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இலங்கை தேசிய சமாதானப் பேரவை
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



Paths To Peace

September 2025

District Level Interventions for Conflict Resolution

A series of intervention programmes for conflict resolution were organized under NPC's Women Organized for Inclusion through Community Engagement (WOICE) project funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Through this initiative, conducted in the Kandy, Matara, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Kegalle and Monaragala districts, groups identified key conflicts within their localities and worked collaboratively to empower women to take strong, solution oriented leadership in addressing them.

The objective was to strengthen women's leadership, enhance their confidence and equip them to identify local issues while developing sustainable, community driven solutions to conflict situations.

In the Matara District, the first conflict resolution programme addressed a health concern among school children - the rise of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in the Weligama area. With the support of health officers from the Matara General Hospital, the programme focused on comprehensive sex education and preventive health awareness.

The second initiative centred on social inclusion and reconciliation in Puhulwella where two communities historically divided by caste came together to prepare and share a midday meal with children with special needs. The event symbolised unity, compassion and equality. The programme featured a cultural performance by children and included a distribution of agricultural seedlings to mark the spirit of cooperation.



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In the Badulla District, a mobile service programme was launched in collaboration with government institutions to help plantation community members obtain essential legal documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates, addressing long standing administrative and literacy challenges. A youth focused job fair and a vocational training awareness session were organized, attracting nearly 100 participants. The initiative was praised by local government officials for its practical impact and community outreach.

In the Kandy District, the group contributed to the middle stream cleaning project, uniting youth and local political leaders to tackle environmental degradation. The group's consistent advocacy elevated the issue to a key regional priority. As part of its civic engagement work, the team organized an awareness session for the people managing the district's public toilet system, addressing sanitation issues affecting women. The programme facilitated a dialogue between contractors and government officials on maintaining hygiene standards and ensuring women's access to safe facilities. The women's group continues to monitor progress and advocate for accountability.

Focusing on the rights and protection of women in plantation communities, the Nuwara Eliya District group conducted an awareness programme on domestic violence, educating participants on identifying abuse and available legal remedies. Around 100 women participated, engaging with public sector resource persons who provided legal guidance and support. The initiative received commendations from officials for effectively bridging knowledge gaps and encouraging women to stand against violence.

“Most of the time, we get beaten for no reason. After working in the estate all day, we come home and still have to do all the household chores. They never help with any of it - just drink all the time. Then after drinking they come home and assault us. Even the children are scared. By evening, we live under great pressure with nowhere to go. Somehow we just endure it. But after participating in this programme, I realised that even if it's against the husband, we can take action because we are protected under the law. We weren't aware of that before,” said Thangamma from Nuwara Eliya.

The Monaragala District team identified the lack of female police officers during evening hours as a barrier for women seeking to file complaints about domestic violence. In response, it organized a meeting involving police personnel and members of the Community Police Committee, fostering discussion on practical solutions to improve women's access to justice. Plans are underway to expand this dialogue to village level community police committees.

Building on the success of these interventions, several additional district level programmes focusing on women's participation in conflict mediation and peacebuilding are scheduled to take place.



Ensuring Timely Elections

As part of the Active Citizens for Elections and Democracy (ACED) project, funded by the European Union, two meetings were held in Kandy and Batticaloa to raise awareness about the significance of timely elections, bringing together 80 participants including representatives from civil society, election monitoring members, youth leaders and women leaders.

The sessions were led by Dr. Mahesh Senanayake, Head of the Department of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Colombo, who shared his knowledge on electoral governance. Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Election Commission in conducting free and fair elections. Discussions covered how the commission manages voter registration, oversees election campaigns, ensures transparency and announces results, emphasising the importance of integrity throughout the electoral process.

Participants were introduced to election related laws and regulations, which provide the legal framework for fair elections at national, provincial and local levels. The significance of an election calendar was explained, showing how proper planning helps to prevent last minute confusion, ensures transparency and encourages voter participation. The financial independence of the Election Commission was also discussed, including the challenges it faces in functioning autonomously and the ways civil society organizations can support stronger independence of this institution.

