, were coded for data entry via a team of 10, and fed into a database for analysis. A final report is due by March 2015.

REPORT ON THE SUBMISSIONS MADE TO THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES COMMISSION AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Successive governments of Sri Lanka have officially recognized the need for language equality for the last 20 years or more, as evidenced by numerous examples of legislation, regulations, official circular and directives.

Three main institutions officially tasked with implementing and protecting language rights namely the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, the Official Languages Commission and the Human Rights Commission support the spirit of language equality, although they cite the lack of capacity as a major challenge to their effectiveness

While the CPA initiated a large number of actions to protect Language rights including awareness raising and encouraging attitude change in the responsible government institutions, to protect citizens language rights, it also strives to ensure that official language policy is adhered to.

From mid-2011 to the present CPA has initiated more than 300 complaints with the Official Languages Commission (OLC) and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka(HRCSL) based on instances where language rights have been violated.

This report provides a breakdown of the numbers of complaints filed by the CPA with the Official Languages Commission (OLC) and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) based on instances of violation of the language rights of citizens, and various steps taken, to date.

Context

The schedule below shows the number of complaints made by CPA over the four phases of its project, sorted by whether the respondents are government or private sector entities.

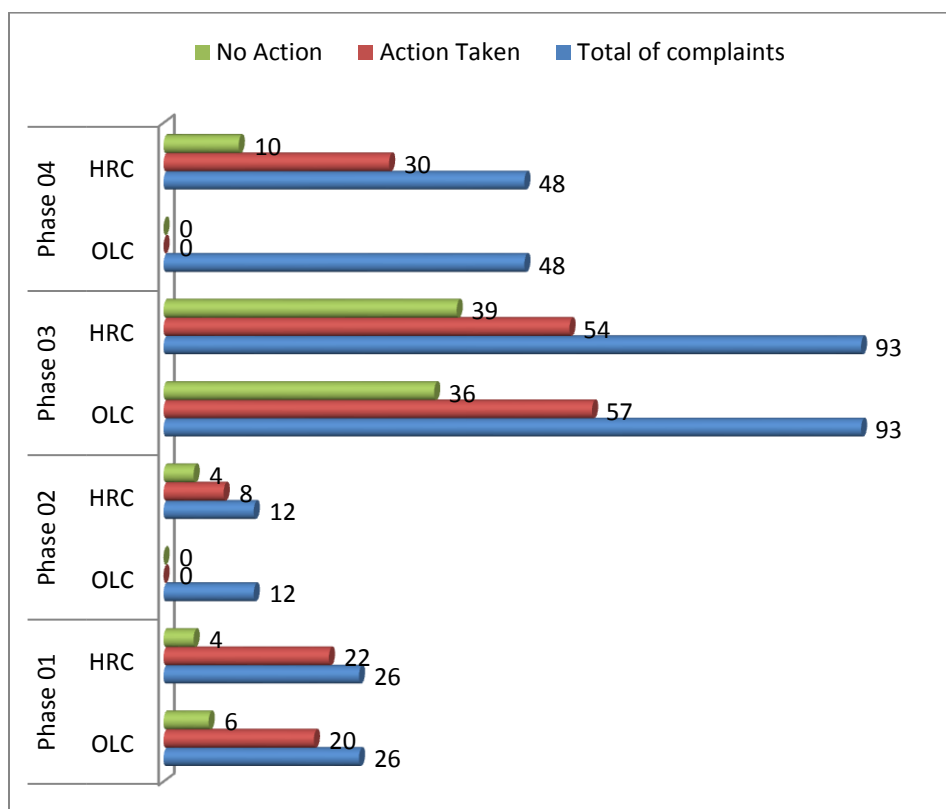
Phase	Number of Complaints		Total
	Govt Sector	Private Sector	
Phase one	26	-	26
Phase 02	12	95	107
Phase 03	93	14	107
Phase 04	48	27	75 (as at 2014/11/12)

Accordingly a total of 315 complaints had been submitted to the OLC and HRC by 12/11/2014 about violations of language rights in the government and private sector. A total of 630 complaints had therefore been submitted to both commissions.

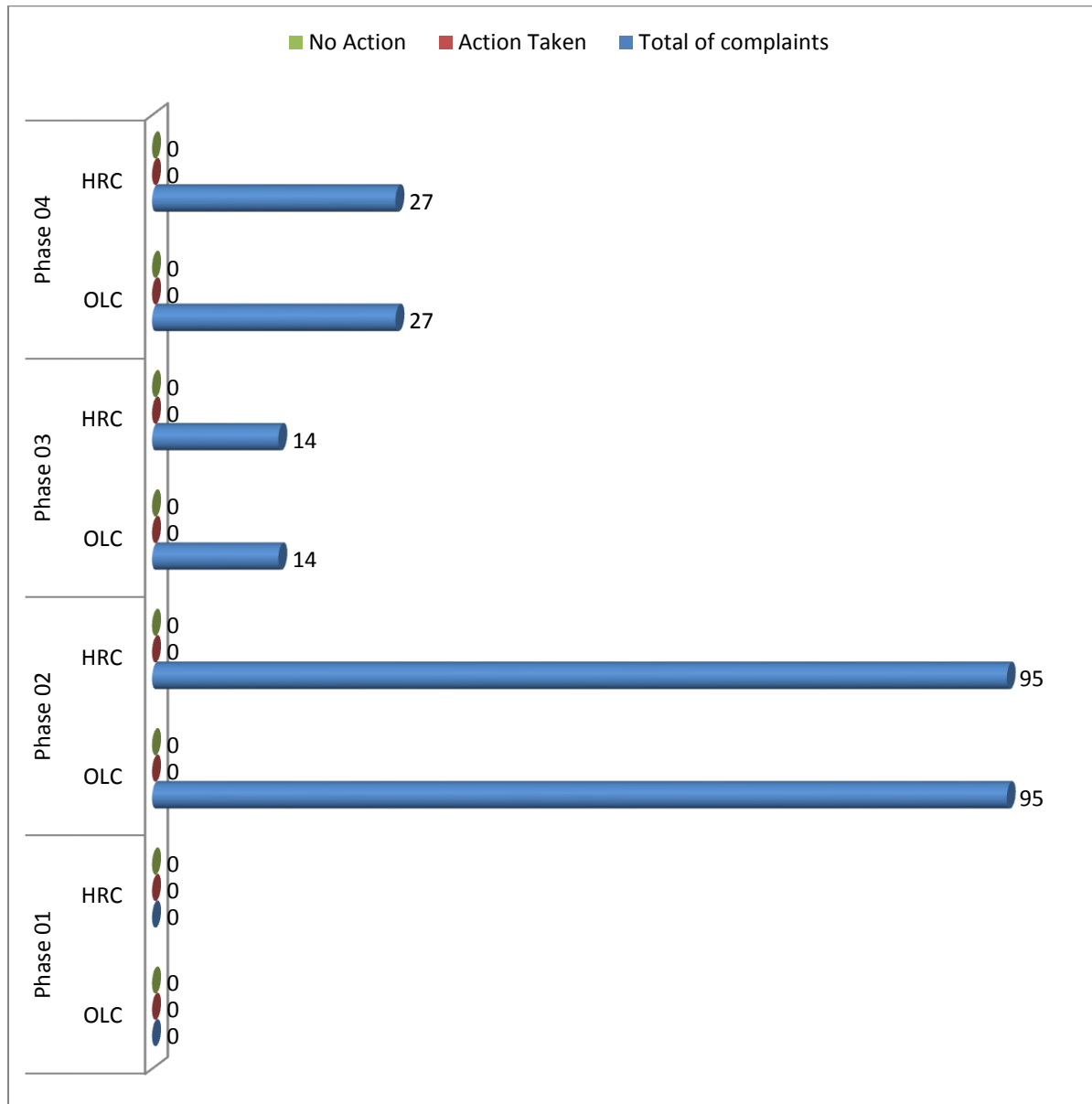
The extent of the actions taken in response to these complaints is shown in the schedule below:

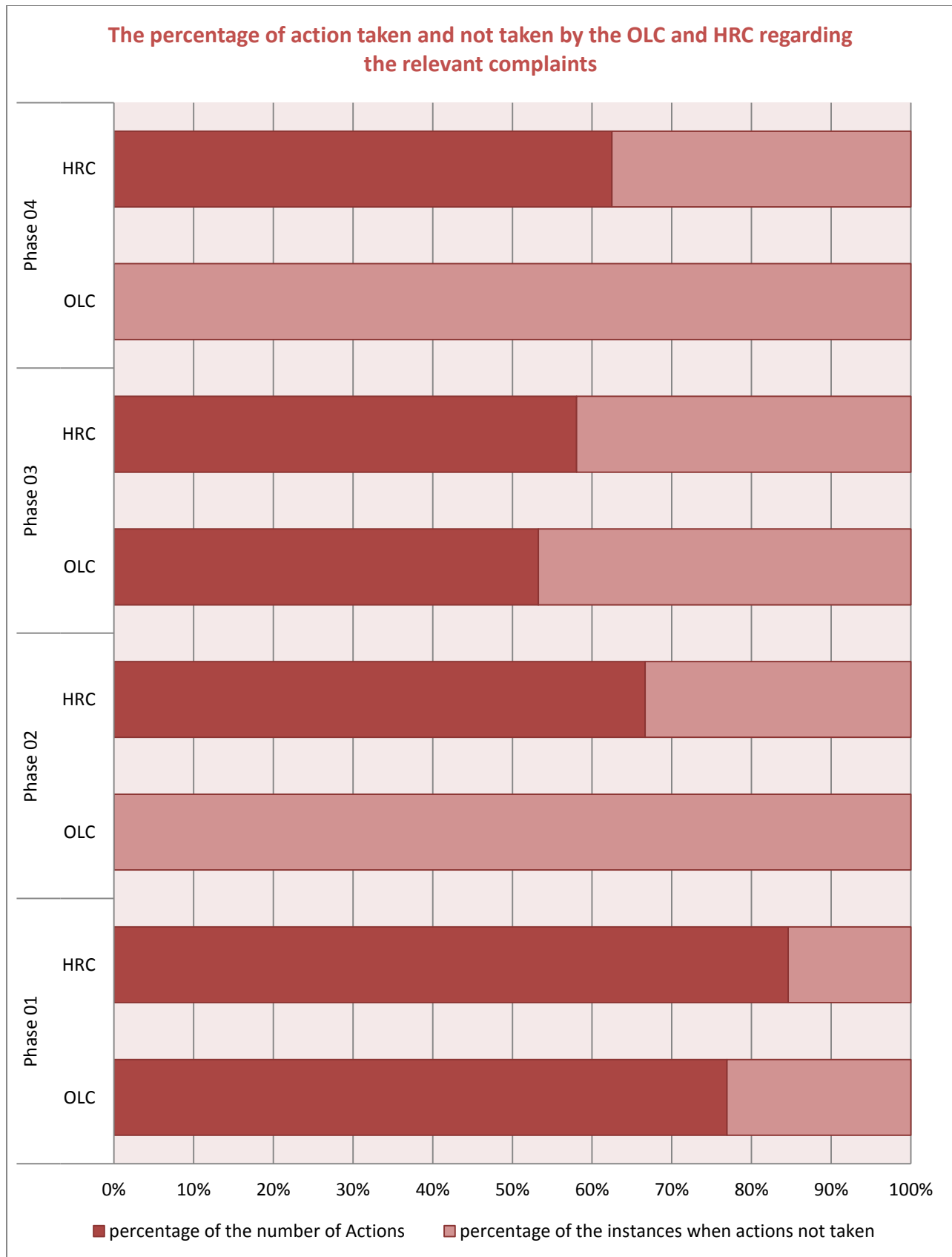
Phase	Number of Complaints									
	State Sector	Action Taken		No Action		Private Sector	Action Taken		No Action	
		OLC	HRC	OLC	HRC		OLC	HRC	OLC	HRC
Phase 01	26	20	22	06	04	-	-	Both parties were invited for a discussion on 12 th of December 2014	-	Both parties were invited for a discussion on 12 th of December 2014
Phase 02	12	-	08	12	04	95	-		95	
Phase 03	93	57	54	36	39	14	-		14	
Phase 04	48	-	30	48	18	27	-		27	
Total	179	77	114	102	65	136	-		136	

Data on the Complaints made to Official Language Commission of Sri Lanka (OLC) and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) on the violations of Language Right in the State Sector and action taken by the Official Language Commission of Sri Lanka and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL).



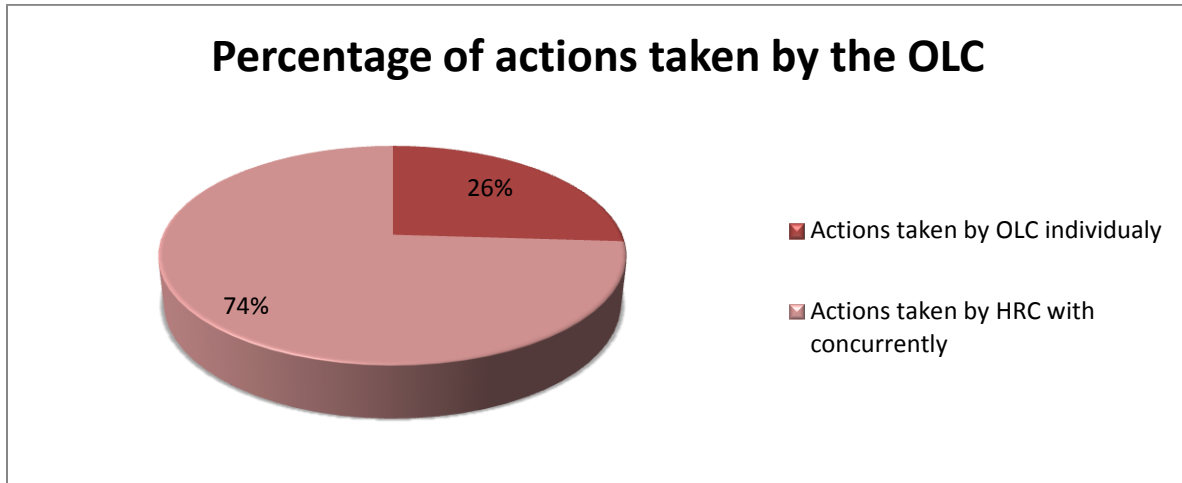
Analysis of the complaints submitted to the Consumer affairs Authority by the official Languages Commission of Sri Lanka (OLC) and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) regarding the violations of Language Rights of consumers and the actions taken by Official Language Commission of Sri Lanka and Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka regarding them.



