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இலங்கை தேசிய சமாதானப் பேரவை
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



Paths To Peace

November 2025

Cyclone Relief Appeal

Dear Friends,

Sri Lanka is living through a national catastrophe without precedent, with Cyclone Ditwah leaving a trail of destruction across almost the entire country. The full scale of the disaster wreaked on Sri Lanka is still to be realised. It has resulted in a devastating nationwide emergency in Sri Lanka, affecting more than 1.4 million people across 22 out of 25 districts as of 02 Dec 2025. The cyclone has caused 410 confirmed deaths and 336 people remain missing.

Preliminary assessments indicate that more than 30,000 homes have been destroyed or damaged. Over 200 roads remain impassable, at least 10 bridges have been damaged and sections of the rail network and national power grid affected. As government agencies, volunteers and civil society groups struggle to meet urgent needs, the National Peace Council is working with local partners and its volunteer-based District Inter Religious Committees to bring food, dry rations, safe water, medicines and basic supplies to those who have lost everything.

We appeal to all who are able to contribute, even in a small way, to support our humanitarian efforts. Your donation will help us reach families who are stranded, displaced or grieving and ensure that assistance is given to those from every community.

Bank name	Hatton National Bank PLC
Account name	National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Guarantee) Ltd
Currency of account	Sri Lanka Rupee
Account number	043010074017
BIC/Swift/Sort code	HBLILKLX
Bank address	No 22 Edmonton Road, Kirulapane, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka



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NPC's District Inter Religious Committees Deliver Swift Relief to Cyclone Casualties

In the face of severe flooding that has displaced thousands across Sri Lanka, the power of local peacebuilding networks has come through. District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs), NPC's community-based formations, swiftly mobilised to provide critical relief to over 1,500 cyclone-affected people in seven districts.

While national efforts address the large scale crisis, the DIRCs comprising local religious leaders, civil society activists and volunteers have demonstrated the strength of organised, compassionate community action. Their response goes beyond distributing aid; it is a testament to solidarity that transcends ethnic and religious lines during a shared national hardship.

A Snapshot of Grassroots Impact

From the North Central plains to the Southern coast, DIRC networks activated independently and in partnership, proving themselves as capable first responders.

- A vital free medical clinic was launched in Kurunegala through a partnership between the Kurunegala DIRC and Didulasa Medical Centre, providing a swift response to the flood emergency. The service was targeted at communities severely impacted by the rising waters of the Daduru Oya. Recognising the immediate health risks posed by floodwaters, the initiative provided comprehensive medical checkups and distributed essential medicines free of charge. This effort aimed to prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases and address urgent health needs among displaced and affected families. Headed by DIRC members including Saman Keerthi Bandaranayake and supported by the voluntary medical expertise of Dr. Bawantha Tennakoon, the clinic stands as evidence to community solidarity and proactive humanitarian intervention during a time of need.



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- Anuradhapura DIRC, with support from the Sri Lanka Centre for Development Facilitation, voluntarily provided over 895 meals across three days to displaced families in Mihintale and Rabeewa, ensuring nutritional support during the most acute phase of displacement.
- Kurunegala DIRC distributed cooked meals, dry rations, medicine, clothing and sanitation items to 300 people. Volunteers assisted in cleaning mud filled homes as floodwaters receded.
- In Matara, a sustained relief operation continues from the Ganewatta Purana Temple with DIRC Coordinator Amarasena Samarathunga and Venerable Ratmalketiye Siridamma Thero leading the distribution of essential dry rations, medicines and sanitation items to affected families.
- Practical solidarity was shown in Monaragala where DIRC volunteers independently organised to clean the flood-affected Kammari Amman Kovil and its surroundings, restoring a vital place of worship and community.
- Simultaneous, targetted actions provided lunch packets and sanitary items to 80 beneficiaries in Polonnaruwa, meals for 220 individuals in Vavuniya and dry rations, clothing and sanitary support to families in Kegalle.

This crisis response is not an isolated event but a reflection of a deeper mission. The DIRCs, formed and empowered by NPC to build trust and cooperation among diverse communities, have proven their infrastructure is not just for dialogue but also for action. When disaster strikes, these established networks of trust become channels of immediate humanitarian aid, demonstrating that the true foundation of peace is practical empathy and shared responsibility.

The extraordinary initiative, empathy and sensitivity shown by all DIRC coordinators, members, partner organisations and local donors is worthy of commendation. Their quick, voluntary response embodies the spirit of resilient and harmonious communities towards the goal of sustainable peace.



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Civil Society Meets President for Dialogue

NPC's Executive Director Dr Jehan Perera took part in the first structured dialogue between civil society groups and the NPP government at a meeting to review the national response to Cyclone Ditwah. A small delegation from the CSO-NGO Collective was invited to the Presidential Secretariat together with senior members of the government team handling the crisis. The invitation itself signalled a willingness to draw on the experience and reach of civil society at a moment when the country faces an unprecedented humanitarian and reconstruction challenge.

