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BRIEF COMMENTARY

# RAPID IDENTIFICATION OF WATER RELATED CONFLICTS IN SRI LANKA

**Project Title:**

"Creating civic space to promote informed advocacy and social cohesion in Sri Lanka"

**Conflict Dynamics: Citizens' Right to Water**
Conflict Triggers/Conflicting Situations identified by Peacebuilders

July 2023

# Introduction

Sri Lanka has suffered the consequences of conflict and violence for decades. Additionally, and unfortunately, in spite of such experiences over many years with the effects of irreparable damage to social cohesion and harmony, steps preventing or countering conflict triggers have remained neglected and ignored. This is mainly because the connotation of 'Conflict', in the country context, has mostly been attributed only to the ethnic issue, and thus a range of other causes or triggers of conflict have inevitably been overlooked.

Whether due to ethnic tension or otherwise, any incompatibility of, including but not limited to, needs, ideas, aspirations, interests and purposes vary in different segments of society, resulting in a greater potential to trigger conflicting situations. Such a state of affairs always leads to social unrest, tensions and, at times, devastating loss of property and lives. Therefore, the impact of conflict, in its broader sense, can undoubtedly be on the social, economic and political spheres of individuals, institutions and the broader governance landscape of the country. Thus the more space there is for conflict triggers in society, the higher the risks of detrimental effects on social cohesion, human well-being and the socio-economic and political stability of the country.

Against this backdrop, this commentary provides a non-exhaustive analysis of the 'Conflict Triggers', their prevalence based on a rapid fact-finding mission and potential consequences in relation to water in Sri Lanka. This analysis is essentially built upon evidence-based information on existing and emerging conflict triggers, gathered from various regions of the country and substantiated by a technical synthesis of problems and conflict dynamics regarding the citizen's right to water in Sri Lanka.

# Conflict Dynamics related to the Right to Water
**Dr. Lareef Zubair**

## Overview

"Water as a conflict trigger in Sri Lanka" refers to the phenomenon where issues related to water resources, their scarcity, distribution, and management, contribute to or exacerbate conflicts within the country. Sri Lanka, like many regions around the world, faces various challenges and tensions associated with water resources due to its complex geography, changing climate patterns, and diverse socio-economic conditions.

Water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka have the potential to trigger tensions and disputes at different scales, from local to national levels. These conflicts can stem from a range of factors, including unequal access to water, unaccountable governance, competition for limited resources, environmental degradation, corruption and politically driven decision making, infrastructure development, and conflicting traditional and modern water management practices.

As a multi-dimensional issue, water-related conflicts often intersect with various aspects of society, including agriculture, industry, urbanization, traditional practices, legal frameworks, and governance structures. Moreover, the impacts of climate change, which affect rainfall and evaporation patterns and water availability, further complicate the dynamics of water-related conflicts.

Efforts to address "Water as a conflict trigger in Sri Lanka" involve a nuanced understanding of these factors, the engagement of multiple stakeholders, the implementation of effective water management policies, and the promotion of equitable access to water resources. By proactively addressing water-related conflicts and working toward sustainable solutions, Sri Lanka can mitigate the potential for tensions arising from water scarcity and contribute to the well-being of its citizens and the overall stability of the country.

## Water governance and broader concerns that leads to potential conflicts

The data collected though peacebuilders indicate that the right to water, a fundamental human right, and the social cohesion in the context of water have been impacted by various factors, including a range of conflict triggers, demographic patterns, unequal resource distribution, governance issues, discrimination and climatic variations. A brief analysis with regard to the 'right to water' is presented below.

## Drinking Water Access:

Access to clean and safe drinking water remains a pressing concern in Sri Lanka, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Uneven distribution of water resources, inadequate infrastructure, discriminatory administrative decisions, lack of policy implementation and water pollution have hindered consistent access to safe drinking water. These challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, different ethnic groups, and particularly in areas where people are affected with unplanned development programs leading to health risks, social tensions, waterborne diseases, and social inequalities.

## Water for Cultivation:

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's economy, and water for cultivation is essential for food security and livelihoods. However, the irregular distribution of rainfall, unaccountable water management approaches, politically motivated short-sighted decisions combined with outdated irrigation systems and land use practices,

leads to water scarcity and inefficiencies in water management. This results in reduced agricultural productivity, economic strain on farmers, and potential conflicts over water allocation among communities and a range of stakeholders.

## Conflict Dynamics:

The right to water in Sri Lanka is intertwined with complex conflict dynamics. Tensions between ethnic groups, uneven access to resources, and governance challenges have contributed to a volatile environment. Water scarcity and disputes over water rights have exacerbated existing conflicts or trigger new ones, further straining social cohesion.

## Policy and Legal Framework:

Sri Lanka has addressed water-related issues through policy and legal frameworks. The National Water Supply and Drainage Board, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (MASL) and the Irrigation Department play key roles in water management. However, the implementation of these policies faces challenges due to administrative inefficiencies, lack of coordination, unaccountable administrative decisions, politically driven bias in policy implementation and resource management, lack of implementation law and inadequate resources.

## Unplanned Development:

The catchment areas are being rapidly waned as a result of inappropriate constructions by unplanned clearing of the forest cover in micro catchment areas, small-hydro power plant projects without meaningful environmental impact assessment and improper cultivations and allocation of lands to corporative interests without local constructions. Due to these reasons the annual flow regime of rivers and streams or their capacity reduction, causing a major problem of drinking water and scarcity of water for agriculture. Sri Lanka is experiencing the threat of unexpected siltation in reservoirs which generate hydro power and supply irrigated water due to the clearance of catchment areas in high altitudes and poor water and soil conservation practices.

## Unaccountable Decisions and Corruption:

In spite of the above, excavation of soil, clay or sand and also mining in the lands reservation for rivers, streams and tanks and reservoirs have adversely affected the water resource at a greater extent. Furthermore, the capacity of the springs and water spouts with common use is being deteriorated and gradually being destroyed due to misuse of land. The boundaries of the areas with water sources, reservations of water ways, catchments of the reservoirs / tanks have not been identified and marked physically on the ground. The data indicate that in terms of parties involved in conflicting situations, reasonably high number incidents in which smugglers are linked while no proactive law enforcement against such occurrences.

## Lack of Coordination and Reforms

successive government before and after independence had introduced various kinds of policies and laws pertaining to the conservation of Sri Lanka`s water sources. National Policy on Watershed Management, National Land Use Policy, National Forest Policy, and National Environment Policy are some of such prominent policies. However, the lack of meaningful implementation in combination with noticeable disconnect among institutions mandated to execute wee-coordinated strategic approaches to ensure better water-governance have resulted water to be remained a potential conflict trigger that causes social tensions.

In terms of legislative and policy reforms, provisions of the laws highlighted below have more or less relevancy to water as a right of citizen and thus, a comprehensive review is essential to ensure the establishment and implementation of a well-coordinated 'Water Governance System' that safeguards the interest of citizen, minimize the potential conflicts, optimize the effective use of water resource.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Land Development Ordinance | Irrigation Ordinance | Agrarian Development Act |
| State Land Ordinance | Wildlife Conservation Act | Water Resource Development Act |
| Forest Ordinance | Review of Laws needed for Legislative Reforms in Minimizing Conflicts related to Water | National Water Supply and Drainage Board Act |
| Soil Conservation Act | Disaster Management Act | Coastal Conservation Act |
| Urban Development Authority Act | Land Reform Law | Mahaweli Authority Act |

## Specific Conflict Dynamics - Drinking Water

### Issues:

**Access and Equity:** Ensuring equitable access to safe and clean drinking water for all citizens, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status, remains a significant challenge. Marginalize communities are facing exclusion from water resource management governance.

**Water Quality:** Maintaining the quality of drinking water sources is crucial to prevent waterborne diseases and other health risks. Addressing issues related to contamination, pollution, and proper treatment is essential.

**Infrastructure Development:** Developing and maintaining the necessary infrastructure to supply safe drinking water to both urban and rural areas is a policy challenge. This includes ensuring proper water treatment facilities, distribution networks, and storage systems.

**Climate Change:** Changing rainfall patterns, increasing evaporation and including demand for water, extreme weather events are impact water availability. Developing strategies to manage these challenges and adapt to the impact of climate change on water resources is important.