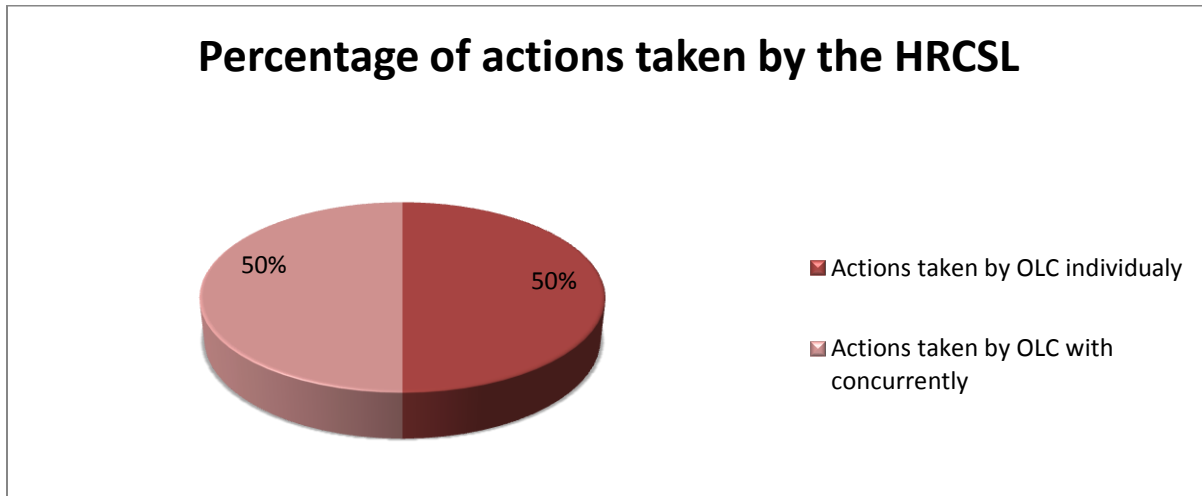


Complaints are commonly made to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and Official Languages Commission regarding the violations of language rights and data on actions taken so far regarding them by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and Official Languages Commission can be indicated separately as follows.

Regarding the total of 315 complaints submitted the Official Languages Commission has taken 77 actions and 20 of them have been taken on their own. Additionally 57 actions have been taken jointly with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.



From among the 315 complaints submitted, the HRCSL has taken 114 actions out of which 57 actions were taken by them alone. Another 57 actions have been taken jointly with the Official Language Commission.



CASE DECISIONS AND COMPLAINTS

A number of recent cases and complaints from many parts of Sri Lanka have resulted in court orders and directives in support of existing legal and constitutional provisions ensuring Language Equality. Some of the many legal interventions arising during the course of the Project Promoting Language Rights by CPA include those on courses at the University Grants Commission being only available in Sinhala, Tamil text disappearing on currency notes and consumer packaging being only in English, among others.

During the period from 2011 to date, more than 300 cases relating to language were submitted before the Official Languages Commission (OLC) and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) as well as the Supreme Court, ranging from issues such as the lack of Tamil language in the destination boards of private buses, language on currency notes, availability of courses in both languages in state universities, changing name boards in schools, information on government websites being made available in all languages and ensuring that hospitals have translators and bilingual documentation among others.

One main case submitted was on the subject of **bus destination boards** and this was successful in the sense that Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Official Languages Commission both issued directives that bilingual destination boards should be in place in all public transport.

Street signs in a number of local authorities were discovered to be in one language only and therefore moves were made to regularise this matter in line with Official Language Policy which makes it mandatory for all public signage to be in both the official languages. Submissions thus called on Local Authorities to ensure that all place signboards should be in both languages, to which the respondents promised to comply. Although such commitments have been obtained in writing the practicality is that in some cases action has not been carried out.

The Consumer Affairs Authority has been petitioned on the subject of many consumer items from batteries to pressure cookers, which do not contain translated information in the public interest, however there is no real way of holding them accountable so this has been futile overall.

Another case of particular relevance to daily life is the matter of the lack of **translations on pharmaceuticals** clarifying dosage, side effects, contraindications and other very critical information on drugs and cosmetic products. The lack of this important information in a language one can understand has the potential to be almost life threatening as can be understood in cases of medicinal drugs and even some more dangerous cosmetic items such as hair dye or harsher chemical preparations. Out of Court negotiations, backed by HRCSL directive, with the Cosmetic Devices and Drugs Authority proved nevertheless to be very protracted and difficult but a final agreement was reached that translations would gradually be made available to consumers.

Another option that was explored was that of people from language societies (local level citizen groups who activate towards language equality) making individual submissions to the office of the chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but this was found to be ineffective to date due to a lack of response to any such submissions. Letters were also sent to the Parliamentary Select Committee and replies were received but nothing beyond this. Some of the more successful complaints were those brought before the HRC SL which has the authority to summon the respondent and complainant together, which helps in reaching a quicker settlement. The OLC on the other hand only advises the respondent.

Perhaps one of the most important cases supported by the CPA was to request that the **National Identity Card** be issued bilingually, and this was filed by a young student from Ananda College, Colombo who petitioned that identity cards issued only in Sinhala cause problems when one is employed in the North or East and citing arbitrary treatment and a denial of freedom of movement. The petitioner asked that the Department of Registration of Persons be ordered to issue the Identity cards in Sinhala and Tamil.

This case was successful and on 21st October 2013, the Supreme Court issued an order to the Department of Registration of Persons to issue all National Identity Cards in both languages, from the 1st of January 2014.

It has to be mentioned that within the justice system itself language rights are often overlooked and signboards and documentation in Police Stations and the Supreme Court itself are mostly in Sinhala and English or English alone.

THE REPORT OF THE AUDIT OF LANGUAGE EQUALITY IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

A survey report by Centre for Policy Alternatives during implementation of its 'Promotion of Language Rights of Minorities' - Phase (iv) – Project on the implementation of the bilingual policy island wide, by Sri Lanka Transport Board(SLTB) buses, privately owned public transport vehicles and Railway announcements

Introduction

In the current fourth phase of the programme 'Promotion of Language Rights of Minorities' CPA works with substantial dedication towards the cause of proper implementation of bilingual policy through heightening awareness within governmental institutions on instances of Language Rights violated and thereby protecting the Language Right of citizens. Centre for Policy Alternatives from time to time has submitted many complaints to the Official Languages Commission of Sri Lanka and the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka regarding the violations of Language Rights of the citizens.

Complaints have been made to the Sri Lanka Official Languages Commission and to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission under complaint numbers OLC/C/2012/W/1/4 and HRC/281/12, HRC/281/12 dated 01/09/2012 with regard to the fact that name boards had not been displayed in in the three languages in S.L.T.B. buses and Privately Owned Public Transport vehicles. At the same time complaints were made to the Sri Lanka Official Languages Commission and to the Human Rights Commission under complaint numbers OLC/C/188 and HrC/3463, 3464, 3465, 3466/11 with regard to the fact that announcements in main railway stations islandwide had not been made in all three languages. A solution was given to the aforesaid complaints and the survey has been conducted to observe whether language policy is being implemented correctly.

Methodology of the Survey

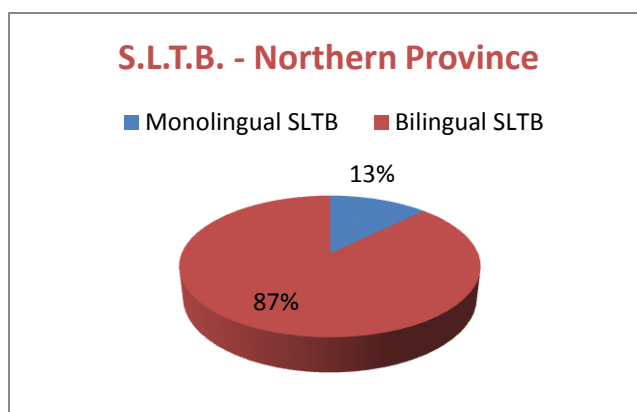
This survey covered all the provinces and districts in the island and was launched on 30.07.2014. The Survey was conducted with regard to S.L.T.B. buses and private owned public transport vehicles. The latter vehicles were divided into categories as Intra Provincial Buses and Inter Provincial Buses. At the same time relevant observations were carried out in 32 railway stations on 11.07.2014 in order that all provinces in the island were covered.

The information of the this survey is provided in detail under each sub topic given below.

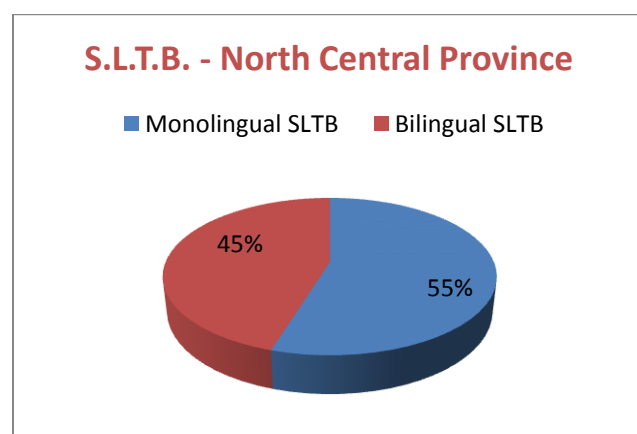
Implementation of the bilingual policy in S.L.T.B. buses throughout the island.

Data Analysis

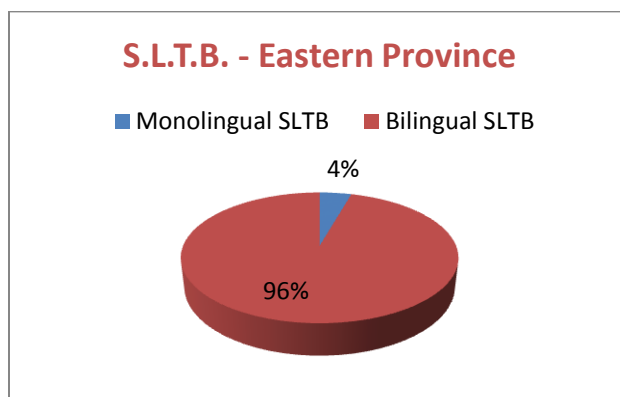
Northern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual (Tamil)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
419	366	53	87%	13%



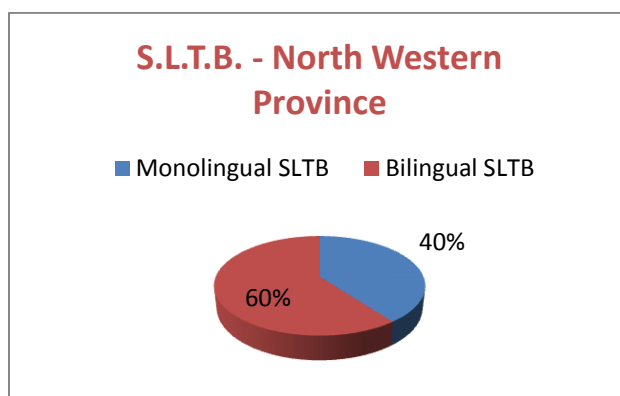
North Central Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
84	38	46	45%	55%



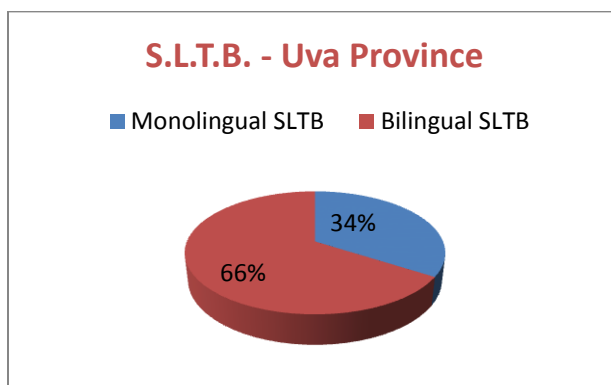
Eastern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Tamil)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
181	173	08	96%	4%



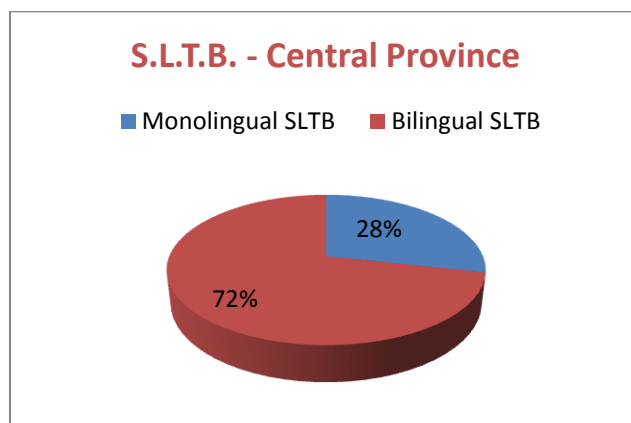
North Western Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual (Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
176	106	70	60%	40%



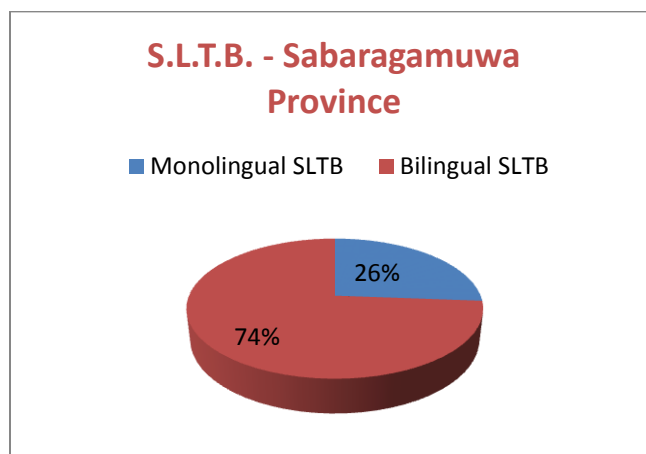
Uva Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
317	209	108	66%	34%