The President outlined the broad contours of the government's approach. He noted the breakdown in communications and access in several parts of the country and said that the response was being organised in related phases: immediate rescue, support for displaced communities, early recovery and the restoration of basic infrastructure. He also referred to the loss of crops and the short window available to restart cultivation.

In his remarks the President recognised the contribution made by civic groups during past emergencies and said that organisations were free to act as they saw fit. He noted that the government would share information to help ensure that relief reached areas of acute need and added that a focal point from the Presidential Secretariat or the relevant ministry would be identified to maintain contact with CSOs during the relief and recovery period.

The CSO representatives briefed the President on ongoing work already underway at local level, including the mobilisation of volunteers, technical expertise, emergency supplies and community networks. They stressed the need for clear instructions from central government to district and divisional authorities to regard CSOs as partners in the response effort so that those already active on the ground are able to function without obstruction.

They also raised the continuing problem of government communications being issued only in Sinhala and urged that all public information regarding relief, recovery and compensation be released in both Sinhala and Tamil. They noted that the sector was willing to assist the government in attaining this basic standard of bilingual communication. Other points raised included the need to facilitate any incoming relief goods such as water purification equipment, the value of engaging religious institutions that have significant capacity and the importance of ensuring that the declaration of emergency does not lead to abuses.

The meeting was attended by the Foreign Minister, Health Minister, Rural Development Minister, Treasury Secretary, the heads of the armed forces and police and senior officials from the NGO Secretariat and the Presidential Secretariat.



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Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Social Empowerment

NPC, through its ongoing Women Organized for Inclusion through Community Engagement (WOICE) project, implemented a two day national level campaign in Kandy, bringing together 120 women leaders representing the districts of Kandy, Kegalle, Matara, Monaragala, Polonnaruwa, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya, marking a significant milestone in advancing women's political participation, leadership and social equity.

The national campaign comprised a peaceful march followed by two rounds of scholarly panel discussions. The central theme focused on advocating for a 25 percent women's quota in the upcoming Provincial Council elections and addressing the rising concerns related to verbal violence against women in political and public spaces.

Women leaders held a peaceful demonstration carrying advocacy messages and awareness raising slogans, demonstrating an united call for structural reforms to strengthen women's representation in regional governance. Following the march two academic discussion forums were held, stimulating dialogue and reflections on women's political empowerment.

The first panel discussion featured distinguished speakers, including Chamindrani Kiriella MP and lawyer, Chandana Udagedara lawyer and Dr Nayana Premasiri former Medical Officer of Maternal and Child Health in the Kurunegala District. Their contributions provided multidimensional perspectives on the intersection between women's political participation, gender-based violence, legal safeguards and community level challenges.

The second panel discussion brought together local political leaders and women representatives who entered politics as a direct result of empowerment initiatives under the WOICE Project. The forum created a platform for emerging women leaders to articulate their views, identify barriers and propose practical solutions to increase women's participation in decision making roles. Participants displayed the enthusiasm and critical engagement of women leaders from grassroots communities.



During the discussions, Ms Kiriella emphasised the significance of enhancing women's representation in political institutions. "The female population in Sri Lanka is approximately 52 percent. Therefore, women have a significant responsibility within the country's electoral process. We must bring more women decision makers into leadership. It is not something that can be achieved instantly but it can begin at the smallest electoral levels. For that, empowerment is essential. Programmes like these help women to identify community issues and generate solutions. This social intervention by NPC deserves appreciation," she said.

The women leaders visited the Temple of the Tooth, the Meera Maccam Mosque, the Kataragama Devalaya and a Christian church. They also organised a fellowship session at the Peradeniya Botanical Garden during which they shared ideas and reflections.

A cluster intervention organised in Kandy and Kegalle for 60 women leaders who participated in a scholarly dialogue advocating for gender equality and political inclusion through peaceful engagement and public discourse.

The Kegalle WOICE Women's Group and Youth Group organised an intervention activity that created a common platform for women entrepreneurs from marginalised communities to market their products, promoting economic empowerment and amplifying the voices of women who often remain excluded from mainstream economic opportunities.

Preparations have been initiated for a cluster intervention involving the Matara, Monaragala and Polonnaruwa districts to ensure continuity of momentum and reinforce NPC's commitment to promoting inclusive governance, strengthening women's leadership capacities and fostering long term community reconciliation.

Through the WOICE Project, NPC continues to advance a transformative agenda that recognises women not only as beneficiaries but as active agents of social change, capable of shaping more peaceful, equitable and democratic futures for their communities.



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Government, Religious and Community Leaders Unite for Change

Eight actualisation activities were conducted across the country under NPC's Plural Action for Inclusion, Reconciliation and Social Justice (PAIRS) project, funded by Misereor and co-funded by CAFOD. In addition, 15 local and provincial level dialogues with religious leaders and government officials have been held by District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs) to advocate locally and nationally for social justice and inclusive reconciliation.

NPC gathered its grassroots network for a progress review meeting of PAIRS project, bringing together 48 leaders including heads of partner organisations, DIRC coordinators and members from 16 districts. The meeting fostered a dynamic exchange of experiences and strategies.