### Challenges:

**Urbanization:** Rapid urbanization can strain existing water infrastructure and lead to increased demand for clean drinking water in urban areas. Ensuring adequate water supply to growing cities while maintaining the needs of rural areas is a challenge.

**Water Pollution:** Pollution from agricultural runoff, industrial discharges, and inadequate sanitation facilities can contaminate water sources, affecting their suitability for drinking.

**Sanitation and Hygiene:** Improving sanitation and hygiene practices is closely linked to ensuring access to safe drinking water. A lack of proper sanitation facilities can lead to the contamination of water sources.

**Agricultural Practices:** Inefficient water use in agriculture and improper use of agrochemicals can lead to water pollution and reduce the availability of clean water for consumption.

## Specific Conflict Dynamics - Water for Cultivation

### Issues:

**Water Allocation:** Balancing water allocation for agricultural use with other sectors, such as domestic and industrial use, requires clear policies and mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution.

**Efficient Water Use:** Encouraging efficient water use in agriculture is important to conserve this precious

resource as it takes up larger share of available water. Policies should promote water-saving technologies, crop selection, and irrigation practices.

**Climate Change:** Changing weather patterns and increasing variability in precipitation affect water availability for agriculture. Resource management policies need to consider adaptive measures to cope with the effects of climate change.

**Land Use Planning:** Integrating water resource management with land use planning is crucial to prevent overexploitation of water resources and maintain the ecological balance.

## Challenges:

**Water Scarcity:** Certain regions of Sri Lanka face water scarcity, particularly during dry periods. Managing water scarcity and ensuring adequate supply for agriculture is a significant challenge.

**Outdated Irrigation Infrastructure:** Some irrigation systems and infrastructure might be outdated or inefficient, leading to water wastage. Upgrading and modernizing these systems can be challenging due to funding and logistical constraints.

**Water Pollution:** Pollution from agricultural runoff, excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and poor waste management practices can contaminate water sources and harm ecosystems.

**Crop Choice and Water Demand:** Some crops require more water than others. Ensuring a balance between high-water-demand crops and water availability is important for sustainable agriculture.

**Water for Nature and People:** At present, hydropower is getting prioritized in water management followed by water for agriculture. As a result, there is a lack of care for the water needs of people from natural sources, and wildlife and ecosystems are undermined. What is happening in various lagoons for commercial shrimp forming and lack of attention to elephant needs around August and September in Minnarya, Giritale and Kaudulla Tank complex.

| Conflict Dynamics | |
|---|---|
| **Water Governance and Management** | |
| *Issue:* | *Implication:* |
| The governance and management of water resources in Sri Lanka involve multiple agencies and sectors, leading to fragmented decision-making and inefficient resource allocation. | Lack of coordination can result in unequal distribution of water resources, favoring certain regions or sectors over others, and hindering equitable access to water for citizens. |
| **Equity and Access** | |
| *Issue:* | *Implication:* |
| Access to clean and safe drinking water is uneven across Sri Lanka, disproportionately affecting rural and marginalized communities. | Social inequalities arise as vulnerable populations are denied their basic right to clean water, leading to health issues and reinforcing disparities. |
| **Legal Framework** | |
| *Issue:* | *Implication:* |
| The legal framework governing water resources is complex, with various laws and regulations overlapping and sometimes conflicting. | Clarity and consistency in legal provisions are essential to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of water rights, avoiding confusion and legal loopholes. |

| Infrastructure and Services | |
|---|---|
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Inadequate infrastructure and services hinder the provision of clean drinking water, particularly in remote areas. | Poor infrastructure exacerbates waterborne diseases and affects the well-being of citizens, undermining public health efforts. |
| | |
| **Pollution and Contamination** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Water bodies in Sri Lanka suffer from pollution due to industrial discharges, agricultural runoff, and inadequate sanitation. | Water pollution leads to unsafe drinking water, harming public health and ecosystems, and necessitating investments in water treatment. |
| **Agricultural Water Use** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Outdated irrigation systems, inconsistent water supply, and land use practices contribute to water scarcity for cultivation. | Agriculture, a vital sector, faces reduced productivity, economic strain on farmers, and potential conflicts over water allocation. |
| **Climate Change Resilience** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Changing precipitation patterns and climate impacts threaten water availability. | Ensuring water rights in the face of climate change requires adaptive strategies that guarantee water access and distribution, particularly in times of scarcity. |
| **Community Engagement** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Limited citizen participation and community engagement in water management decisions. | Excluding citizens from decision-making can lead to grievances, hinder sustainable water management, and perpetuate conflicts. |
| **Legal Awareness** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Limited awareness among citizens about their water rights and legal avenues for addressing water-related issues. | Citizens may be unaware of their entitlements, impeding their ability to advocate for their rights and access legal remedies. |
| **Enforcement and Compliance** | |
| **Issue:** | **Implication:** |
| Inconsistent enforcement of water-related laws and regulations. | Weak enforcement can lead to non-compliance, allowing unsustainable practices to persist and further exacerbating water-related challenges. |

Addressing these legal and policy challenges is crucial to ensuring the water rights of citizens in Sri Lanka. Comprehensive reforms in water governance, equitable distribution, pollution control, infrastructure development, and climate resilience are essential to secure clean drinking water and water for cultivation for all citizens. A transparent, coordinated, and inclusive approach involving government agencies, civil society, and communities is necessary to tackle these complex issues, conflicting situations and promote sustainable water management in the country and enhance social cohesion.

## Chapter Two

# Analysis based on data received from peace builders

**Analysis Done by the Capacity Building and Outreach Team of CPA**

This section provides a brief analysis of the data received from peace builder from various districts of the country. The data collection was done within two weeks of the month of July 2023.

## Prevalence of conflict related issues: By Districts

The data highlights the varying levels of water-related conflicts across districts in Sri Lanka, with some areas facing significant challenges in water resource management and access. This information can guide policymakers and stakeholders in developing targeted strategies to address water-related conflicts, promote sustainable water management practices, and contribute to peace and development in the region.

**High Water-Related Conflicts:** Several districts stand out as having a high number of conflicts related to water issues. These include Batticaloa (16 incidents), Ratnapura (15 incidents), Nuwara Eliya (14 incidents), Galle (7 incidents), and Anuradhapura (10 incidents). Data claim that these districts are facing significant challenges related to water resource management, allocation, or access, which are resulting in conflicts.

**Regional Patterns:** Some districts in the same region appear to have similar levels of water-related conflicts. For example, Anuradhapura and Mannar, both in the Northern Province, have 10 and 10 conflicts, respectively.

**Resource Allocation:** The data underscores the importance of equitable resource allocation and effective water management policies. High-conflict districts may require more attention and resources to address water-related issues, including infrastructure development, water distribution, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

**Sustainability and Peacebuilding:** Addressing water-related conflicts is crucial for both environmental sustainability and peacebuilding efforts. Water scarcity and disputes over water resources can exacerbate existing tensions and hinder development.

## Specific water issues and the number of conflict incidents identified by the peacebuilder:

The data illustrates that water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka are multifaceted, impacting various aspects of society, including health, livelihoods, and social cohesion. Addressing these conflicts will require a comprehensive approach that involves multiple stakeholders, sustainable land and water management practices, equitable policies, and government accountability. Ensuring access to clean drinking water and effective water resource management are critical steps in mitigating these conflicts and improving the overall quality of life for the population.

**Diverse Range of Water Issues:** The data indicates that Sri Lanka faces a diverse range of water-related issues, each contributing to conflict incidents. These issues include damage to water sources due to small hydropower plants, militarization affecting water accessibility, inadequate water distribution policies for cultivation, lack of clean drinking water, abuse of water resources, contamination of drinking water, discrimination in water distribution, deforestation in catchment areas, land acquisition without water facilities, depletion of water sources due to land sales and various cultivation activities, floods due to environmental protection measures, arbitrary actions by government departments, and rising water bills for low-income urban families.

**Multiple Stakeholders:** These water-related conflicts involve various stakeholders, including government agencies, private entities, communities, and individuals. Addressing these conflicts would require collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders.

**Resource Depletion:** Several issues, such as depletion of groundwater sources and damage to water sources, are related to unsustainable land use practices, including large-scale cultivation activities and development activities.