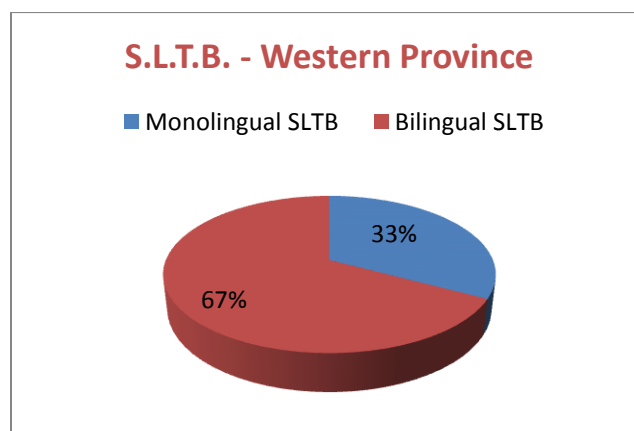
Central Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
489	350	139	72%	28%



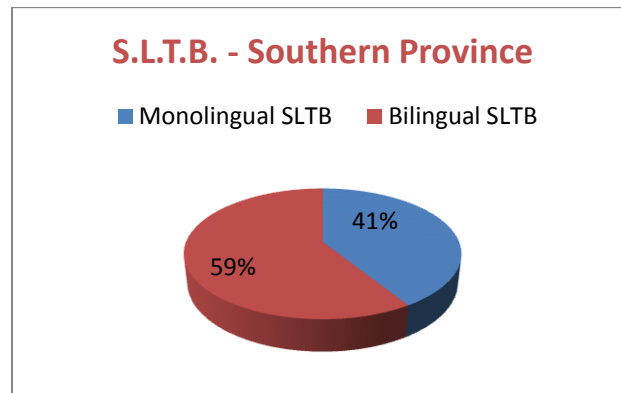
Sabaragamuwa Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
252	186	66	74%	26%



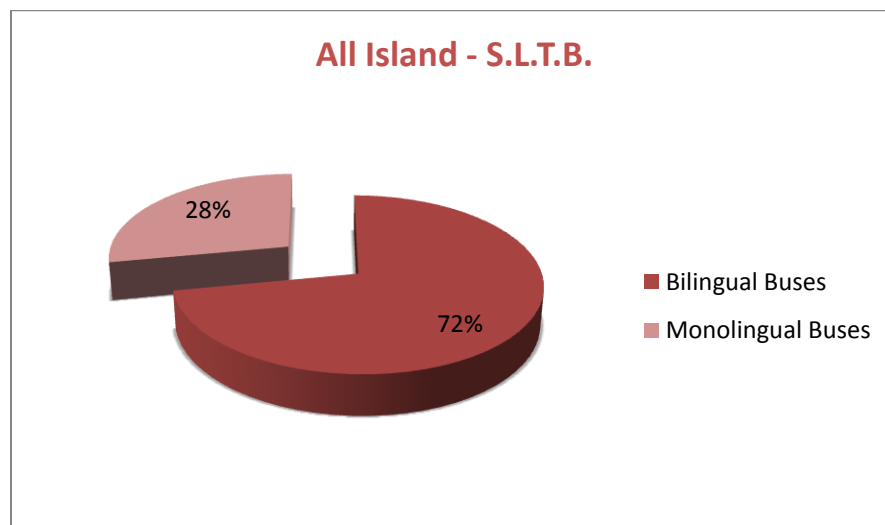
Western Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
305	205	100	67%	33%

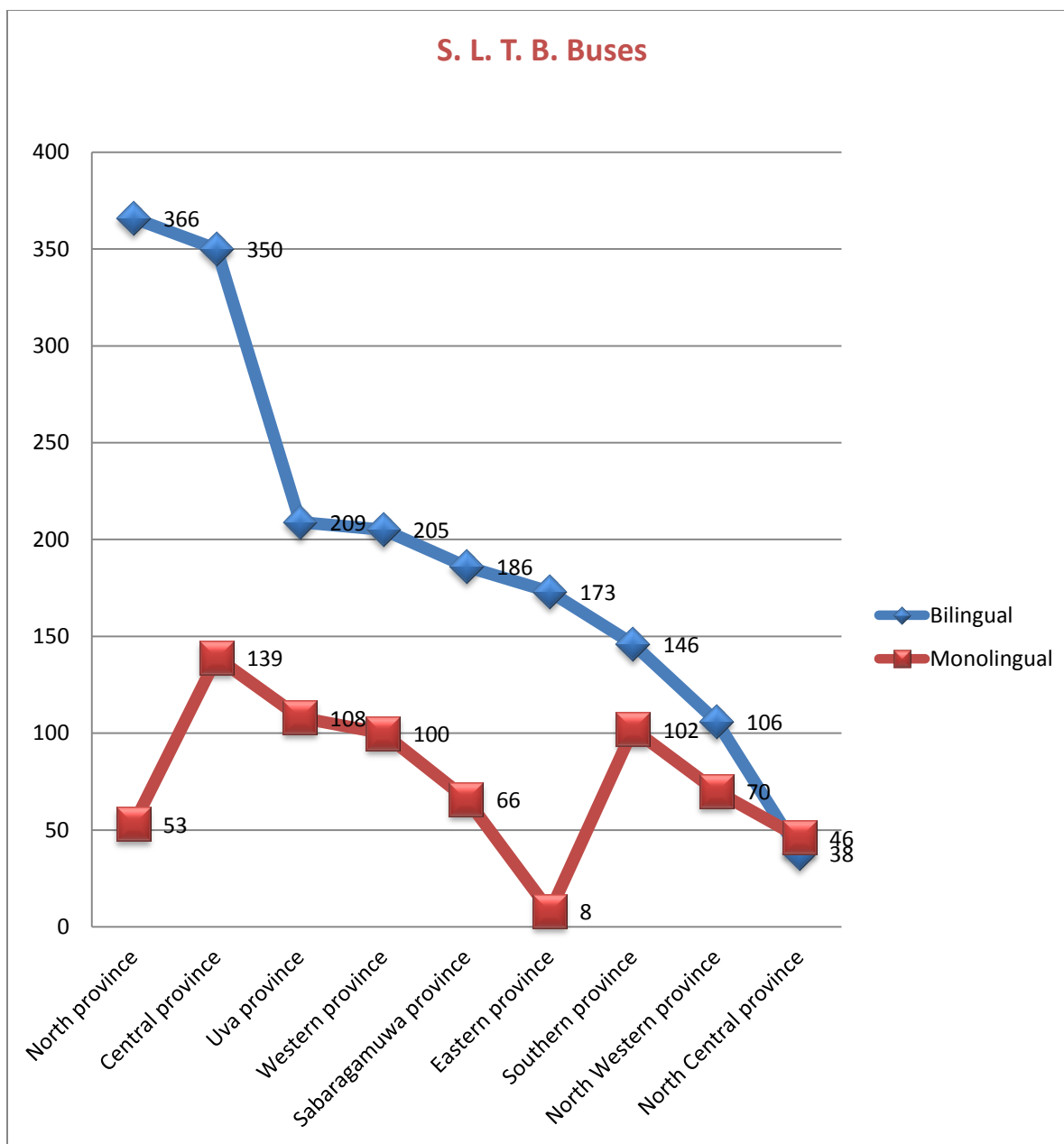


Southern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
248	146	102	59%	41%



As a whole, the total number of S.L.T.B. buses that were subject to the survey in all the nine provinces was 2471. Out of them 1799 buses were identified to having bilingual name boards whereas 692 buses had only monolingual name boards. This is shown below indicated as a percentage.





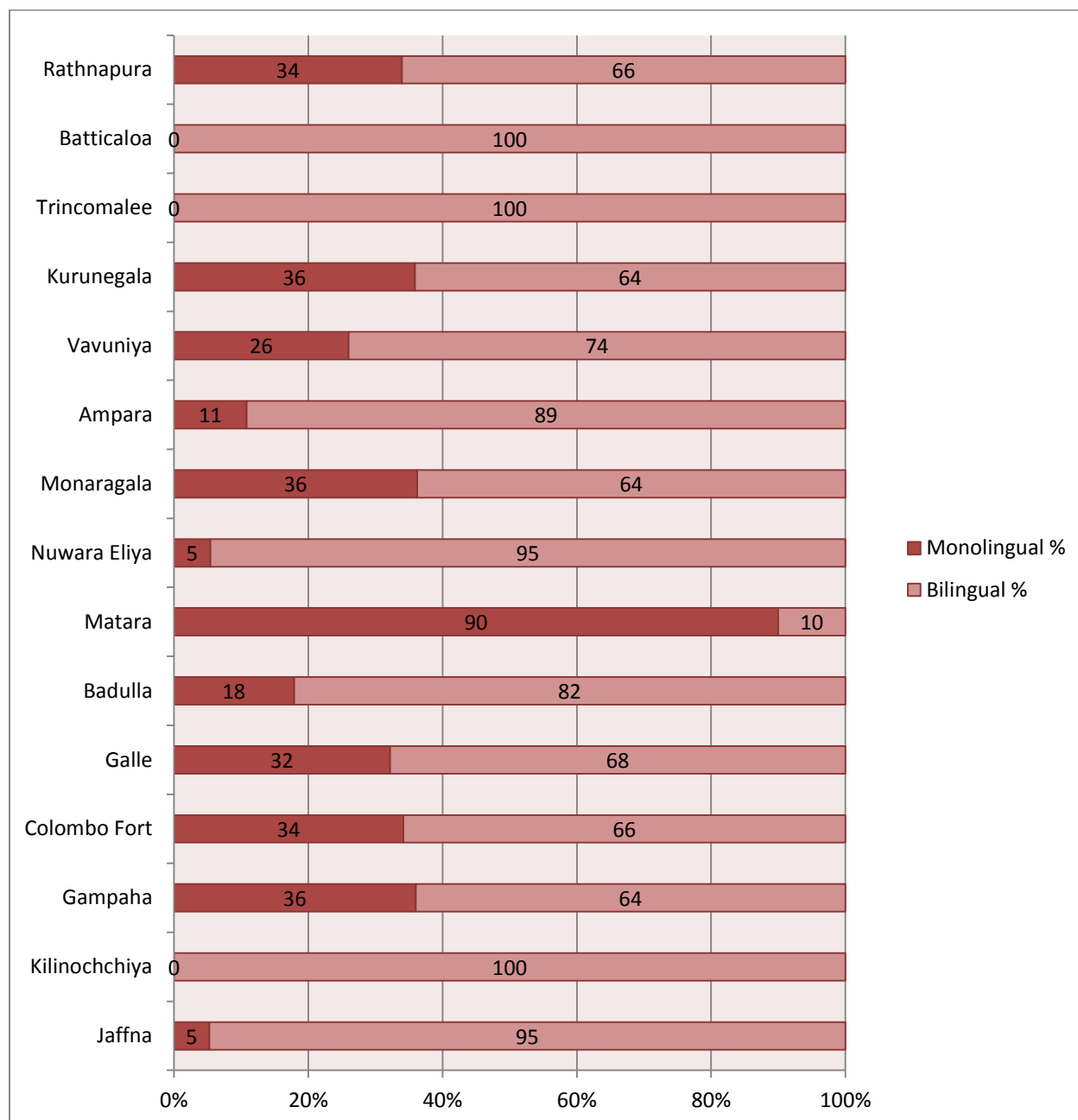
With regard to the implementation of bilingual policy in S.L.T.B. buses by each province, it is found that this policy has been implemented more than 90% in the Eastern province, 70% in Northern, Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces while more than 50% implementation was found in the North Western, Uva, Southern and Western provinces. The North Central province indicated a minimum percentage of 45% in the implementation of bilingual policy.

Data Analysis in regard to S.L.T.B. main bus – stations.

It was surveyed in 15 selected bus – stations in the island whether the bilingual policy was implemented. The following data was received.

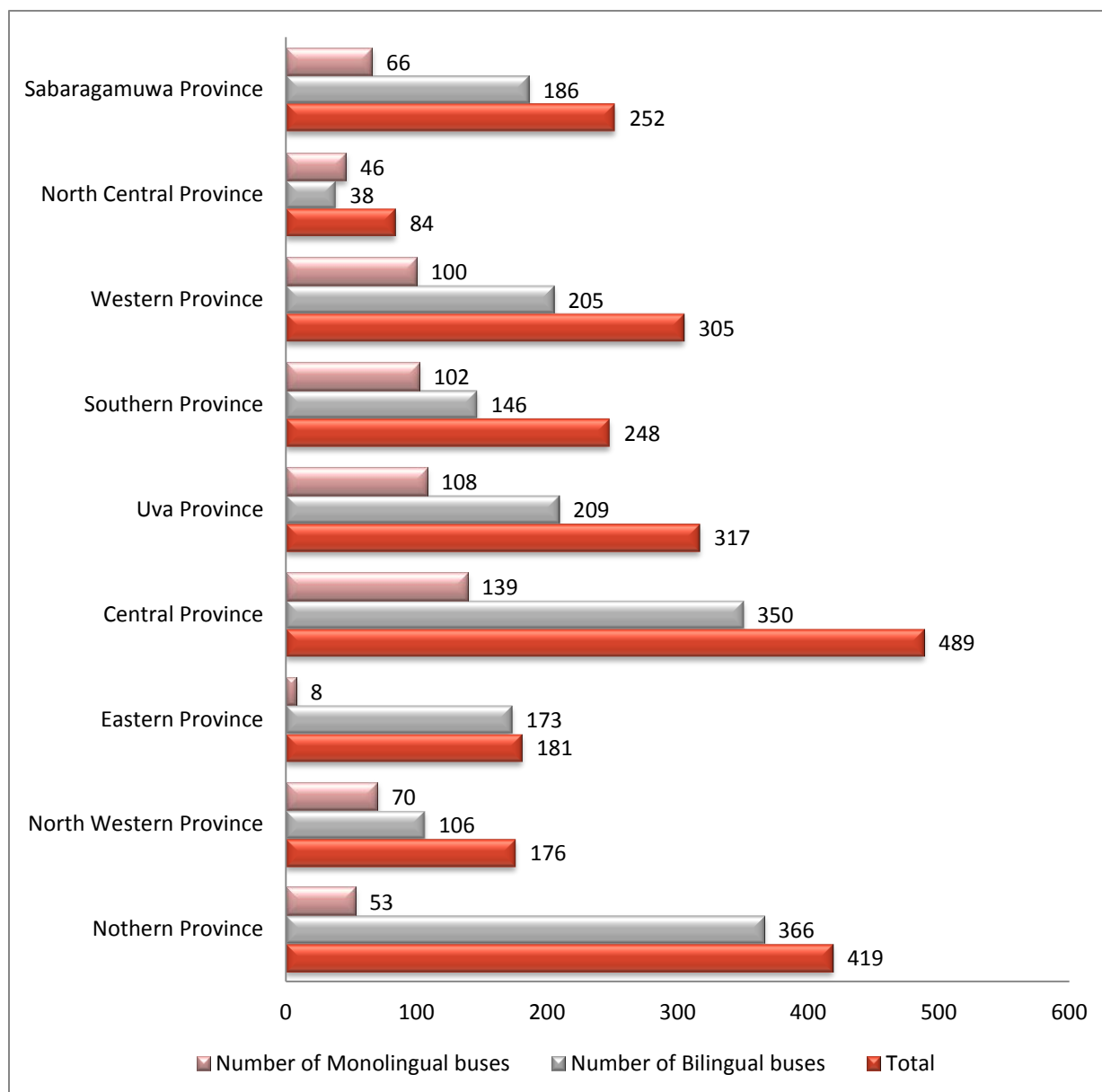
Main bus station	Total number of buses subject to the survey	Number of buses with bi lingual name boards	Number of buses with Monolingual Name boards
Ratnapura	106	70	36
Batticaloa	30	30	00
Trincomalee	37	37	00
Kurunegala	131	84	47
Vavuniya	200	148	52
Ampara	74	66	08
Monaragala	69	44	25
Nuwara Eliya	37	35	02
Matara	40	04	36
Badulla	95	78	17
Galle	59	40	19
Colombo Fort	202	133	69
Gampaha	25	16	09
Kilinochchi	43	43	00
Jaffna	19	18	01

Main Bus stations - S.L.T.B.



