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இலங்கை தேசிய சமாதானப் பேரவை
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



Paths To Peace

June 2026

Strengthening Human Rights Defenders in the Estate Sector

NPC commenced a new project titled Building Safe and Effective HRDs in Estate Sector Communities supported through the Carter Center's ACCELERATE initiative. The project will be implemented in the districts of Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, two areas with large concentrations of Malaiyaha Tamil estate sector communities who continue to face long-standing barriers in accessing documentation, welfare, schooling, housing, disaster-related support and administrative services.

The project seeks to strengthen community-based Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) who are already working closely with estate communities and are often the first point of contact for families facing difficulties in dealing with state institutions. In many estate sector communities, HRDs and community facilitators play a quiet but essential role in helping people understand procedures, prepare documents, approach government offices and follow up on unresolved issues. Their role became even more important following Cyclone Ditwah in November 2025, which worsened existing vulnerabilities in the hill country areas through landslides, housing damage, loss of personal documents, mobility difficulties, disrupted schooling and challenges in accessing compensation and welfare assistance.

The objective of the project is to advance equitable access to services, documentation and disaster-related support for marginalised Malaiyaha Tamil communities in Nuwara Eliya and Badulla by strengthening HRDs who can safely and constructively reduce routine and post-cyclone access barriers. Through the project, NPC will identify and strengthen a core group of 60 HRDs, with 30 HRDs from each district. A further 60 community facilitators will also be mapped to support local level identification, referral and follow up.

A key component of the project is practical case navigation. With mentoring support, HRDs will help identify urgent community access issues and guide affected families through relevant administrative processes. The project aims to resolve or substantially advance approximately 30 priority cases, with at least 15 cases per district. These cases will include issues relating to lost or damaged identity documents, birth certificates, school records, welfare access, disaster compensation, housing support and disrupted schooling.

During May and June 2026, NPC focused on the start up phase of the project. This included preparing the groundwork for district level implementation, selecting local partners, developing selection criteria for HRDs and beginning initial engagement with communities and stakeholders. NPC updated its existing partner selection criteria to reflect the specific needs of the project, including the ability of partners to work with Malaiyaha Tamil communities, identify suitable HRDs from within the community and engage constructively with district and divisional level state institutions.



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NPC will work with two competent district-based organizations that have existing working relationships with NPC and have demonstrated experience working with Malaiyaha Tamil communities. During Cyclone Ditwah, both organisations worked closely with state structures to respond to issues faced by estate communities and showed an understanding of the marginalisation and access barriers experienced by these communities. NPC also conducted an online pre-orientation meeting with the selected district partners to introduce the project, clarify expectations and discuss the next steps for implementation.

The HRD selection process began during May and June. NPC developed HRD selection criteria in consultation with the district partners. The criteria focus on community trust, existing engagement with estate sector communities, ability to support documentation and service access, language capacity, ethical conduct, confidentiality, conflict sensitivity, availability and ability to engage constructively with officials. The selection process is currently ongoing in both districts.

As part of the pre-activity phase, NPC conducted an initial community meeting in Hatton, bringing together potential HRDs including estate workers, community leaders, youth, university students, women's group members, school principals and local government representatives. The discussion provided valuable insight into the types of community-based actors who could serve as HRDs under the project and the practical access barriers faced by estate families.

The next phase of the project will include finalising the HRD cadre, conducting a post-Ditwah access scan, identifying priority cases and documenting access routes to compensation and services. Through this work, NPC aims to strengthen the capacity, safety and legitimacy of HRDs while helping estate sector communities secure more equitable access to essential services and disaster-related support.

NPC Pays Tribute to Dr. Devanesan Nesiah

NPC expresses its profound sorrow at the passing of Dr. Devanesan Nesiah, one of Sri Lanka's most respected public intellectuals, civil servants and advocates of peace and reconciliation. His life of public service, moral courage and intellectual integrity has left an enduring mark on Sri Lanka's search for a just and inclusive peace.