**Social and Health Impact:** Issues like lack of clean drinking water and health problems due to contaminated drinking water have a direct impact on public health and well-being leading to coflicts.

**Equity and Discrimination:** Discriminatory practices in water distribution based on ethnicity or religion are identified as sources of conflict. Ensuring equitable access to water resources is crucial for social cohesion and peace.

**Environmental Protection:** Damage caused by floods due to the lack of environmental protection measures underscores the importance of sustainable environmental policies and practices to mitigate water-related conflicts.

**Government Role:** Several issues, such as arbitrary actions by government irrigation departments and rising water bills, point to the role of government agencies in managing and regulating water resources.

**Cultivation Challenges:** Both insufficient water for cultivation and lack of fair water management for cultivation are significant issues, highlighting the importance of agricultural water management to ensure food security and livelihoods.

**Drinking Water Access:** The most significant number of conflict incidents are related to the lack of drinking water facilities. This issue affects a large portion of the population and requires urgent attention to provide access to safe and clean drinking water for all.

## Government institutions connected to conflicting situations:

The involvement of various government institutions in water-related conflicts highlights the complexity of managing water resources in Sri Lanka. Effective coordination, clear policies, and transparent governance will be essential to address these conflicts and ensure sustainable water management practices.

**Diverse Government Stakeholders:** The data highlights the involvement of a wide range of government institutions in water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka. These institutions include health sector facilities, regulatory bodies, environmental agencies, local government authorities, agriculture and irrigation departments, and more.

**Key Institutions:** Some government agencies stand out as having a higher number of conflict incidents. The Department of Irrigation is the most frequently mentioned, with 21 conflict incidents associated with its activities. The Water Supply and Drainage Board is also significantly involved in conflicts, with 36 incidents. These numbers suggest that these institutions play crucial roles in water management and may need to address conflicts more effectively.

**Resource Management:** Agencies like the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Forest Conservation, with 4 and 5 incidents respectively, are linked to conflicts related to land use and resource management practices, such as cultivation and deforestation. These conflicts often involve disputes over water resources.

**Local Governance:** Local government authorities and divisional secretariat offices, with 5 and 16 incidents respectively, are involved in numerous conflicts. This highlights the importance of local governance in addressing water-related issues, especially at the community level.

## The involvement of security forces in conflicts:

The data indicates that security forces, including the Army, Navy, and Police, have been involved in a total of 12 conflict incidents related to water-related issues.

Among the security forces, the Police have the highest number of reported incidents (6), followed by the Army (5), and the Navy (1).

## The involvement of other parties in conflicts:

The data highlights the diverse range of actors involved in water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka, including domestic and foreign companies, smugglers, political affiliates, religious leaders, and environmental organizations. These conflicts may arise from economic interests, illegal activities, political connections, and environmental concerns.

➔ Domestic companies and local businessmen are frequently involved in water-related conflicts, with 10 reported incidents. This suggests that economic interests and activities play a significant role in these conflicts, potentially related to activities such as land development, mining, or agriculture.

➔ Smugglers engaged in illegal businesses like sand mining, soil mining, wood extraction, and drug trade are also a significant factor in water-related conflicts, with 10 reported incidents.

➔ Close affiliates and supporters of politicians are associated with 11 conflict incidents, indicating that political connections or influence may be contributing to conflicts over water resources.

➔ Religious leaders are linked to 3 conflict incidents, although the nature of their involvement is not specified in the data. Further details would be needed to understand their role in these conflicts.

➔ Environmental organizations are involved in 8 conflict incidents, suggesting their engagement in advocating for environmental protection and possibly addressing issues related to water resource management.

## Conflicting situations between different ethnic groups:

While conflicts between Sinhala and Tamil communities are notable, intra-ethnic disputes and conflicts involving other ethnic groups also contribute to the complex landscape of water rights disputes in the country.

➔ The data reveals that conflicts related to water rights involve interactions between various ethnic groups, including Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, and Up country Tamil communities.

➔ The most frequently occurring conflicts involve interactions within the Sinhala ethnic group, with 19 incidents of Sinhala-Sinhala conflicts. This suggests that intra-ethnic disputes over water rights are relatively common.

➔ Interactions between the Sinhala and Tamil ethnic groups also result in a significant number of conflicts, with 14 incidents. These conflicts may stem from historical, cultural, or geographical factors.

➔ Conflicts involving the Tamil ethnic group with 12 incidents indicate that internal disputes among Tamil communities also play a role in water-related conflicts.

➔ There are a smaller number of incidents involving other ethnic groups, such as Muslim-Muslim (3 incidents), Sinhala-Muslim (5 incidents), Tamil-Tamil (12 incidents), and Up country Tamil-Up country Tamil (11 incidents).

## Conflicting situations between different religious groups:

➔ The data shows that conflicts related to water resources involve interactions between different religious groups, including Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims.

➔ The most frequently occurring conflicts involve interactions within the Buddhist religious group, with 19 incidents of conflicts between Buddhists. This suggests that intra-religious disputes over water resources are relatively common.

➔ Interactions between Buddhists and Hindus also result in a significant number of conflicts, with 12 incidents. These conflicts may stem from religious, cultural, or geographical factors.

➔ There are smaller numbers of incidents involving other religious groups, such as Hindu-Hindu (6 incidents), Hindu-Christian (3 incidents), and Hindu-Islam (2 incidents).

## Government institutions alleged to have caused conflicting issues:

The data reflects the diverse range of government institutions allegedly involved in water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka. These conflicts may arise from issues related to water management, distribution, regulation, land use, and governance.

➔ Data suggests that out of 129 incidents, there is some kind of involvement of government agencies in relation to 81 cases in causing or perpetuating the issue related to the conflict situation.

➔ The Department of Irrigation is the most frequently mentioned institution, with 13 reported incidents. This suggests that the management and regulation of water resources, as overseen by the Department of Irrigation, may be a source of conflicts.

➔ The Water Supply and Drainage Board also has a substantial number of reported incidents (15). These conflicts may pertain to issues related to water distribution, infrastructure, and service provision.

➔ Several institutions, such as the Department of Agriculture (5 incidents), District Secretariat (5 incidents), Forest Department (6 incidents), and LGA (6 incidents), are also associated with conflicts, indicating that land use, environmental, and local governance factors may play a role.

## Actors involved in conflicting situations:

The data highlights a range of actors involved in water-related conflicts, including politicians at various levels, religious leaders, security forces, estate managers, influential individuals, and others.

➔ Local level politicians are the most frequently mentioned actors, with 44 reported incidents, indicating their significant role in water-related conflicts at the grassroots level.

➔ Provincial level politicians (8 incidents) and national level politicians (4 incidents) are also involved in water-related conflicts, suggesting that political influence extends to various levels of government.

➔ Religious leaders (6 incidents) play a role in some conflicts, although the nature of their involvement is not specified in the data.

➔ Security forces (6 incidents) are involved in conflicts, potentially reflecting their role in maintaining order and addressing security-related water issues.

➔ Estate superintendents (5 incidents) and the Estate Trust (1 incident) are associated with conflicts related to estate management and water resource issues within these estates.

➔ Affluent or influential persons, such as businessmen, are involved in 7 incidents, likely due to their economic interests in water-related activities.

## Type of social tensions created by conflicting situations:

The data reveals that water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka can lead to various forms of social tensions, including physical clashes, attacks on protesters, and intimidation of citizens and activists.

➔ Clashes between or among groups are the most common type of social tension, with 38 reported incidents, indicating that conflicts often escalate into confrontations between different parties.

➔ Attacks on protesters by security forces or police have occurred in 17 incidents, suggesting a risk of violence during protests or demonstrations related to water issues.

➔ Attacks or influence on citizens, farmers, journalists, and human rights defenders by those accused or alleged perpetrators have been reported in 13 incidents, highlighting the potential for intimidation and violence in water-related conflicts.

## The main conflict triggers related to water issues:

The data reveals that conflicts related to water can be triggered by a variety of factors, including administrative decisions, development projects, hate speech, security force actions, and statements by political or religious leaders.

➔ Illegal/unjust administrative decisions are the most frequently reported conflict trigger, with 46 incidents. This suggests that decisions made by government authorities or administrative bodies related to water resources management may lead to disputes and conflicts.