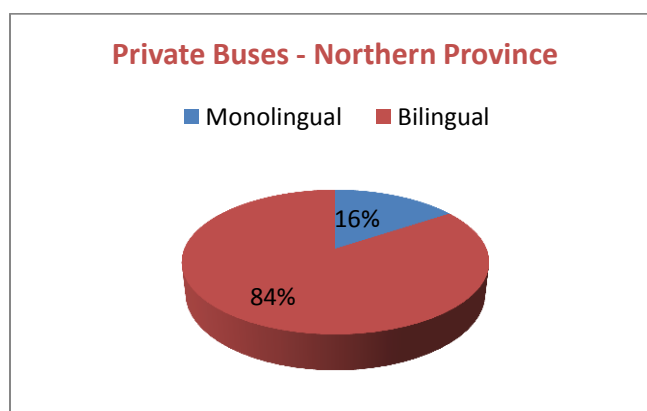
Several facts that came to light subsequent to the survey in the main bus stations of S.L.T.B. can be indicated as follows. It was evident that bilingual policy was implemented 100% in Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Kilinochchi Bus stations. In Rathnapura, Kurunegala, Vavuniya, Ampara, Moneragala, Nuwaraeliya, Badulla, Galle, Colombo Fort, Gampaha and Jaffna bus stations the bi-lingual policy was implemented in more than 50% areas while bi-lingual policy was implemented at the minimum level of 10% in the Matara bus station only.

The number of S.L.T.B. buses in the whole island in detail

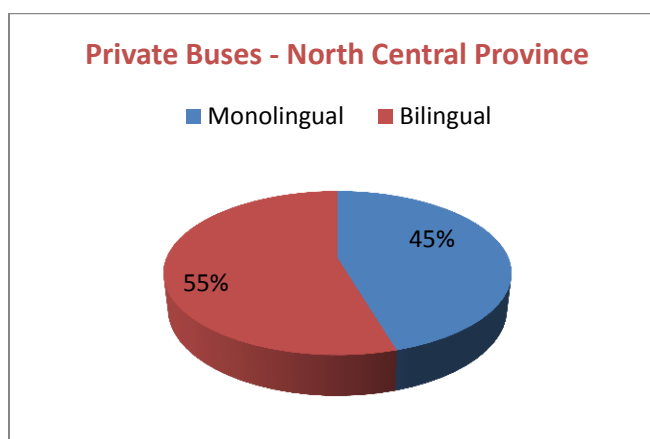


Implementation of the Bilingual policy in the private owned buses in the whole island

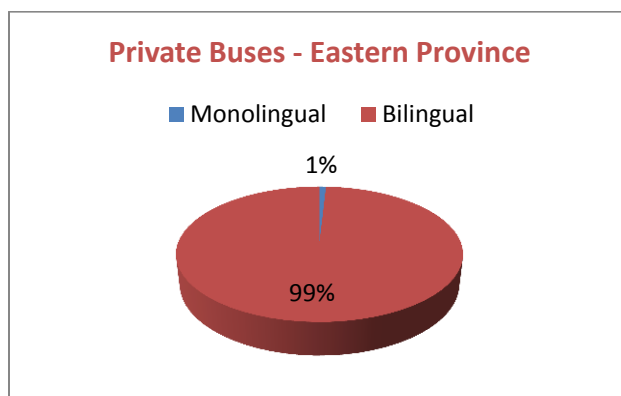
Northern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Tamil)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
626	528	98	84%	16%



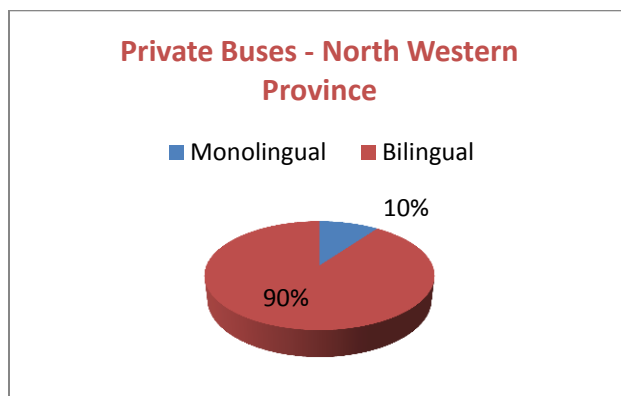
North Central Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
196	107	89	55%	45%



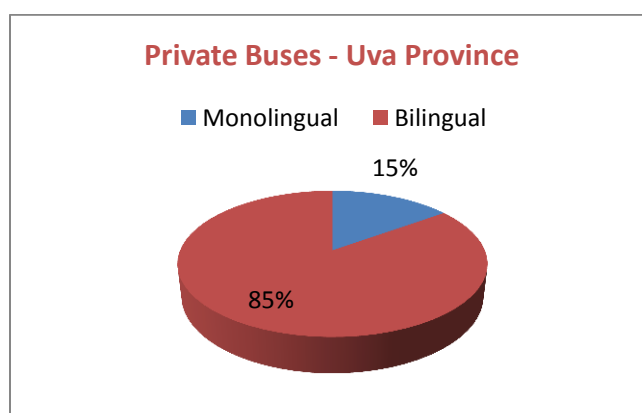
Eastern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Tamil)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
459	455	04	99%	1%



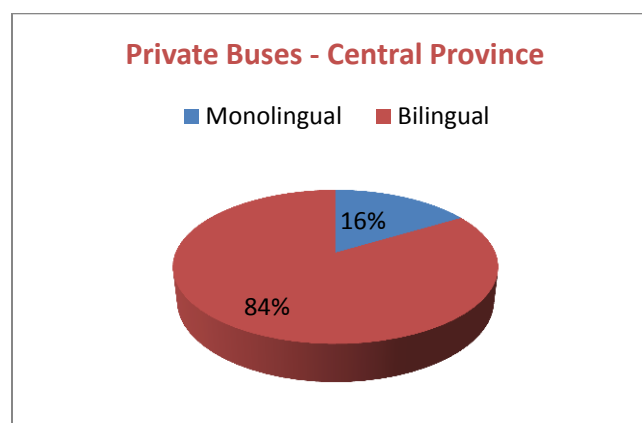
North Western Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
390	351	39	90%	10%



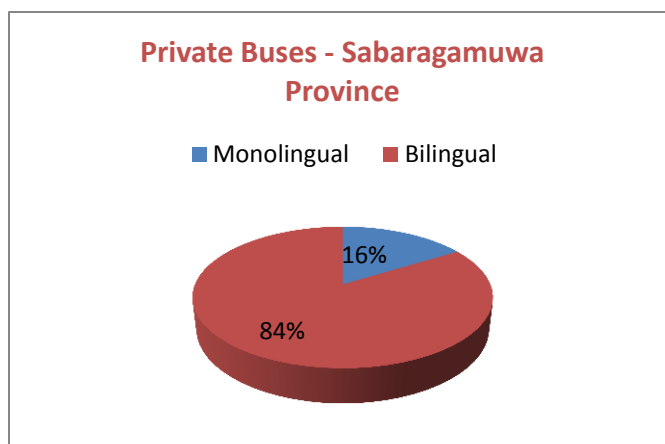
Uva Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
339	288	51	85%	15%



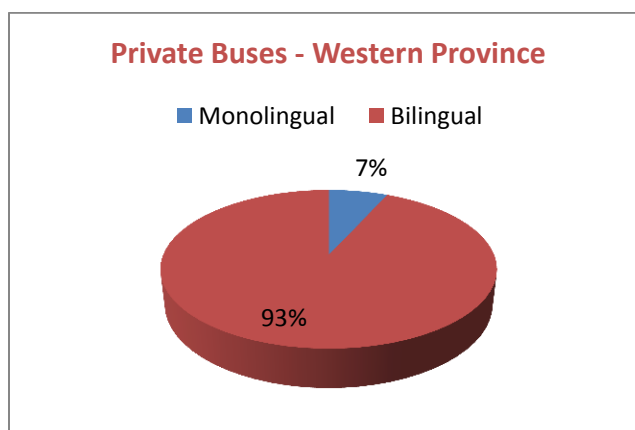
Central Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
589	492	97	84%	16%



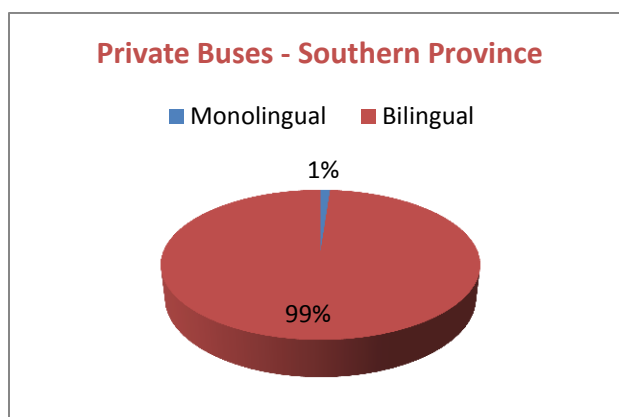
Sabaragamuwa Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
697	584	113	84%	16%



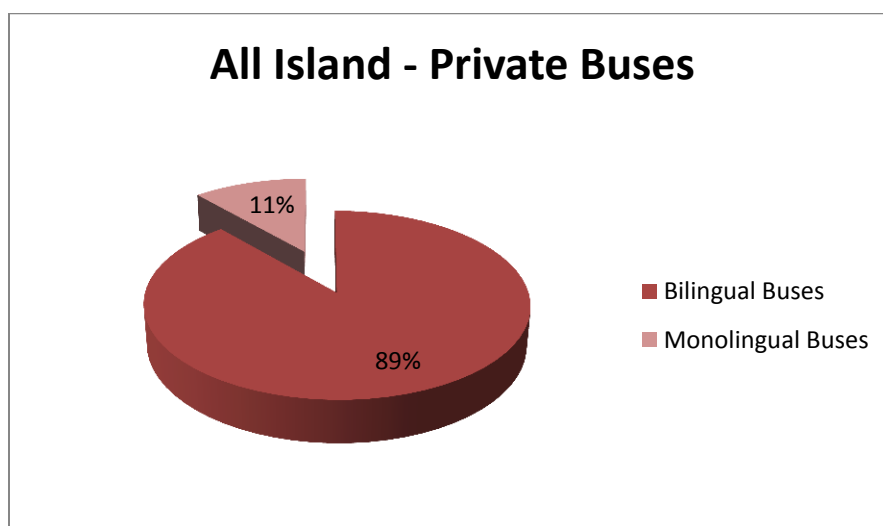
Western Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
972	906	66	93%	7%



Southern Province				
Total Number of buses	Signs available bilingually	Signs are monolingual(Sinhala)	Bilingual Percentage	Monolingual Percentage
693	685	08	99%	1%



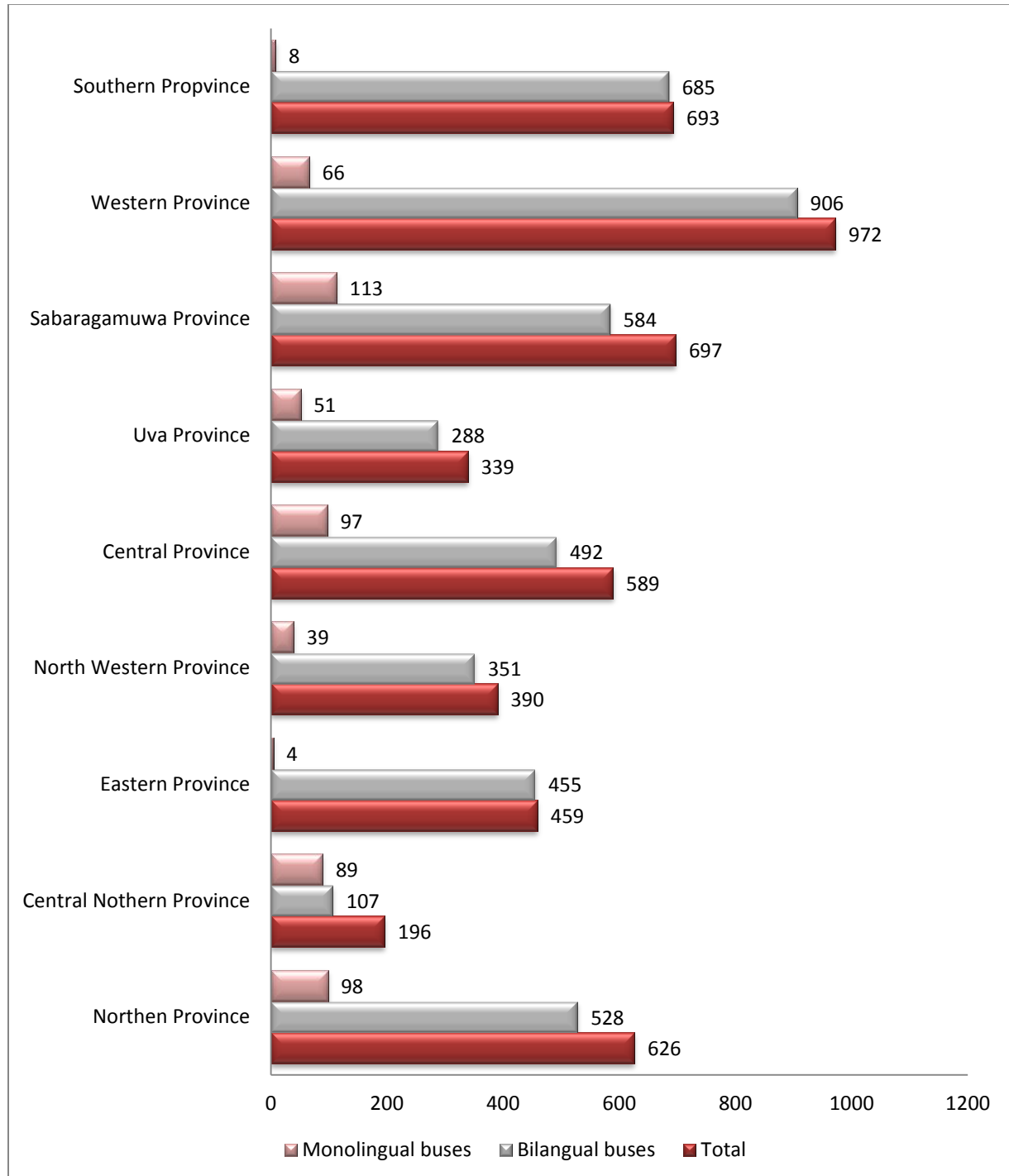
The total number of private owned buses that was subjected to the survey was 4961. Out of them bilingual policy was implemented in a majority of buses (that is 4396 buses) and bilingual policy was not implemented in a small number of buses(totaling 565 buses). This situation can be indicated percentage wise as follows



When analysing the manner in which the bilingual policy is implemented in each province we can see a constructive tendency in implementing the bilingual policy in all provinces in the country. This policy is implemented at a percentage of 55% in the North Central Province whereas it is more than 80% in all other provinces in the country.