"This project has been instrumental in helping us with a meaningful connection with higher levels of state partnership. Government officials now recognise us because they have seen our consistent efforts to understand grassroots issues and develop practical solutions. They no longer hesitate to support our work. We have built a foundation of trust and mutual respect that will enable us to continue our mission far more effectively," said Chaminda Piyasekara from Ratnapura.

NPC, in collaboration with the Nuwara Eliya and Kandy DIRCs, convened a high level meeting of religious leaders from the Central Province, bringing together 40 religious leaders to foster new connections for provincial peacebuilding. The dialogue reflected a strong, shared commitment to advancing inter-community harmony and mutual respect across the region.



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“The programme showed how religious leaders and government officials can effectively work together on local issues. The presence of the District Secretariat signalled that community concerns can reach decision makers,” said A. Nandakumar Kurukkal, Chairperson of Ceylon Hindu Priest Association in Nuwara Eliya.

NPC convened an inter religious meeting for the North Western Province, bringing together 40 religious leaders from Kurunegala and Puttalam districts, many engaging with the official peace network for the first time. The meeting, organised in collaboration with the Kurunegala and Puttalam DIRCs and local government partners, served as a vital platform for dialogue. A key outcome was the strong consensus on the unique role of religious leaders in bridging community divides while transforming dialogue into tangible action for peace and social justice across the province.

“We as monks often lack real understanding of other faiths and their places of worship. We must instill a positive attitude about all of Sri Lanka’s religions in our children. Now is the time to build strategies for stronger religious and national cooperation,” said Ven. Karakorale Piyadassi Thero.

NPC organised a meeting of 20 religious leaders in Matara, many engaging formally for the first time. The dialogue unlocked a collective commitment to advance social harmony, with participants discussing strategies for strengthening inclusion and reconciliation at the provincial level. A key outcome was the direct identification of structural gaps, alongside a pledge from all leaders to bridge these divides through sustained collaboration.

“Participating in this inclusive interfaith discussion was a first for me in the Southern Province and a deeply valuable experience. I can affirm that the Catholic priests are fully ready to support and strengthen these harmony building initiatives into the future,” said Fr. Sampath Wilegoda.

A religious leaders’ meeting in Jaffna brought together 10 multi-faith representatives and key district officials to translate the project's goals into actionable local strategy. The forum provided a focused platform to jointly review progress, analyse challenges in community level interventions and strengthen the critical link between civil society and government. The collaborative dialogue reinforced a shared commitment to practical peacebuilding and enhanced the framework for inclusive, community-driven reconciliation efforts across the district.

A skills development programme was held for 120 youth in Moneragala, connecting youth with key government agencies and offering onsite enrollment into vocational training programmes. The programme not only opened doors to future careers but also empowered youth to advocate for their needs as their immediate feedback has shaped a request for Tamil language course materials and advanced residential training.

“The programme was beneficial and the first of its kind conducted in Tamil. For the first time we received clear, proper guidance in our own language about the training courses we can choose. This is a valuable opportunity to build a better future unlike the uncertain daily wage labour many of us face,” said L. Indumathi.

An actualisation programme in Badulla brought together 300 persons with special needs, government officers and community leaders to address critical needs by clarifying access to social protection schemes, disability benefits and assistive devices while tackling systemic barriers, institutional accessibility and information gaps.

With participation of youth leaders and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), these initiatives engaged over 4,263 (1,421 direct and 2,842 indirect) beneficiaries, transforming identified issues into tangible solutions for peace and inclusion.



Make Sri Lankan Day a Shared National Event

The government is proceeding with its plans to hold Sri Lankan Day celebrations on December 12-14 in Colombo as a national platform to bring every community together. The event, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, aims to promote unity. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's recent outreach to Tamil and Muslim political parties to brief them on the preparations for Sri Lankan Day is a constructive step. Engagement of this nature strengthens trust and widens the sense of collective ownership.

The vision behind this event would be to create a space where all citizens can feel included and respected regardless of political, religious or cultural identity. The National Peace Council believes it is very important that opposition parties and civil society organisations are also included so that the event reflects the full diversity of the country.

Civil society organisations in particular have supported reconciliation and community engagement even during the most difficult periods of conflict. They have long upheld the values that Sri Lankan Day seeks to promote. Their experience, presence at the grassroots, and long record of building bridges between communities place them in a unique position to contribute to the success of national initiatives of this kind.

Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath speaking at the recent event held by the Association of War Affected Women together with the National Peace Council and the Peoples Action for Free and Fair Elections marking the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 recognised that civil society can be an ally in addressing national challenges. The willingness he signalled to work together suggested the possibility of moving from distance to dialogue, and from limited contact to cooperation.

We believe that Sri Lankan Day offers an opportunity to consolidate this positive shift. For the event to achieve its purpose, the planning and implementation process needs to reflect the principles it seeks to celebrate. We therefore urge the government to involve civil society organisations in a structured manner as preparations move forward. A collaborative approach will demonstrate that reconciliation is not only a goal of the government but a shared national effort.

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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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