➔ Misuse of natural resources in the name of development projects is another significant conflict trigger, with 22 reported incidents. This indicates that large-scale development projects, which may involve activities such as deforestation, mining, or land acquisition, can contribute to water-related conflicts.

➔ Hate speech by any party has resulted in 18 reported incidents, highlighting the role of inflammatory rhetoric in exacerbating conflicts related to water issues.

➔ Interferences/conduct of security forces have led to 4 reported incidents, suggesting that the actions or conduct of security forces may sometimes contribute to conflicts related to water.

➔ Statements by political or religious leaders have led to 2 reported incidents, indicating that public statements by influential figures can also play a role in triggering conflicts over water resources.

## Actions taken regarding water-related conflicts:

The data reflects a range of actions taken in response to water-related conflicts in Sri Lanka, including formal complaints, legal actions, protests, and engagement with government authorities and religious institutions.

➔ Police complaint logged has been reported in 16 cases, indicating that individuals have formally reported conflicts to law enforcement authorities.

➔ Silent protests have occurred in 1 case, suggesting a peaceful form of expression in response to water-related conflicts.

➔ Complaints made to Divisional Secretariat are the most common action taken, with 55 cases, highlighting the role of local government offices in conflict resolution.

➔ Complaints made to District Secretariat have been made in 13 cases, indicating that conflicts are also escalated to higher administrative levels.

➔ Cases filed at the Courts are reported in 2 cases, suggesting that legal action has been taken to address water-related conflicts.

➔ Complaint to Mediation board and Complaint to a religious institution/leader have occurred in 1 case each, suggesting alternative methods of conflict resolution.

➔ Complaints to other government authorities have been made in 12 cases, underscoring the involvement of various government bodies in conflict resolution efforts.

➔ Complaints to Estate Management/Estate Trust have been reported in 2 cases, indicating the involvement of estate management in addressing conflicts related to water resources within estates.

➔ No action has been taken is indicated in 24 cases, which may suggest that in some instances, conflicts remain unresolved or unaddressed.

# Chapter Three

# Summary Analysis

This summary analysis is based on data shared by a group of peacebuilders with improved capacity to ensure early identification of conflict triggers with regard to socio-economic and political issues. In this brief analysis, key issues connected to conflicting situations, parties involved, type of social tensions and key conflict triggers have been identified by the peacebuilders across the country in short period using a structured questionnaire. Accordingly, this note is a non-exhaustive analysis of the existing conflicting situations in relation to water and a brief snapshot of potential incidents that may adversely affect the social cohesion, if immediately unaddressed by relevant mandated authorities. The peacebuilders across the country use these findings to create a sub-national level advocacy dialogues and act as a crisis response mechanism.

**Figure1.** Type of key issues related to water
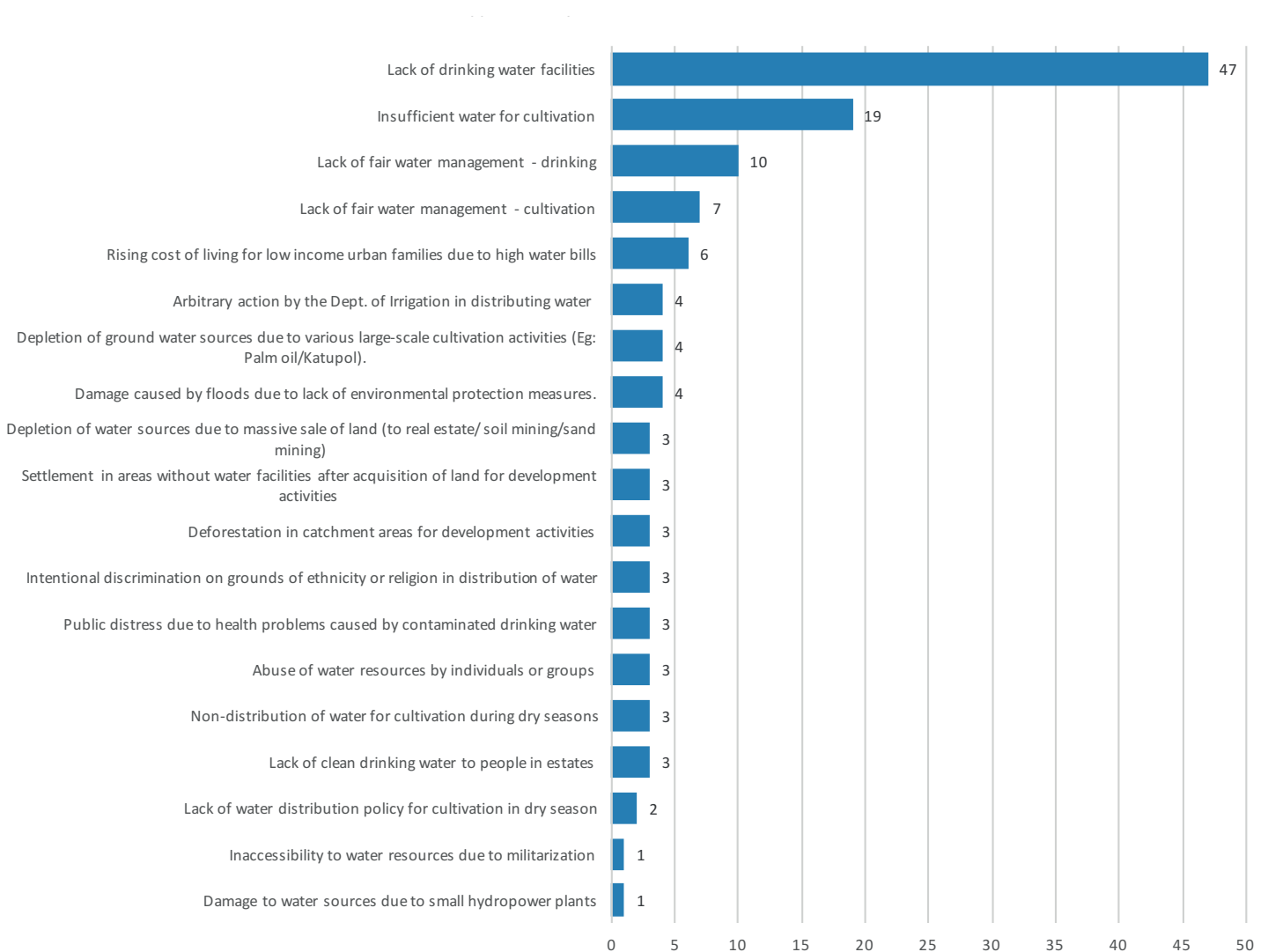
**Figure 2.** Identified key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water - By District
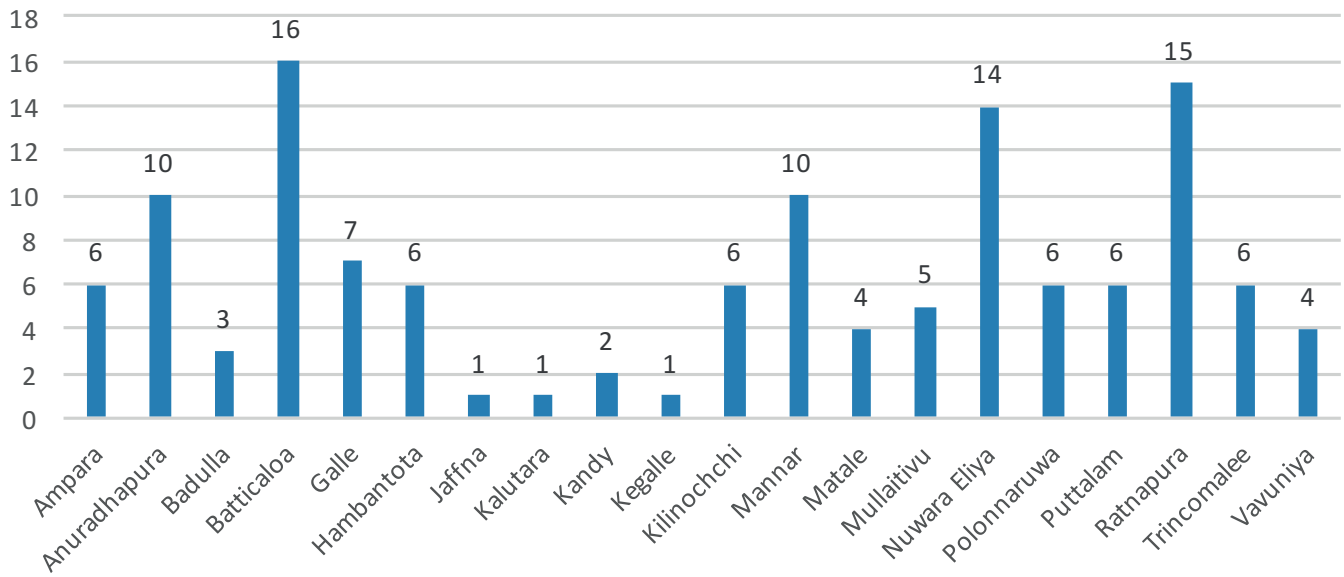