The number of private owned buses in the whole island in detail

Implementation of Bilingual Policy among Private buses



Implementation of Bilingual policy in private owned buses (Intra province)

Name of the Province	The total number of Buses that was subjected to the survey	The number of buses with Monolingual Name Boards (Sinhala or Tamil)	The number of buses with Bi language Name boards
North	593	95 (Tamil)	498
Central North	146	70 (Sinhala)	76
Eastern	274	02 (Tamil)	272
North Western	302	33 (Sinhala)	269
Central	483	93 (Sinhala)	390
Uva	339	51 (Sinhala)	288
Sabaragamuwa	565	113 (Sinhala)	452
Western	627	58 (Sinhala)	569
South	571	08 (Sinhala)	563

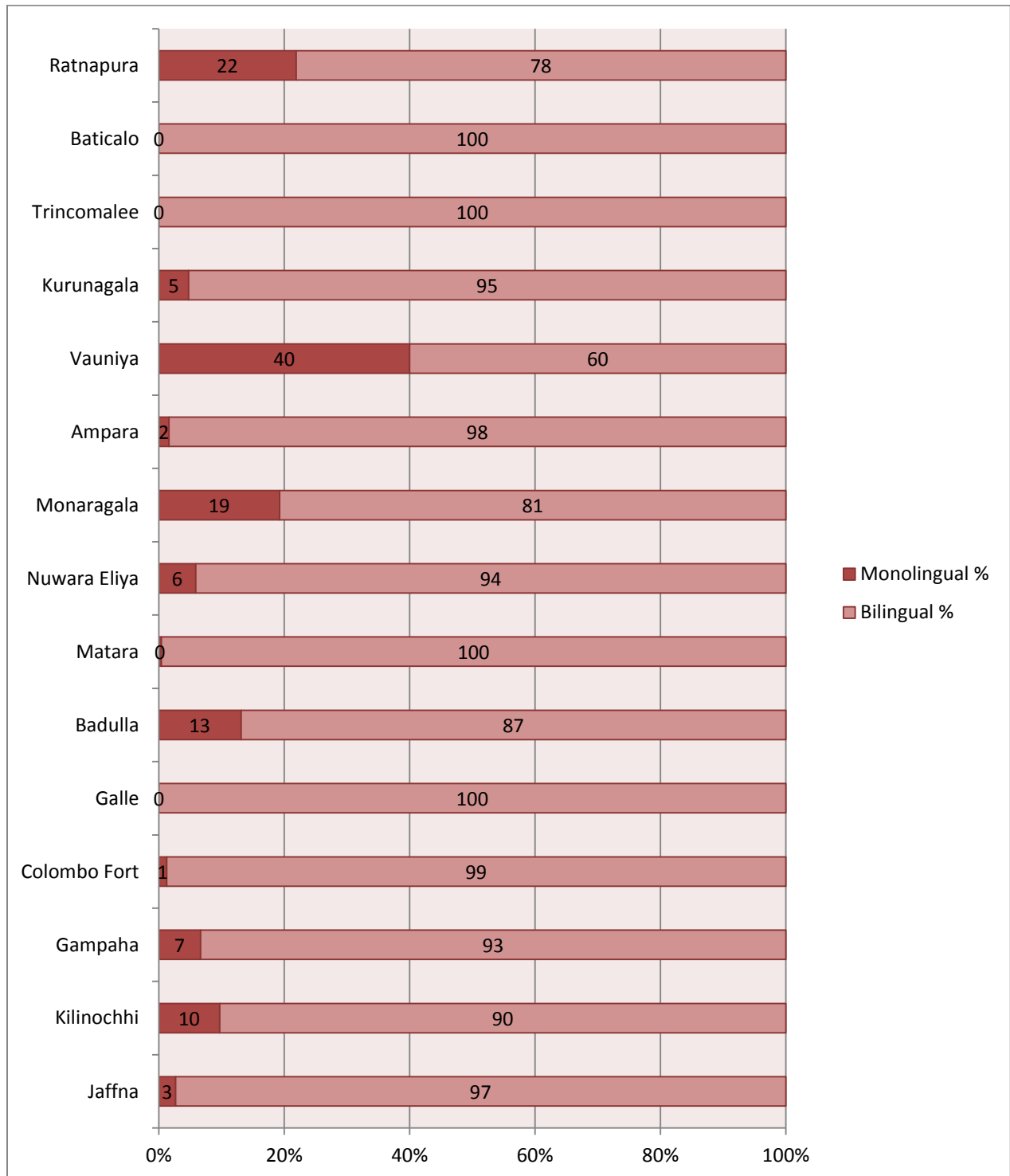
Implementation of Bilingual policy in private owned buses (Inter province)

Name of the Province	The total number of Buses subjected to the survey	The number of buses with bilingual Name boards	The number of buses with monolingual Name Boards (Sinhala or Tamil)
North	33	30	03 (Sinhala)
Central North	50	31	19(Sinhala)
Eastern	185	183	02 (Sinhala)
North Western	88	82	06 (Sinhala)
Central	106	102	04 (Sinhala)
Uva	132	132	00 (Sinhala)
Sabaragamuwa	345	337	08 (Sinhala)
Western	122	122	00 (Sinhala)
South	33	30	03 (Sinhala)

Main Bus Stations - Private

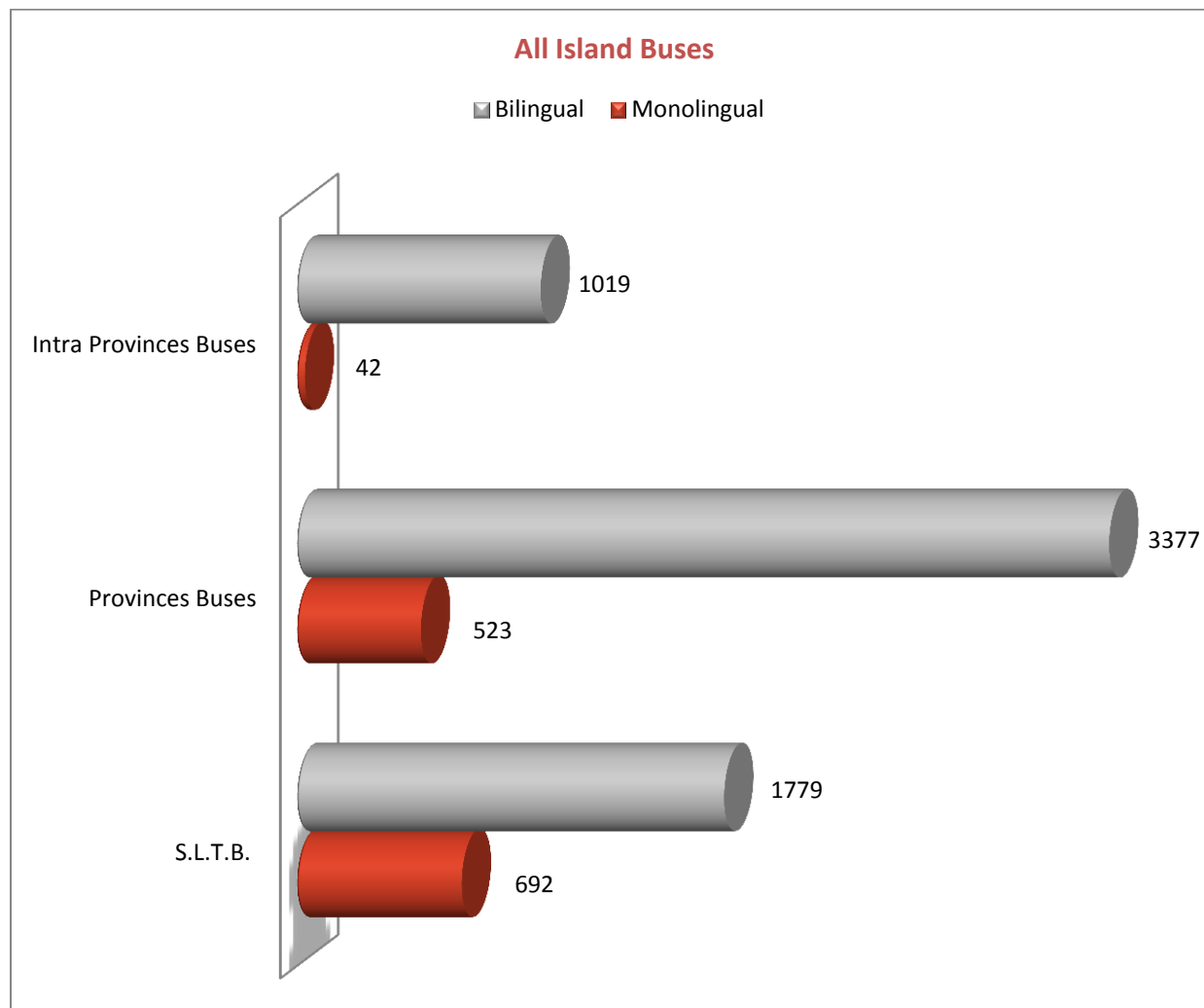
Main bus station	Total number of buses subject to the survey	Number of buses with bilingual name boards	Number of buses with Monolingual Name boards
Ratnapura	420	328	92
Batticaloa	27	27	00
Trincomalee	14	14	00
Kurunegala	316	301	15
Vavuniya	190	114	76
Ampara	123	121	02
Monaragala	109	88	21
Nuwara Eliya	68	64	04
Matara	242	241	01
Badulla	122	106	16
Galle	303	303	00
Colombo Fort	318	314	04
Gampaha	165	154	11
Kilinochchi	103	93	10
Jaffna	113	110	03

Main Bus Stations - Private



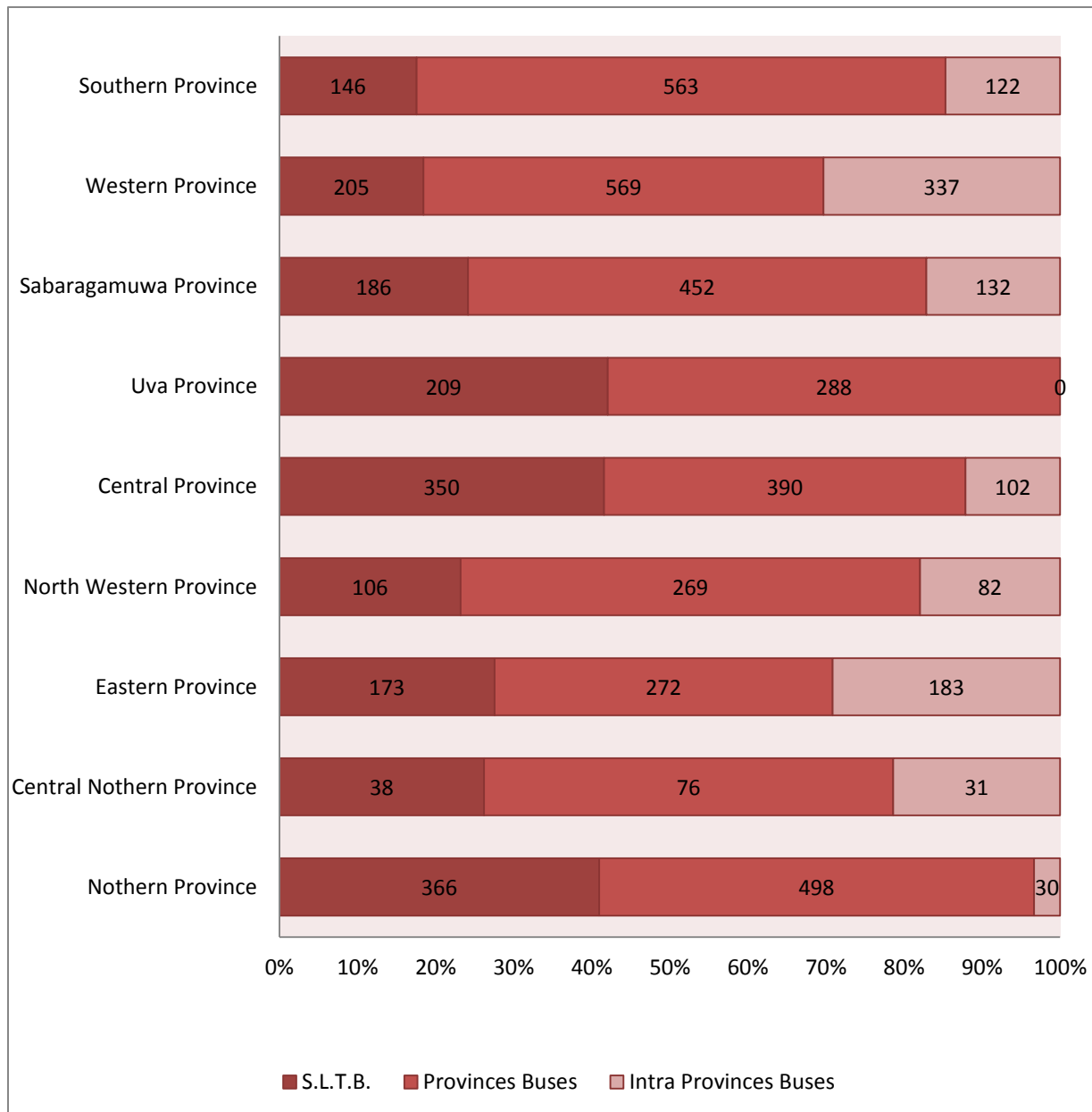
In the survey conducted at the main bus stations (private), the following observations were made. As a whole, bilingual policy had been implemented in a constructive manner in all private bus-stations that were subjected to the survey. In the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Galle bus stations bilingual policy had been implemented 100% while it had been implemented at a percentage of 80% in Kurunegala, Ampara, Moneragala, Nuwara Eliya, Matara, Badulla, Colombo Fort, Gampaha, Kilincochi, and Jaffna bus stations. In Vavuniya and Ratnapura bus stations bilingual policy had been implemented at a percentage of over 60%.