Through these meetings participants explored the role that civil society organizations can play in promoting voter education, monitoring electoral processes and strengthening democratic governance. By engaging with local communities, youth networks and women leaders, the programmes empowered participants to better understand their responsibilities in supporting transparent and timely elections.

These meetings reflect the ACED project's commitment to fostering informed participation and enhancing democratic processes across Sri Lanka.



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Community Dialogue in Solving Problems

NPC's Plural Action for Inclusion, Reconciliation and Social Justice (PAIRS) project, funded by Misereor and co-funded by CAFOD, is transforming community dialogue into tangible action by bridging long standing gaps in justice, services and inclusion. Through a series of targeted actualisation activities and strategic facilitation meetings citizens, civil society and state officials are collaborating to implement concrete solutions for the most pressing local issues, turning advocacy into dignity and promises into progress. In September, 1,026 target group members were directly reached, reflecting the project's growing impact and reach at the grassroots level.

Ratnapura

A civil society actualisation activity in collaboration with the Ratnapura District Inter Religious Committee (DIRC) was held to address a critical gap in the justice system: the lack of Tamil speaking mediators, which leaves estate communities marginalised in accessing fair dispute resolution. The programme brought together 63 participants including Grama Niladharis, government officials and estate community members, many of whom were learning about mediation for the first time. Discussions highlighted the barriers faced by Tamil speaking communities including language exclusion, lack of awareness, economic challenges and limited representation on mediation boards. All the Grama Niladharis were Sinhalese with only one able to speak Tamil, underscoring the urgent need for bilingual mediators. Despite social divides and hesitancy to speak openly in front of officials, the activity created a rare platform for dialogue and inclusion. Many Tamils youth expressed interest in becoming mediators, signalling potential for future leadership and reconciliation.

“Officers in my Grama Niladhari division learned about mediation for the first time. I believe they realised that, as Tamil speaking individuals, they too can participate in this process. I hope that they will step forward to serve as mediators, contributing to reconciliation. Programmes like these are important because they can truly influence and inspire people,” said M.A. Eranga Maarasinghe, Grama Niladhari of the Kolonna Division.

Badulla

An actualisation activity under the theme local government services are equal for all was held in collaboration with Future in Our Hands, civil society partners and Badulla DIRC to address three major challenges to inclusive local governance: limited civic participation due to mistrust and misinformation, unfair resource allocation caused by weak coordination and political interference and inequalities in sharing resources among ethnic and religious groups. These gaps have particularly affected vulnerable groups such as the Malaiyaha community.

The event created a rare space for direct dialogue between citizens and local authorities, where participants raised concerns and officials responded immediately. An informational leaflet on local government services was also distributed, strengthening community awareness.



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Kegalle

An activity on community dialogue and mobile clinics was held in collaboration with Kegalle DIRC and civil society partners to create a shared space for equality, where government and non-government actors came together with plantation communities to address legal and social security challenges. Its goal was to minimise barriers, secure basic rights and promote sustainable inclusion and protection. During the consultations, communities highlighted issues such as lack of access to legal documents, limited land and housing rights, gaps in education and vocational training, employment exploitation and the absence of sustained state and non-state interventions. In response, the initiative combined participatory workshops, stakeholder dialogues and a mobile service clinic, which provided legal documentation support and awareness programmes. And an action plan with clear responsibilities was developed and local monitoring committees were established to ensure follow up and long term sustainability.

Also in Kegalle, youth leaders prioritised concerns around the display of religious symbols in hospitals, schools and government offices, highlighting the need for inclusivity and respect for diversity in public spaces. They also raised issues of school dropouts among state sector children, malnutrition, the urgent need for sexual education and gender awareness in schools and broader human rights violations affecting vulnerable groups. An outcome across both districts was the youth leaders' voluntary commitment to take ownership of these issues rather than waiting for external support.