**Figure 3.** Identified Key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water in Anuradhapura District - By DS level locations (10 Cases)
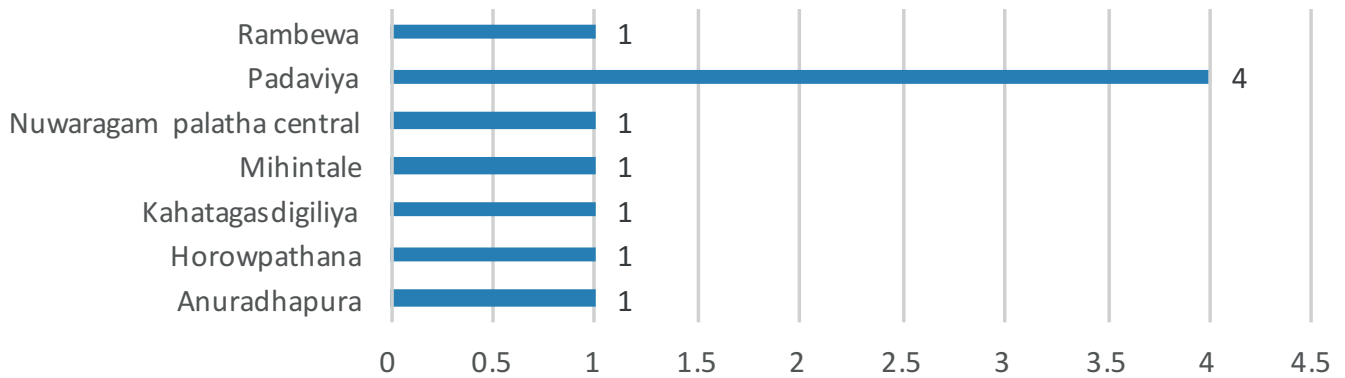


**Figure 4.** Identified Key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water in Batticaloa District - By DS level locations (16 Cases)
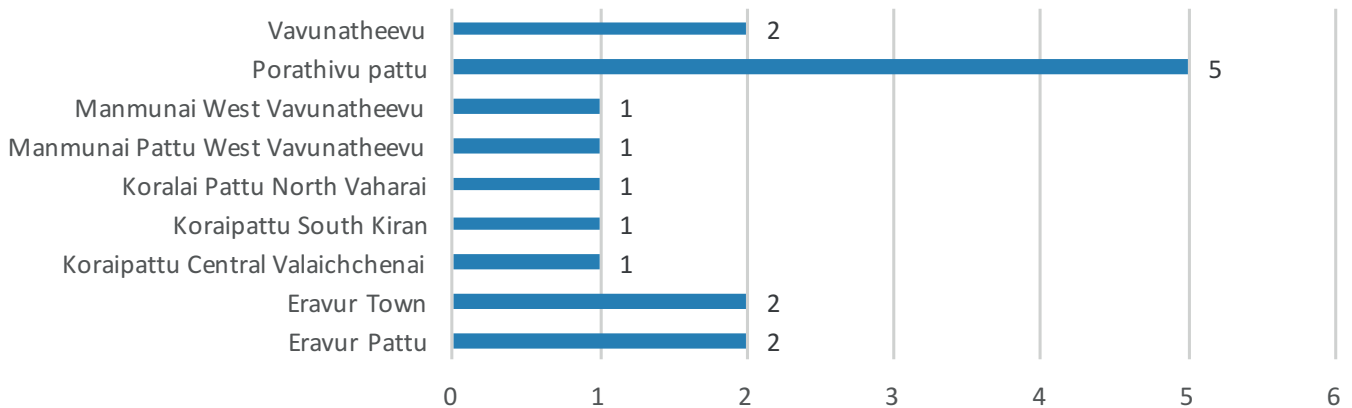
**Figure 5.** Identified Key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water in Mannar District - By DS level locations (10 Cases)
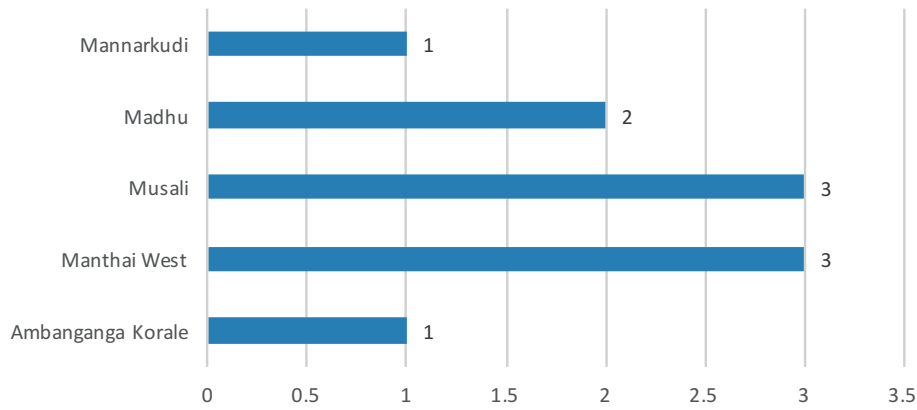


**Figure 6.** Identified Key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water in Nuwara Eliya District - By DS level locations (14 Cases)
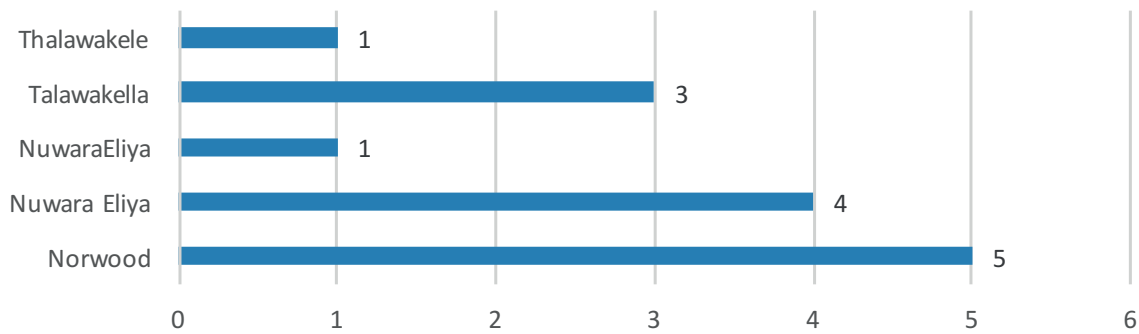