As Government Agent of Jaffna during one of the most turbulent periods in the country's history, Dr. Nesiah combined administrative competence with deep humanity in responding to the needs of people affected by violence and displacement. Throughout his career he demonstrated that public office was a trust to be exercised with fairness, independence and compassion rather than political expediency.

Following doctoral studies at Harvard University under Nobel Laureate Thomas Schelling, Dr. Nesiah brought a rare combination of academic insight and practical experience to the challenges of conflict resolution. He consistently argued that even in situations of seemingly intractable conflict, it was possible to identify common interests and build political solutions based on justice, equality and mutual respect. His writings and public interventions enriched national debate on devolution of power, minority rights and constitutional reform, always seeking practical ways that could command the confidence of all communities.

Dr Nesiah's commitment to reconciliation was rooted in a broader vision of human dignity. He rejected discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, caste or any other form of exclusion as human constructs, and believed that Sri Lanka's diversity was a source of strength rather than division. He spoke truth to power regardless of personal cost and remained steadfast in his principles even when this affected his own public service career.

NPC was privileged to benefit from Dr. Nesiah's wisdom and guidance over many years. His thoughtful counsel, generosity towards younger peacebuilders and unwavering commitment to dialogue and nonviolence strengthened both our institution and the wider peace movement in Sri Lanka. His life exemplified the values of integrity, empathy and rational public engagement that remain essential to building a peaceful and democratic society. He inspired us to continue our work. NPC extends its heartfelt condolences to his family and all who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. We honour his memory by renewing our commitment to the ideals he championed and to the unfinished task of building a Sri Lanka in which every citizen can live with equality, security and dignity.



Sri Lankan Experience at South Asian Climate Summit

NPC took Sri Lanka's experience in responding to climate change and disaster recovery to the regional stage when Executive Director Dr. Jehan Perera, board member Mrs. Visaka Dharmadasa and Senior Project Officer Arafaath Rahby participated in the Climate, Peace and Security Summit in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The summit, organised by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) under the European Union funded Climate, Peace and Security (CLIMPSE) initiative, brought together government representatives, academics, civil society leaders and young peacebuilders from across South Asia to examine how climate change is affecting peace, security and development.

Addressing the conference and drawing from Sri Lanka's experience following Cyclone Ditwah, Dr. Perera said that climate action needs to move from the margins to the centre of development planning. He stressed that successful climate adaptation depends on public trust, stronger community participation and making better use of existing local institutions rather than creating new structures.

Mrs. Visaka Dharmadasa chaired the session on Women, Peace and Security, which was organised with UN Women. She challenged the portrayal of women as passive victims of climate disasters, pointing out that women are often the first responders within their families and communities and should be recognised as leaders in disaster preparedness, recovery and peacebuilding.

Senior Project Officer Arafaath Rahby represented Sri Lanka's younger generation of peacebuilders at the Youth Workshop that preceded the summit. Together with youth representatives from across South Asia, he contributed to discussions on strengthening youth leadership and regional cooperation in responding to climate change.

The NPC delegation also shared findings from research undertaken jointly with the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies and partner organisations on the impact of Cyclone Ditwah on affected communities. The research highlighted the importance of community participation, secure livelihoods and public trust in strengthening resilience to future climate related disasters.

The summit concluded with a commitment to strengthen regional cooperation and ensure that the voices of communities, women and young people play a greater role in shaping climate action across South Asia.



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Community Action Transforms Life in a Rural Village

For many years the residents of Palu Wewa, a small rural village in the Polonnaruwa District, lived with a challenge that many communities take for granted - access to safe drinking water. Every night, long after most people had gone to sleep, families in the village would wake up to collect water whenever it finally flowed through the taps.

Palu Wewa was established in 1996 under a government resettlement programme. Today around 250 families, approximately 1,500 people, call the village home. Most residents depend on daily wage labour, making access to essential services even more critical to their quality of life.

The community had relied on four tube wells and a natural spring to meet their daily water needs. Although the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) later introduced a piped water supply, the service came with a significant limitation. Due to low water pressure, water reached the village only after midnight.