Nuwara Eliya

For the Malaiyaha community in estates like Holyrood, a non-functioning postal service is more than an inconvenience; it's a lifeline cut off. Through field visits, a powerful documentary and dialogues with officials, civil society leaders built an undeniable case for change. They strengthened their advocacy skills and learned to negotiate practical solutions. Their efforts yielded an immediate, tangible outcome. The estate authority, acknowledging the problem, installed name boards with house numbers for each housing row in Holyrood Estate. This direct intervention, funded by the estate, is already helping postal workers deliver mail more efficiently, easing a daily burden for hundreds of families.

Anuradhapura

A dynamic group of 15 youth leaders in Anuradhapura held a meeting to identify the most pressing issues in their district and chart a course for action. Through collaborative discussion, they pinpointed nine critical challenges from land ownership and sanitation to public health. From this list, they prioritised a single, powerful issue for their first actualisation activity: the protection of civic space and the promotion of inclusion and pluralism in the district. These young leaders are now designing a collective action to address this foundational issue, recognising that an inclusive society is the bedrock for solving all other problems.

North and East

A series of DIRC and youth meetings were held Batticaloa, Vavuniya and Jaffna to create spaces for interfaith dialogue, identification of issues and joint planning of actualisation activities focused on inclusion, reconciliation and social justice, bringing together over 75 participants including religious leaders, government officials, civil society representatives, women leaders, media and youth. Meetings were hosted in churches and mosques, fostering interfaith understanding and mutual respect.

Colombo

NPC and the Darmashakthi Foundation hosted the Colombo DIRC actualisation activity bringing together 45 participants including senior state officials, religious leaders, civil society representatives and members of the media, creating a vibrant and inclusive space for dialogue. A panel dialogue on the theme education reforms and curriculum reduction focused on three areas: the reduction of content in the history and religion syllabi, the importance of promoting inter religious understanding among students and scholarly insights on the positive and negative implications of the government's proposed education reforms. By bringing together diverse voices and critical perspectives, the Colombo activity not only underscored the urgent need to critically examine education reforms but also showcased the potential of inter religious and civic collaboration in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future.



Consultation Not Force Required on Mannar Island

The long festering controversy over the installation of wind turbines on Mannar Island has taken a turn for the worse with mass demonstrations and a hartal taking place. The escalation has followed police forcibly removing protestors, including Catholic priests and women seated on the road preventing the transport of machinery to the proposed site. The National Peace Council expresses its concern at the situation and actions taken which have led to more polarization on the issue.

The government's action is seen by the protestors as a breach of faith. President Anura Kumara Disanayake during the election campaign in Mannar pledged not to proceed with any project opposed by the people, specifically naming the wind turbine proposal of the India-based Adani Group. It is regrettable that this police action occurred while the president was attending the 80th United Nations session on Sustainable Development Goals. The National Peace Council urges the president upon return to Sri Lanka, to intervene and seek a mutually acceptable solution through discussions as he has promised.

The current project by a domestic company is a follow up to the foreign direct investment project proposed by the Adani Group. The environmental concerns, however, remain unchanged with salinization of waterways, risk of flooding, and damage to livelihoods on an island largely below sea level. Similar fears surround a proposed mineral sand mining project by an Australian company.

The National Peace Council appreciates the government's aim to boost electricity capacity and its concern for earning foreign exchange to repay international debt. However, Mannar, as a former war zone, requires sensitivity to ethnic and religious sentiment. The police has a duty to maintain order, but using force against peaceful protestors risks escalation. Future policing must prioritise de-escalation and judicial guidance. The government has negotiated with other protesting groups such as postal and electricity board employees and reached solutions. The same approach should be applied in Mannar.

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Our Vision:

A just and peaceful Sri Lanka, in which the freedom, human rights and democratic rights of all peoples are assured.

Our Mission:

To work in partnership with different target groups with an aim to educate, mobilize and advocate the building of a rights conscious society of people that work towards a political solution to the ethnic conflict, reconciliation and equal opportunities for all.

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