**Figure 7.** Identified Key issues of Conflicting Situations on Water in Nuwara Eliya District - By DS level locations (15 Cases)
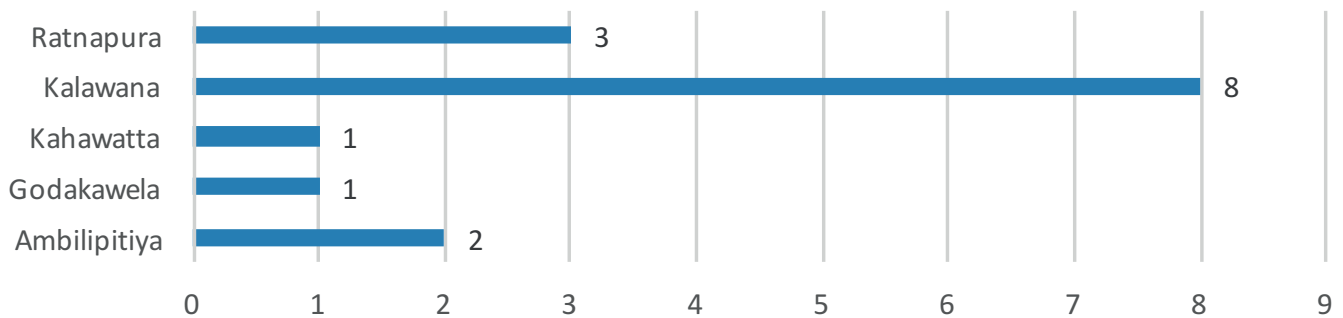
**Figure 8.** Parties involved in the issue connected to conflicting situation – by Government Institution
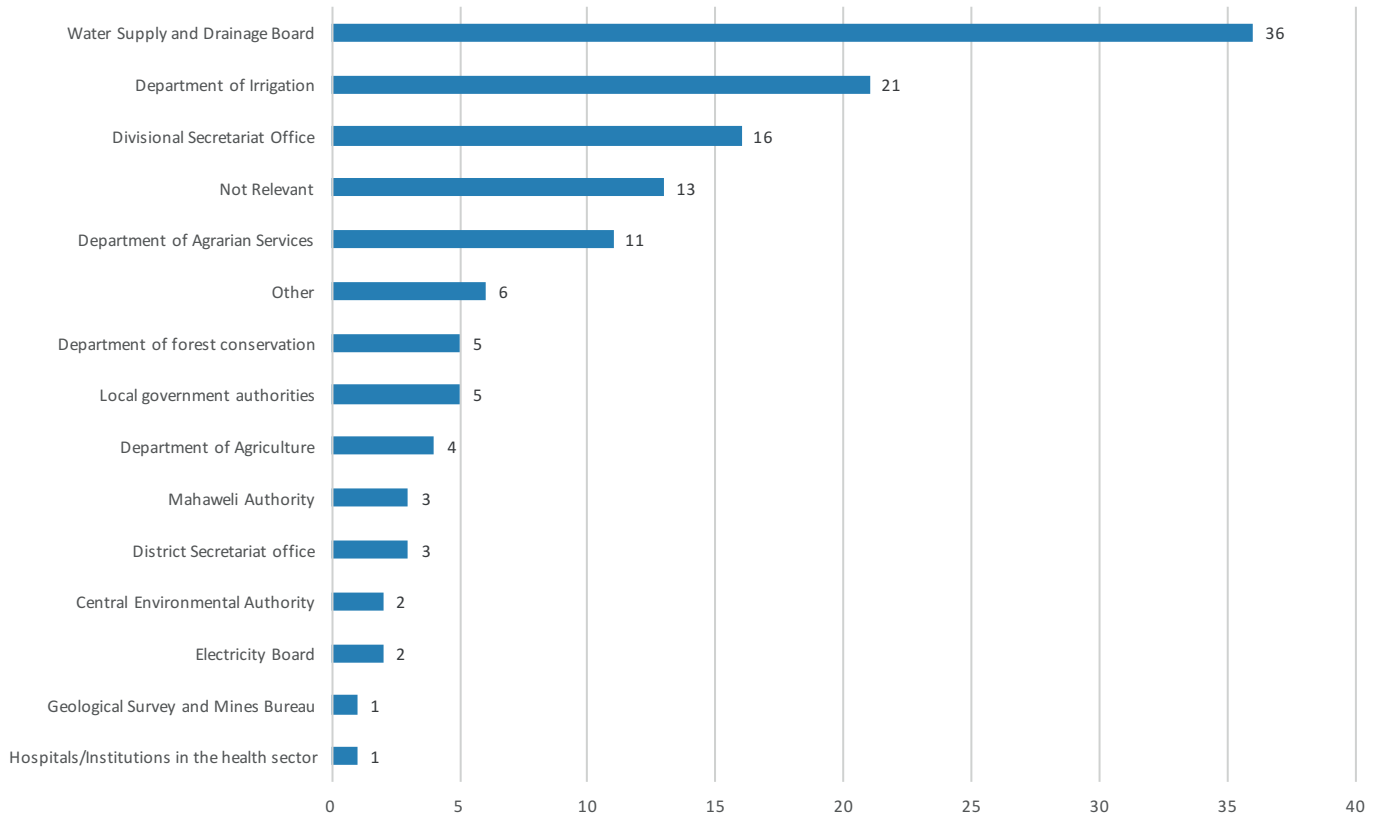


**Figure 9.** Parties involved in the issue connected to conflicting situation – by Security Forces
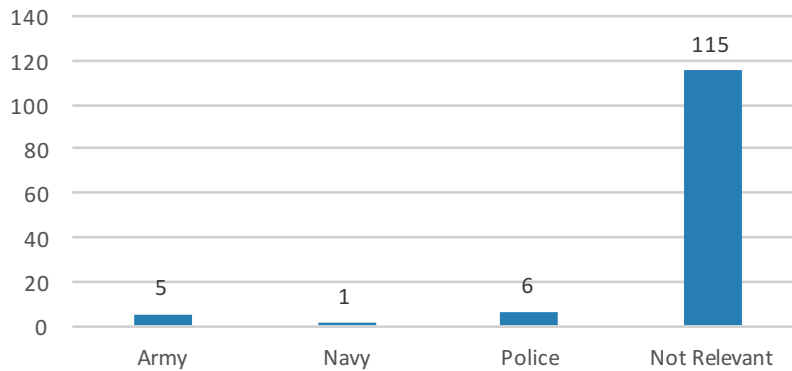


**Figure 10.** Parties involved in the issue connected to conflicting situation – by Other Parties
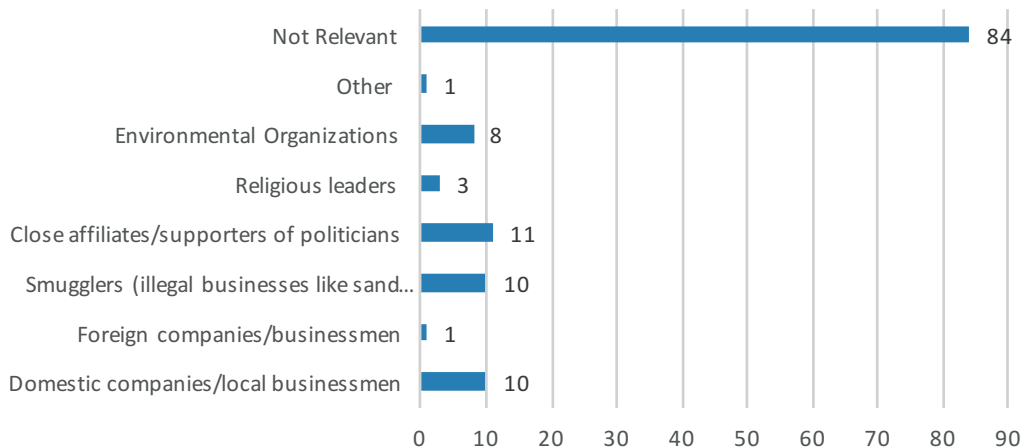
**Figure 11.** Parties involved in the issue connected to conflicting situation – by Ethnicity
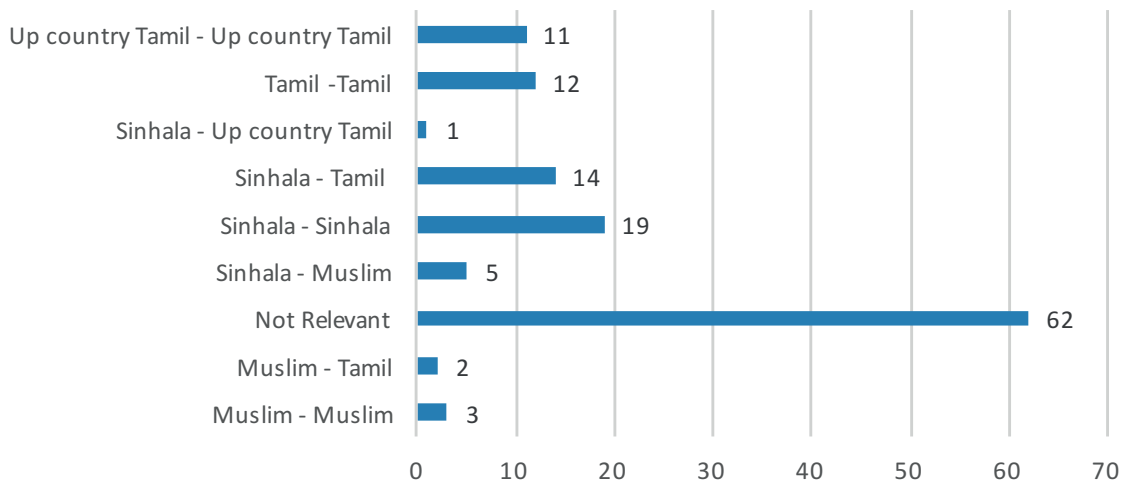