This meant that women, men and children had no choice but to collect water during the early hours of the morning. The routine exposed them to numerous dangers, including encounters with wild elephants, theft and other security risks. Beyond the physical dangers, the disrupted sleep and uncertainty affected the wellbeing and daily routines of the community.

The root of the problem lay in geography. Palu Wewa is situated at a higher elevation than the main water distribution line, resulting in inadequate water pressure during the daytime. While a new water pipeline had already been constructed from Medirigiriya to a point just 1.5 kilometres away from the village, the final connection to the community had never been completed.

Over the years, residents repeatedly sought assistance. They learnt that a proposal for a new water supply scheme worth Rs. 15 million had been submitted for government approval. However, with no immediate implementation in sight, the community continued to wait while their daily struggles persisted.

Recognising the urgent need for action, the Women Organized for Inclusion through Community Engagement (WOICE) project brought together community members and government officials to identify a practical, affordable and sustainable solution without waiting for a large scale infrastructure project.



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The discussion brought together key stakeholders, including the village's Grama Niladhari, development officer, representatives from the NWSDB and project facilitators. Rather than focusing solely on the challenges, the meeting explored realistic opportunities for collaboration.

During the discussion, the Officer in charge of the NWSDB presented an immediate solution. If the community was willing to excavate the required trench through collective voluntary effort, the board would provide the necessary pipes, technical expertise and installation support to connect the existing pipeline directly to the village. This partnership would make it possible to deliver a continuous daily supply of safe drinking water to the community.

The proposal was met with optimism and demonstrated that solving development challenges does not always require waiting for major investments. Sometimes, meaningful progress can be achieved when communities and government institutions work together, each contributing their strengths toward a shared goal.

Promoting Understanding and Collaboration Through Dialogue

Under its Plural Action for Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Social Justice (PAIRS) project NPC, in collaboration with the Nuwara Eliya District Secretariat, the Walapane and Nildandahinna Divisional Secretariats, the Nuwara Eliya District Inter Religious Committee (DIRC) and the Cultural and Environment Society, organised a special mobile service programme on delivering effective services for communities affected by the Ditwah cyclone.

The programme was implemented by Nuwara Eliya DIRC to address the urgent needs of communities affected by the disaster, covering 110 Grama Niladhari Divisions across the district and benefitting over 3,000 people.

Many families lost essential documents, including birth certificates, identity cards, marriage certificates and death certificates. The remoteness of the areas, together with the absence of these documents, created significant barriers to accessing government relief and other public services.

To address these challenges, the programme set up a one stop service platform that brought together relevant government institutions to provide direct services and support to beneficiaries. The government institutions participating in the programme included the Pradeshiya Sabha, the National Building Research Organisation (NBRO), the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), the Disaster Relief Services Division, the District and Provincial Road Development Authorities, Regional Agrarian Service Centres and Small Enterprise Development Units, who provided on site assistance and services enabling affected families to obtain information, submit applications and access services.



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The special mobile service clinic was attended by Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education Madura Seneviratne, District Secretary of Nuwara Eliya, Additional District Secretaries, the Divisional Secretaries of Walapane and Nildandahinna, field level government officials and stakeholders.

Also under the project, a civil society dialogue on strengthening the national reconciliation process was held in Anuradhapura organised by NPC together with Anuradhapura DIRC, the District Citizens' Committee and the NGO Consortium, bringing together 110 participants including civil society leaders, government officers and media representatives.

Sessions at the meeting included social issues related to missing persons, building reconciliation and the responsibility of civil society in building a just society. The facilitators were Mr. Manjula Gajanayake, Executive Director, Institute for Democratic Reforms and Electoral Studies; Professor Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, University of Colombo; and Mr. Rohana Hettiarachchi, Executive Director of PAFFREL.

Participants discussed a range of issues related to reconciliation as well as the current political, economic and social situation, sharing their views, raising concerns and exchanging ideas on the challenges facing society and the role of citizens and civil society organisations in promoting reconciliation, social justice and democratic values.