Implementation of the bilingual policy in all S.L.T.B. and private owned buses in Sri Lanka can be indicated in a graph as follows.



It was identified that the implementation of the bilingual policy in all the buses in the country was at a constructive percentage of 83% and the bilingual policy was not implemented in a small number of buses, which was 17%

Province wise implementation of the bilingual policy in all buses in the island

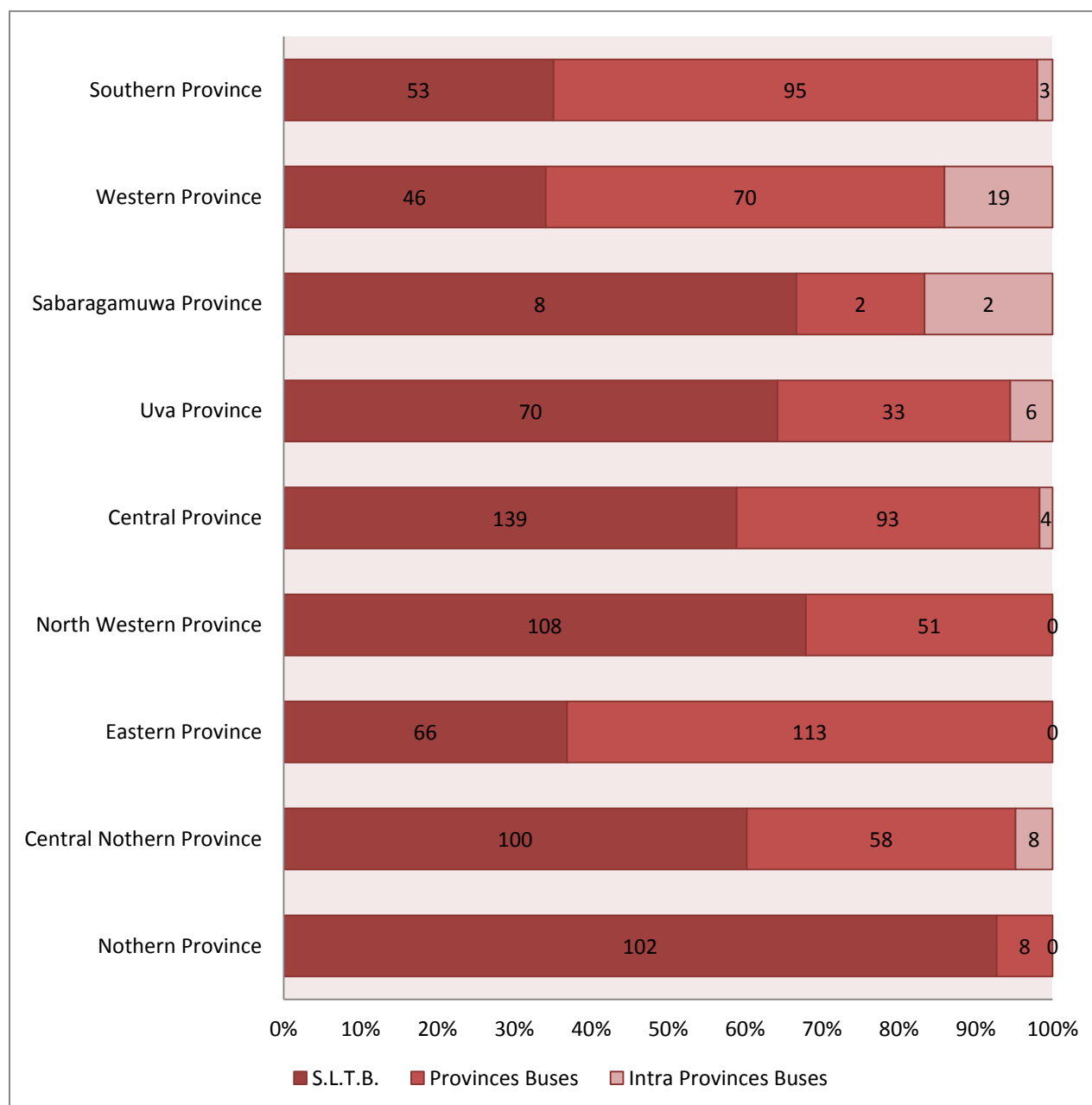


S.L.T.B. - 1779 (29%)

Within Province - 3377 (57%)

Inter Provincial Private- 1019 (16%)

Non implementation of Bilingual policy in all private owned buses in the island - provincial level



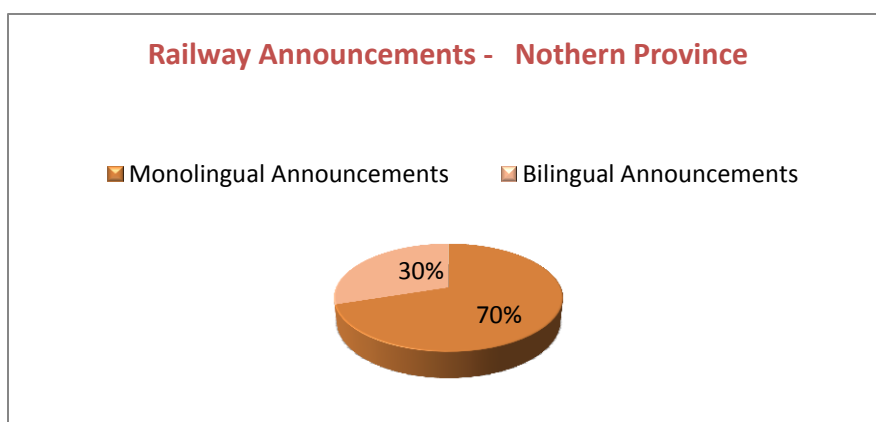
S.L.T.B. - 692 (55%)

Provincial Buses (private owned) - 523 (42%)

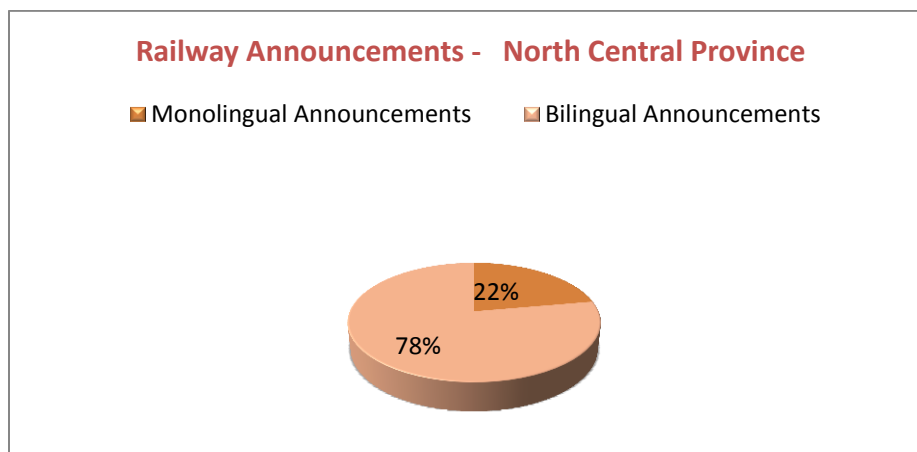
Inter Provincial Buses (private owned) - 42 (3%)

Implementation of bilingual policy in railway announcements in all railway stations

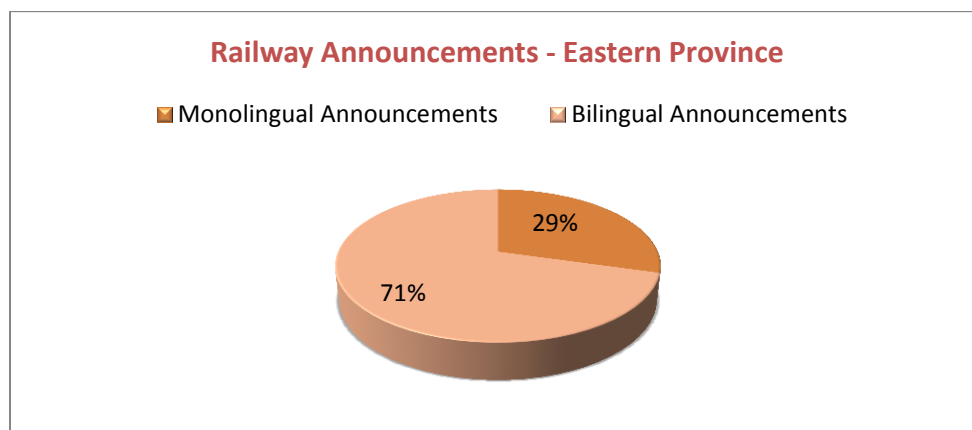
Northern Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcements (Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
01	03	07	30%	70%



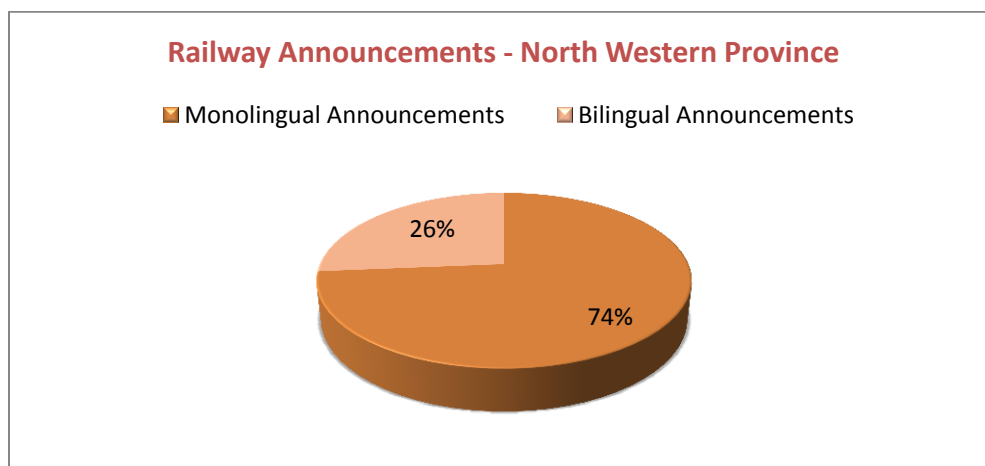
North Central Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcements (Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
05	14	04	78%	22%



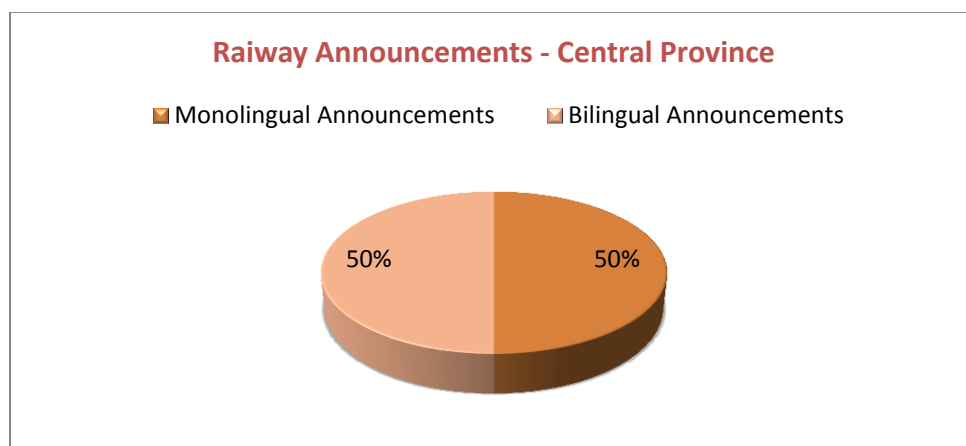
Eastern Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
04	12	05	71%	29%



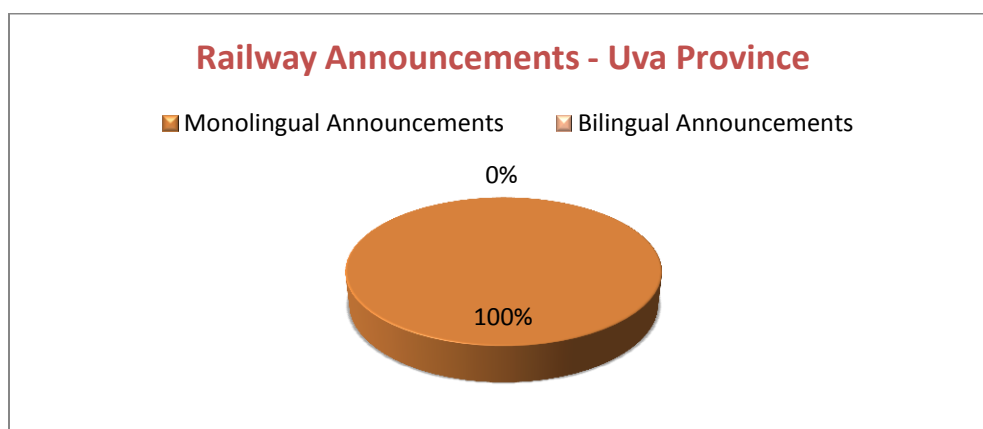
North Western Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
04	15	42	26%	74%