**Figure 12.** Parties involved in the issue connected to conflicting situation – by Religion
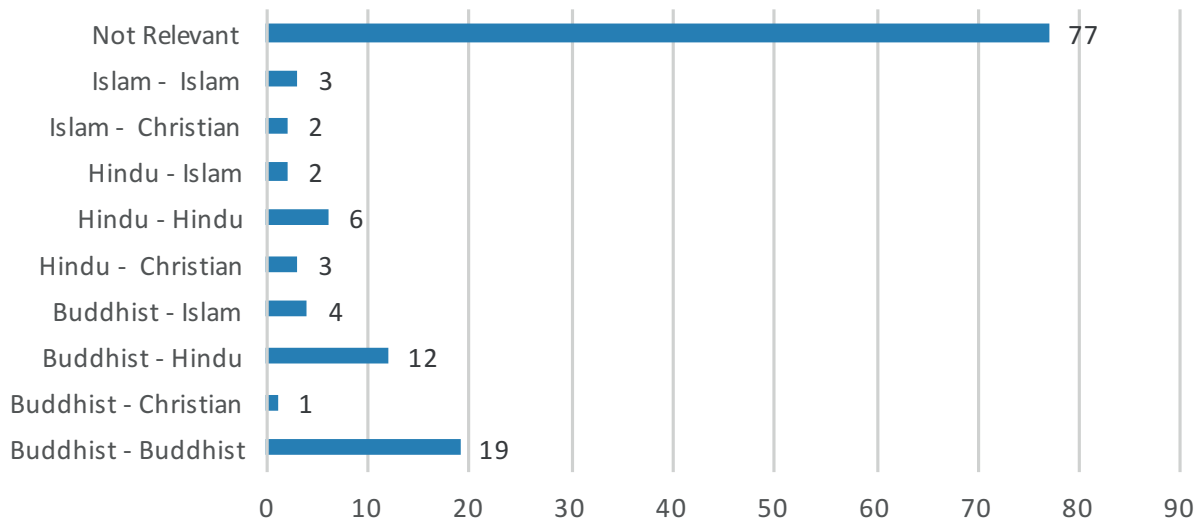


**Figure 13.** Is there involvement of government agencies in causing/perpetuating the issue related to the conflict situation?
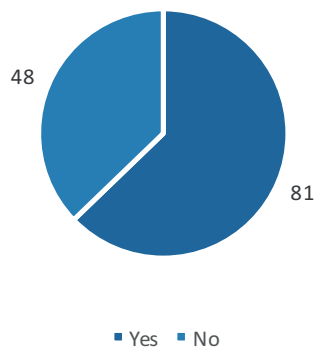
**Figure 14.** Main government institutions alleged to have caused the issue
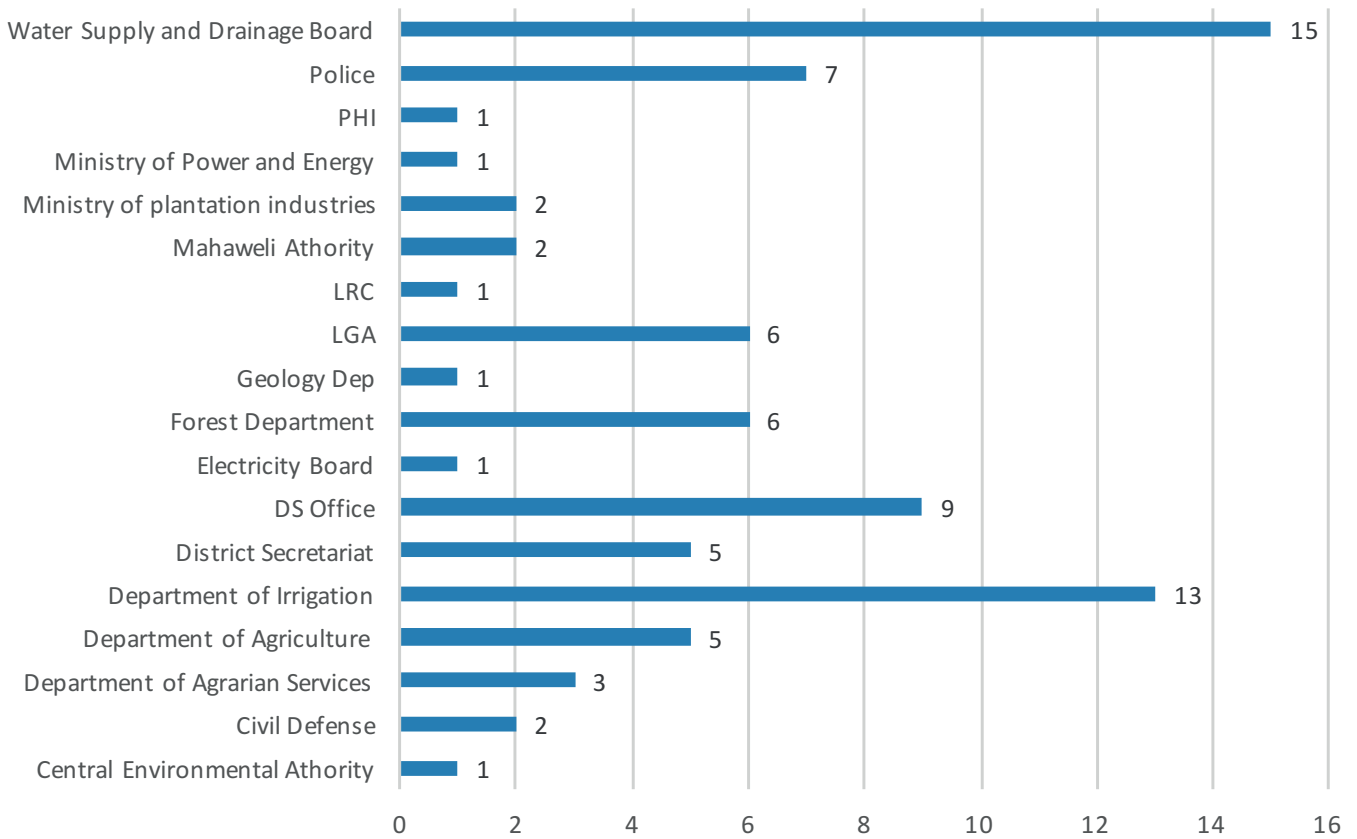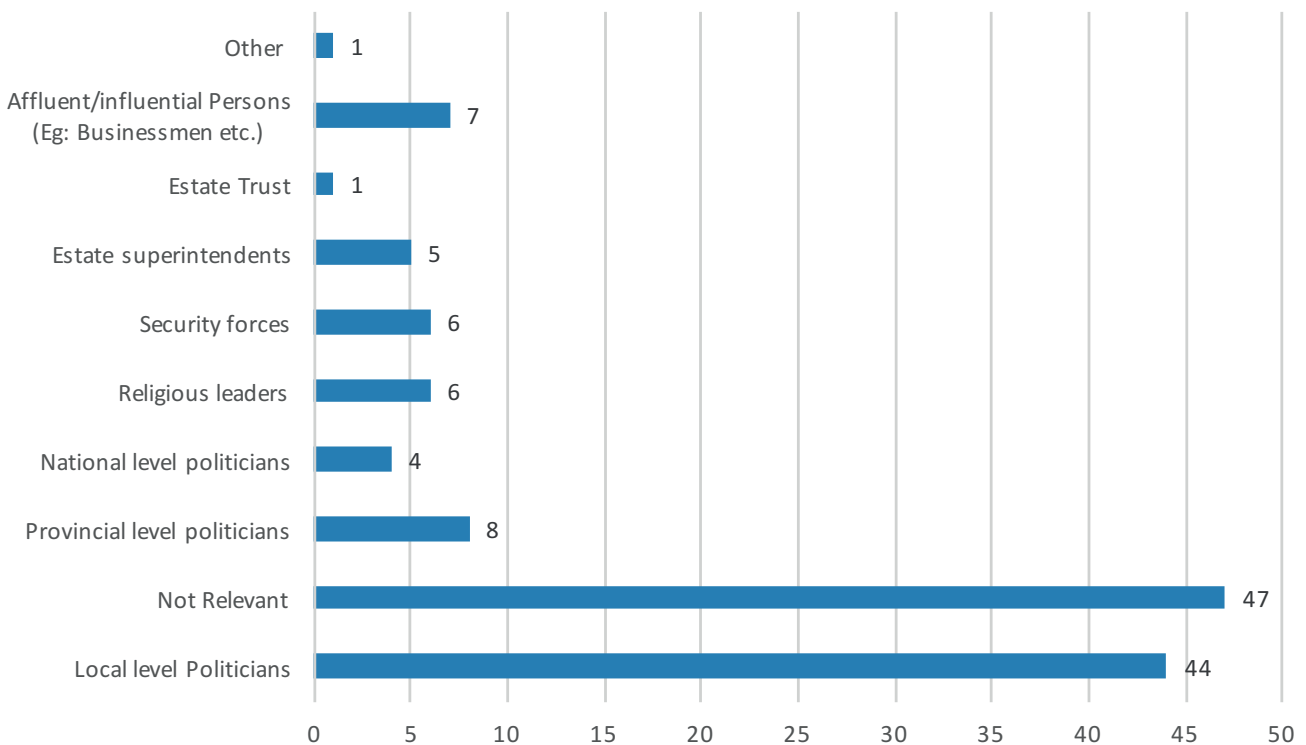