“People need not only food but also dignity and recognition. Families of missing persons need hope and society must continue to have open discussions on this issue. In a democratic society, both the power of the people and the authority of the government should always be exercised for the public good. However, for many years, we have witnessed governments that have failed to prioritise the welfare of the people. This is why it is important to continue these discussions. Citizens and civil society must not become passive or silent. If civil society remains inactive, it creates space for authoritarian rule to grow,” said Mr. R.M. Nihal Rathnayaka from the March 12 Campaign.

“When discussing the issue of missing persons, an important question is what steps the government plans to take in the future. Whether they are Sinhala or Tamil, there are still many parents who continue to live in the hope that one day their children will return home. Another key concern is the support provided to the families of the missing. While some may receive material assistance, they have still not received adequate psychological support or clear answers about the fate of their loved ones. These families continue to seek truth, justice and closure,” said Ms. Gangani Dissanayaka, Chairperson of the Aurora Foundation.



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In Kegalle, the team distributed supplies to a school and an elders' home impacted by Cyclone Ditwah. In collaboration with Kegalle DIRC and the People Development Foundation library cupboards, tables and a collection of library books were handed over to a rural school. A storage cupboard, kitchen racks, walking aids and crutches were donated to an elders' home.

The team worked with the Monaragala District Secretariat, Monaragala and Medagama Divisional Secretariats and the Community Resource Protection Centre to distribute dry rations to 49 families whose houses were destroyed by the cyclone and were facing livelihood challenges. The majority of the beneficiaries were from the Malaiyaha Tamil community, one of the most vulnerable groups impacted by the disaster.

An youth actualisation activity was held under the project in collaboration with the University Of Jaffna and Social Organization Networking For Development, bringing together 60 participants, including Jaffna University students representing different religions.

Student leaders said that Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim students at Jaffna University were experiencing poor understanding and weak relationships due to cultural differences, language barriers and limited interaction. The students emphasised the need for inclusive activities, dialogue and collaboration to build mutual respect, strengthen communication and promote peaceful coexistence among all ethnic groups at the university.

The event offered an opportunity for students from the three communities to discuss the issues that prevented them from working together effectively. They were able to share personal experiences, understand each other's perspectives and collectively explore practical solutions. The programme built mutual respect, strengthened relationships and encouraged a more collaborative atmosphere.

“The event was useful and meaningful for all of us. The workshop provided a valuable platform to learn from one another and appreciate our differences. It created a friendly and respectful environment where students from diverse backgrounds could come together and share their thoughts openly. We had the opportunity to directly discuss our problems and concerns with fellow students. I would like to express my gratitude to NPC and the university administration for organising such an impactful event. More programmes like will greatly contribute to harmony and cooperation among students,” said Nayomi from the Jaffna University Faculty of Law.



Rise in Global Peace Index Must be Matched by Democratic Reforms

The National Peace Council congratulates the government and the people of Sri Lanka on the country's rise from 97th to 67th place in the 2026 Global Peace Index. At a time when global peacefulness has declined for the twelfth consecutive year and South Asia has become one of the world's least peaceful regions, Sri Lanka's achievement demonstrates that progress is possible when democratic governance, accountability and political stability are strengthened. However, this important achievement should not lead to complacency. It should provide the impetus to complete the reforms that remain unfinished and that are essential to securing a just and lasting peace.

The next step is to match progress in peace rankings with tangible progress in democratic reform, reconciliation and justice. Completing these long promised reforms will lay a firm foundation for national development that is sustainable. The National Peace Council urges the government to honour its commitment to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act as promised and replace it with legislation that fully complies with international human rights standards while safeguarding national security. We also call for the prompt completion of investigations into missing persons, including the Chemmani mass grave excavations, and for the truth and justice sought by affected families to be delivered without further delay.

NPC also calls on the government to move decisively to strengthen national reconciliation by advancing meaningful power sharing. In this regard, the long delayed Provincial Council elections should be held without further prevarication. The government has the responsibility, and the parliamentary majority, to make the necessary amendment to the Provincial Council Election Act to hold the election without further delay. Restoring elected Provincial Councils is both a constitutional obligation and an important confidence building measure that will strengthen democratic participation and demonstrate the government's commitment to political inclusion and devolution of power.

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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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