Central Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
03	11	11	50%	50%



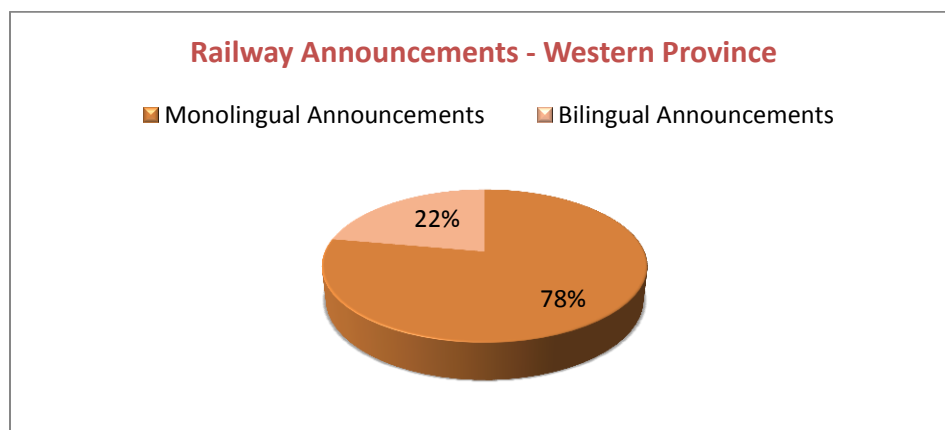
Uva Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
01	00	03	0%	100%



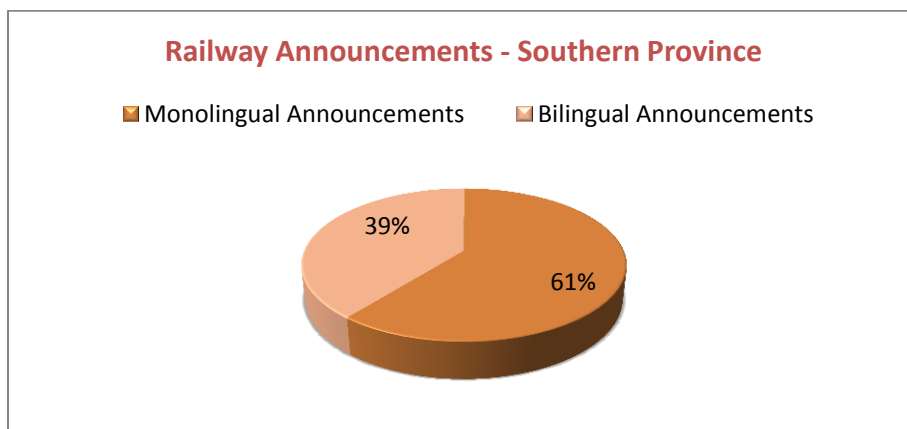
Sabaragamuwa Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
01	02	19	10%	90%



Western Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcement s(Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
09	138	483	22%	78%

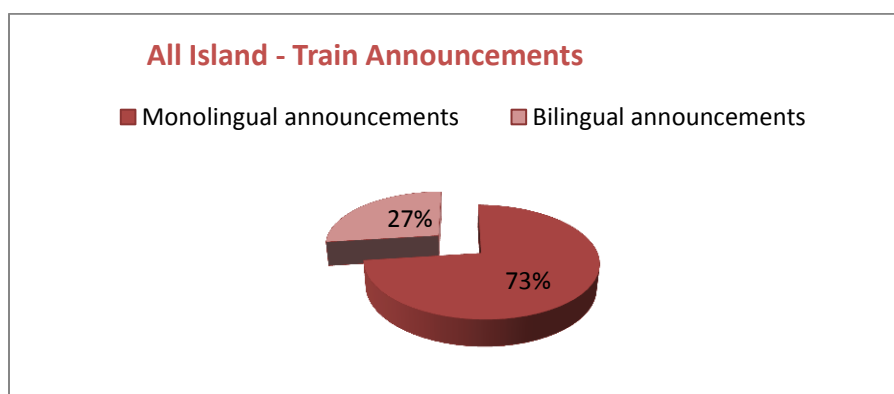


Southern Province				
Number of Railway Stations	Bilingual Announcements	Monolingual announcements (Sinhala)	Bilingual percentage	Monolingual percentage
04	40	62	39%	61%

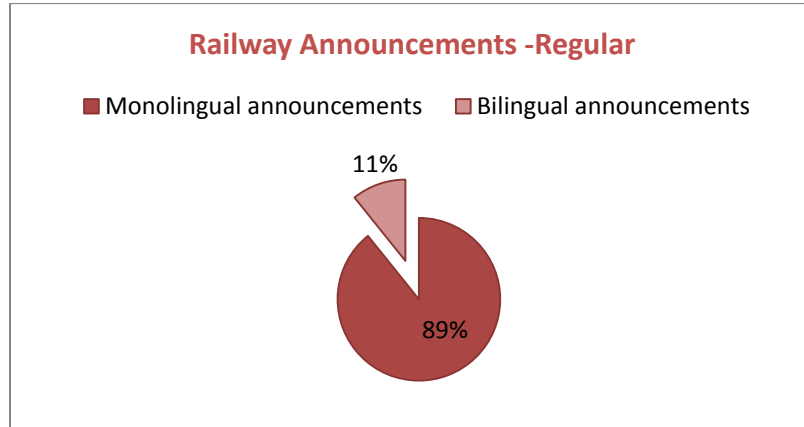


The implementation of the bilingual policy in railway announcements was observed at 32 railway stations islandwide. It was observed that 735 announcements were made in the two languages while 636 announcements were made in only one language. In the railway station that was observed in the Uva province bilingual policy was not implemented at all.

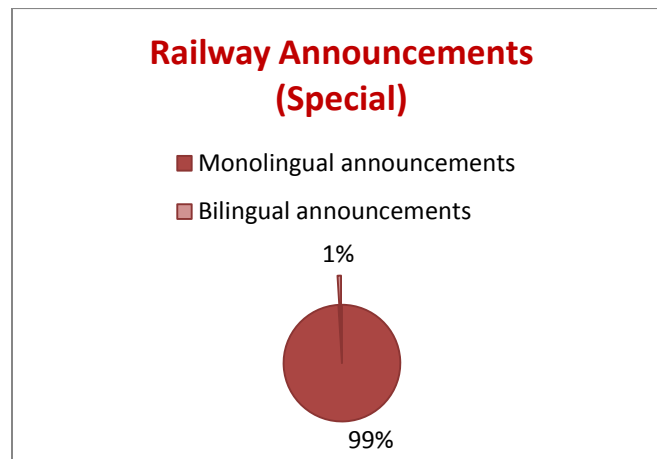
Percentage wise the aforesaid data can be indicated as 50%, 71% and 78% in respect of Central, Eastern, and Northern Provinces respectively. In other provinces the bilingual policy was implemented at a percentage less than 50% . It is a remarkable observation that this policy was not implemented in the Uva province. Accordingly, the implementation of the bilingual policy in the railway announcement in the whole country can be indicated percentage wise as follows.



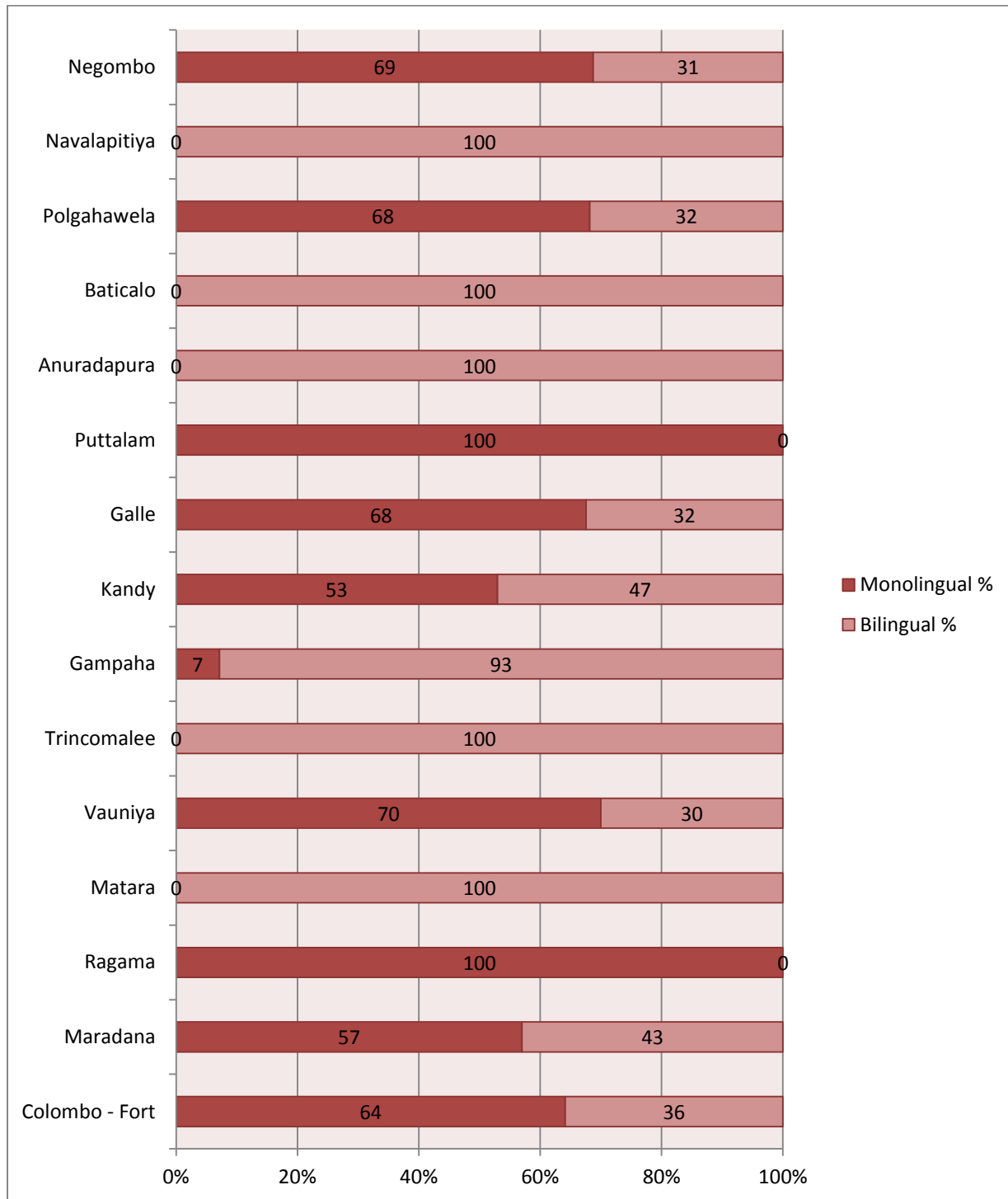
In addition to this it was evident that the general announcements made in the railway stations in the island were made in the two languages at a minimum percentage of 11% while 89% of the general announcements were made in only one language only Sinhala.



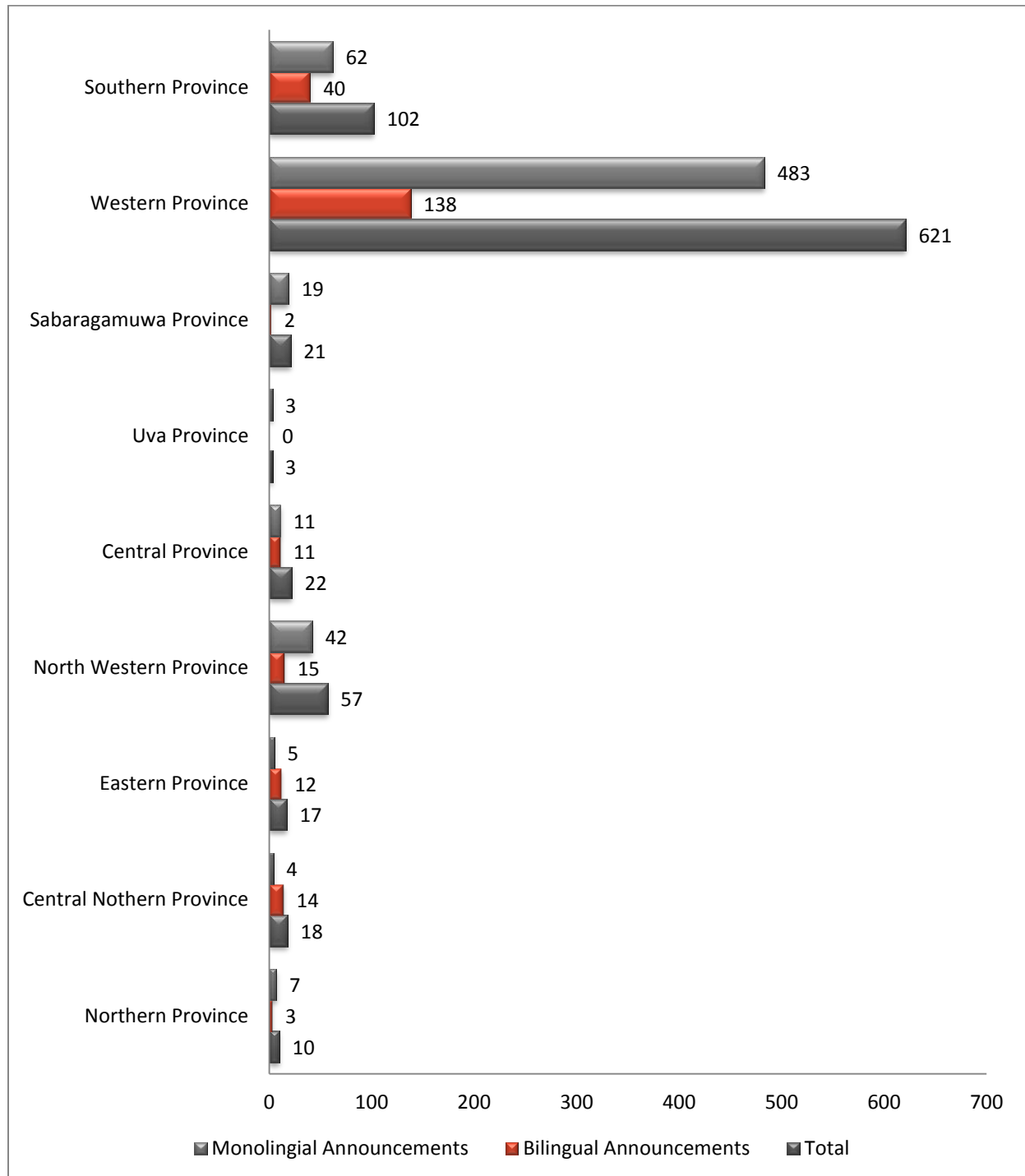
It was evident through the survey of special announcements that bilingual announcements were made at a small percentage while 89% of such announcements were made only in one language (Sinhala)