**Figure 15.** Actors involved in the conflicting situation

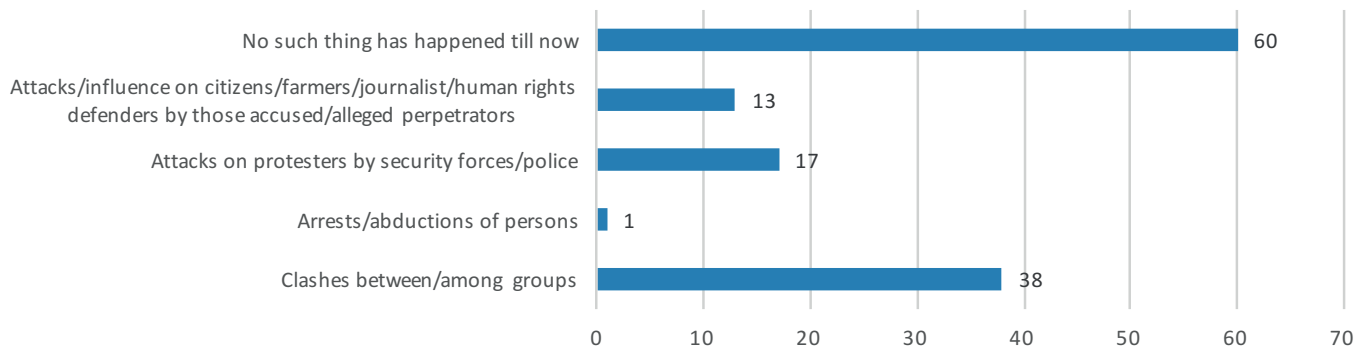**Figure 16.** Type of social tensions created due to the conflicting situation



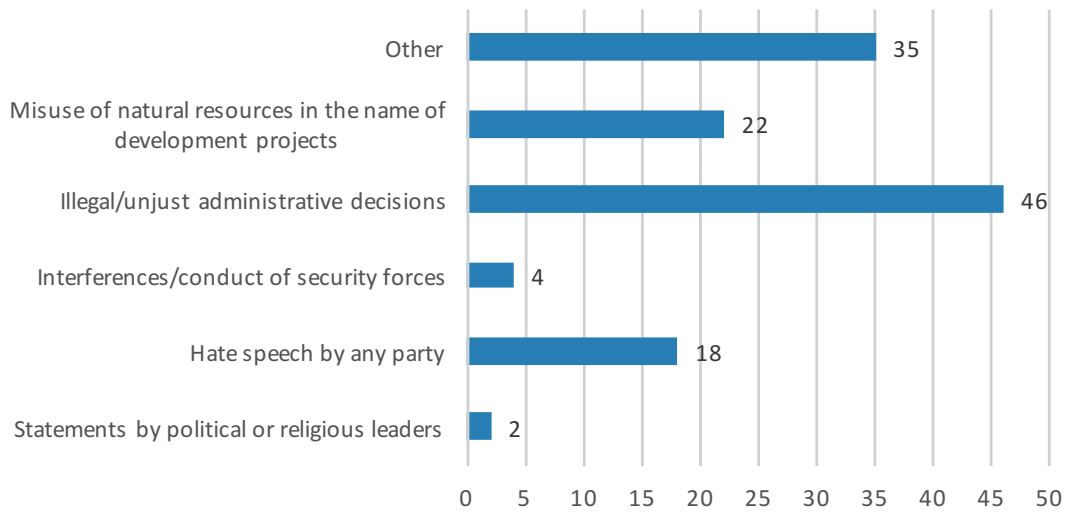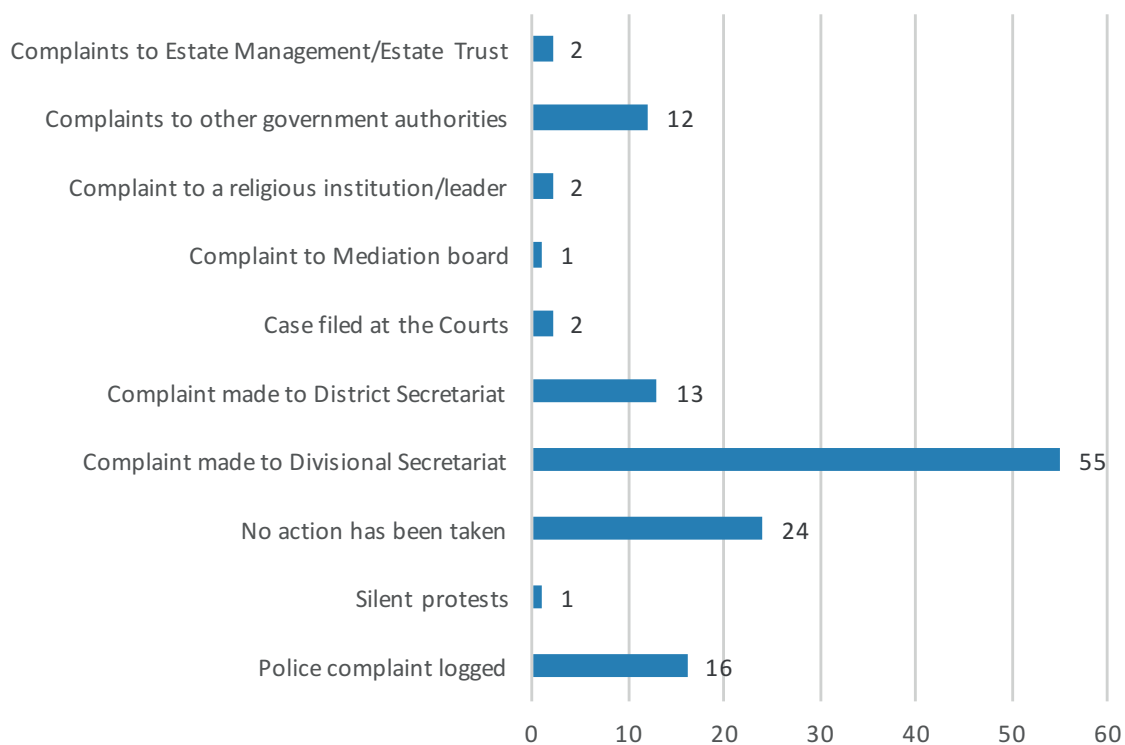**Figure 17.** Main Conflict Triggers caused escalations of social tensions



**Figure 18.** Main actions taken about the conflicting situation

VOICE OF CITIZENS

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மாற்றுக் கொள்கைகளுக்கான நிலையம்