Main Railway Stations



All Island Railway Announcements in detail



PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Including the Constitutional provisions, public administration circulars and cabinet decisions etc. relating to Language Rights and Official Language Policy in the syllabus of Language in the G.C.E. (O/L) and including questions based on those areas in the Ordinary Level Examination. National Institute of Education and the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration should take speedy action towards the implementation of the above matters.
2. Including Central Government subject areas of Language and Culture in the subject areas of line ministries in the Provincial Councils and making relevant budgetary allocations for such subject areas.
3. In registering business enterprises under the local government institutions, including the relevant conditions in the business permit that would require compliance with the bilingual policy.
4. Including sections of the works of esteemed Tamil writers in the text books prepared according to the syllabuses of Sinhala medium schools and similarly including sections of such works of esteemed Sinhala writers in the text books of Tamil medium schools.
5. Initiation of programs of translating Sinhala literary works to Tamil and Tamil literary works to Sinhala by the Ministry of National Languages and Social integration. That Ministry should also annually organize a Sinhala - Tamil literary festival.
6. Implementing Language Audits in the governmental institutions at the divisional secretariat level since long term and short term solutions can be reached through reconciliatory Language Audits.
7. Establishing a Teachers' Training College for the teachers of Sinhala and Tamil languages.
8. Launching training programs for media personnel taking into consideration the broad responsibility of the media institutions in promoting Language Rights.
9. Consumer authority informing mercantile sector companies to mention information in the signboards they display in all three languages.
10. Strengthening the enforcing directives of the Official Languages Commission for ensuring enforceability of its directions.
11. Taking the necessary measures for the accomplishment of responsibilities of the Official Languages Commission at the regional level as well, since currently its role is centred in Colombo.
12. In the process of compilation of school text books excluding the sections that harm interethnic coexistence and including the sections that promote such coexistence.
13. Including Tamil short stories and poems in the advanced level Sinhala literature texts and following a similar procedure with regards to the Tamil literature texts as well.
14. Conducting the academic courses in the higher educational institutes in Tamil Language as well in cases of such courses presently conducted in Sinhala Language only.
15. Making provisions for enabling anybody interested to follow the degree course in Translation studies through an open competitive exam. Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of National Languages and Social integration should take speedy measures for the accomplishment of this task.

16. Increasing the space available in the print and electronic media for teaching Sinhala and Tamil languages.
17. Establishing a progress review mechanism in the cases submitted to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Official Languages Commission.
18. Establishing a regular and permanent institute for training Sinhala and Tamil translators.
19. Using a number relevant to the offense when issuing spot fine receipts for violation of traffic laws and each and every offence should be mentioned trilingually under a numbering system in a side of the fine receipt.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE PROJECT

Vibhasha, a bi monthly project newsletter in all three languages, targeting stakeholders in general including schools, public libraries, pirivenas, ministry personnel, civil society organizations, Language Society members and all on CPAs contact lists, was printed for the purpose of collecting and disseminating language and reconciliation related matters. More than 60,000 copies were distributed in all.

Feedback in the form of email, letters, filled questionnaires, etc was received from readers of the Vibhasha periodical on Language Issues, demonstrating increased public awareness and support of Language Equality.

The project Increased awareness and respect for language rights among target groups, via publications including the Trilingual newsletter, 5 pamphlets, 2 reader friendly guides/ translations, nearly 40 newspaper articles, and the final brief on policy recommendations on the implementation of language policy in Sri Lanka

1550 copies of a **Guideline on Official Language Policy and its related Laws** (Rajya Baasha Prathipatti Ha Eh Ha SambandaNeethiya) was printed in Sinhala and 1550 copies in Tamil. These were distributed to trainers and for Language Society leaders and language officers. Ministry officials and a number of relevant parties have made further requests for more copies. This publication better facilitated ease of audience with government officials.

Working to complement the recently set up complaints hotline of the Ministry of National languages and Social Integration, the CPA project also installed more than 45 billboards giving publicity to the **1956** hotline, and is due to launch a Trilingual Common Signage CD which will have more than a 1000 words in all three languages in printable formats, for use in all manner of private and public sector offices and commercial outlets.

Recent Bilingual Publications

- Guideline on Official Language Policy and its related Laws
- Tamil Language Rights in Sri Lanka (*by Dr Devanesnan Nesiah*)
- Language and Humanity (*by Attorney at Law S.G. Punchihewa*)
- Vibhasha Newsletter Issues 1-14
- Guidebook on the LLRC Report
- An Opinion Survey on the LLRC Report



Cultural connections

Strengthened by language

The more serious effects of the protracted ethnic conflict have always been felt by young people of diverse backgrounds. They therefore have more interest in taking steps to solve these problems. Previously they only saw each other through a veil of mistrust and there was no time and no chance for them to actually get to understand each other. This is the basis of part of a paragraph in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission report (section 9. 281) dealing with building connections among communities. It pays attention to the division suffered by people due to distances and misunderstandings and the process of building reconciliation. The paragraph encourages unity among social groups and broader programmes which will bring them together in cooperation with civil society groups ensuring that such programmes are carried out with due respect to the cultural and language sensitivities of the visiting community as well as the host community.

CPA has a tradition of organizing such cultural exchange programmes, starting with the Inter University and Inter- School student exchange programmes held in 2007 at a time when this was a completely new concept. This was most enthusiastically accepted by both Sinhala and Tamil students even during the height of the war. So the government's "From Palmyrah Grove to Coconut Grove" programmes too were carried out sometime later. In any case many of the prior experiences from the CPA went a long way towards this concept.

Accordingly in 2012, in Kantalai, Panama and Jaffna a series of exchange programmes were held bringing together Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people from all backgrounds in a successful and heartening exercise in cross cultural relationship building. From time spent at a Tamil "relations" home, Sinhala friends learnt unforgettable experiences about food, culture, traditions and most of all, humanity; it was the same for Tamil and Muslim people who stayed with their new Sinhala "relatives"

"Though we may be from different ethnicity our thoughts and feelings are the same. It is those thoughts of brotherly regard that come to the surface in this programme," said Venerable ChandrarathanaHimi from Panama, who gave his blessing to this programme.



Vilasama

ADDRESSING human rights in the Estate Sector

“What a delight for them to have a name, number and an address to their homes in a manner they can receive the respect of others changing the name of “line rooms,” given to their homes”



Nadeshan Suresh – Chairman of the Uva Shakthi Foundation

Their hard labour powers the multimillion dollar industry that is Sri Lankan tea. But the estate sector workers of Badulla district are still some of the poorest, most marginalised people in Sri Lanka. Fostered by a system that does not want to let go its hold on cheap labour, conditions in the estate sector of the Uva Province have remained almost unchanged by various development drives. Exemplifying the administrative neglect of these communities is a fact that 21st century city dwellers would be surprised to know: many plantation sector workers have never had a permanent contact address to their name.

Meet Wasanthi: EPF savings of her entire lifetime, in a cheque, were encashed by another woman of the same name, in the same estate who got hold of it, because her mail had been delivered to the wrong address. Her thoughtful countenance, while she is listening to the other sad stories her neighbors tell, is one of deep disillusionment.

Who knows what destiny would have held for a very studious young man named KanthaiahIf he had only received the letter that told him that he had in fact been selected for university admission? After studying very hard, amidst great odds, a chance of a lifetime, a way out of a life of deprivation and hardship, was missed because of a letter misdirected. He is now a teacher in a remote village in Monaragala, living a difficult life, unheard of and hopeless. Simply because one letter was lost. However he tries to help others avoid the same fate.

Many line rooms in the plantation sector are not numbered and letters are often delivered to other people with the same name. Whether a person receives a letter depends on the integrity of the *kangani*(an official who's duty is to organise distribution of these) the good will of his neighbours , often sorely lacking, and sometimes sheer chance...

The lack of National Identity cards among some workers, another problem addressed by the project, leads to a number of serious issues, eg. limited freedom of movement, vulnerability in civil and criminal cases, lack of security, complications in obtaining official documentation and finding employment etc

Safeguarding the civil rights of plantation sector workers

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) along with a local partner UvaShakthi Foundation, worked on a pilot project in Passara ,Badulla (Uva Province) aimed at bringing a modicum of dignity into the lives of this marginalized community whose human rights have been routinely denied. In the last six months this project has arranged to provide permanent addresses, for the first time ever in the plantation sector, for no less than 3000 families of estate workers. The project also organized setting up secure mail collection boxes in 20 localities, selecting road names and providing signage for 40 of the estate by-roads in the area, in an endeavor to safeguard the delivery of correspondence.

Mobile clinics were hosted to speed up the application process for more than 300 National Identity Cards, which may otherwise reach owners late or never. The latter is particularly relevant to a large number of students who were due to sit for exams shortly.

The right to safely receive one's correspondence, taken for granted in the rest of the country but fraught with difficulty in this area, can make the difference between receiving a rare university admission, a job in Colombo, a desperately needed remittance from a relative abroad...or not. In the lives of estate worker communities such rare opportunities may come only once or twice in a lifetime and be the difference between hope and a life of regrets

We represent the fourth generation of the community that was brought from India for the work in estates. We have not got the opportunity of living with dignity so far. The reason is that we have not been treated in the manner humans are treated. So our people have suffered for generations. It is a relief that this suffering has been understood by some party. At last we were provided with a permanent address along with a post box to our school.



- S. Priya (A student)



Citizens Councils

Empowering the citizen

The Concept of Citizen Councils

The project Promoting Language Rights of Minorities (PLRM) which was initiated in 2011 has to-date (2014) established more than 430 Language Societies (LSs) in the target regions of the North & Eastern Provinces and lately Central and Southern provinces. Language Societies are local groups of concerned citizens who rally to find recourse in instances of language rights violations; in the last three years of the project the scope of these language societies has grown to include other regionally relevant issues that have a close nexus with issues of language, for example difficulties faced by fisher folk due to their identity cards being in Tamil which subsequently affected the timing of their voyages and thus their productivity; for another example, land cases where owners claiming ownership or compensation are affected by the inability of the defendant to communicate in a particular language. During the first phases of the project, Language societies were established, strengthened and their members empowered to take more progressive steps in addressing instances of language rights violations not only by negotiating, and advocating but themselves intervening where possible to make the change they wished to see.

Phase IV will make LSs fully autonomous and self sustaining by improving capacity, networking with strategic contacts such as provincial journalists, and amalgamating with other established citizen groups of the areas. Such "Citizen Councils" (CCs) address matters of citizen human rights at the village level; the core group of officers of each Council will meet at least bi-monthly to organise actions depending on issues affecting people of the area. Citizen's human rights are addressed including but going beyond LR, in the case of the N& E this may be land rights, in the case of Estate Sector, civil rights etc.

The aim is a strengthened and proactive village level democratic citizen group who respects and protects pluralism, diversity and language rights as well as culture, religion and the environment, and involves in the matters relevant to fellow citizens rights to ensure that good governance is promoted at the village level. Youth and women's participation, the rights of differently abled persons and protection of the environment are all included in the mandate of these voluntary bodies. CPA will continue to support LSs and then CCs.

Targets of the PLRM project include:

- Formation and activation of 500 Citizen Councils in the 13 districts covered by the project, in the N&E, Uva and Central provinces and Kalutara, Hambantota and Kilinochchi.
- 500 Annual action plans formed based on the intricacies of issues in each region

- 2000 numbers legal / arbitration / reconciliation hearings with minuted follow up action (submissions/ legal action) eg civil rights, water, land, issues, EPF funds, environmental etc and 25% of issues addressed by Citizen Councils through intervention to see a positive result.

PLRM Phase 4 will therefore combine LS with other regional citizen groups to form a sustainable forum to address issues not only of language but other relevant concerns such as land issues, mediation, civil rights, religious discrimination, etc. This will ensure that as long as such citizen councils are sustained with other important agendas, the language component too will have a part in their composite, thus continuing after the project ceases.

The Civil Society Collective for Promoting Language Rights

CPA networked with selected civil society organisations in the relevant regions, most of whom CPA had previously worked with. Trainers in the awareness raising on Language Rights were chosen from members of these regional partners. This decision complemented the project in renewing linkages, gaining the benefit of local knowledge and support on the field, and the opportunity to benefit the partner organisations by building capacity of the trainers, apart from effectively spreading language rights awareness to all their networks in turn.

Implementing partner organisations:

C.C.D.M Muniyapar Kovelaly, K.S.Road, Kondavil West Jaffna

Center for Rehabilitation of Alcoholic and Drugs Addicts, (CRADA) 5th Milepost, Thoattavely, Mannar

CEPO, Aliyawaththa, Monaragala, No-104/1, Drug Stores Road, Monaragala

NAHRO, No-20, Kanagapuram, Kilinochchi, Kilinochchi

National Collaboration Development Foundation (NCDF), AriyawansaMawatha, Kanthale Trincomalee

Rural Development Foundation (RDF) 66 A 2nd Cross St, Vavuniya

Rural Development Planning Organization (RDPO) Main Street, Sandiweli, Batticaloa.

Rural Economic Development Society Panama South, Panama, Ampara

Samadanam, 34, Nikaioya Road, Rattota, Matale

Samadanam, Tekilawatta, Thennakumbura, Kandy

Sri Lanka Young Voice Foundation, Infront of Samurdhi Bank, Mamadulla, Ambalanthoda Hambanthoda

True Vision 04A, Main Street, Attalaichenai-01, Ampara

UPSAC, 293/42, Darrawella Gama, Dikkoya, Nuwara Eliya

UVA Shakthi, Lakshitha Canavarolla, Maussagolla, Badulla

UVA Shakthi, No-245, Deekilapetha, Pelgahatenna, Passara, Badulla

End of Report