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இலங்கை தேசிய சமாதானப் பேரவை
National Peace Council of Sri Lanka



Paths To Peace

October 2025

Advocating for Electoral Reform

As part of the ongoing initiatives under NPC's Active Citizens for Elections and Democracy (ACED) project, funded by the European Union (EU), a team of project partners led by Rohana Hettiarachchi, Executive Director of PAFFREL, engaged in a series of discussions with several political parties, including the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Social Justice Party.

A statement comprising 22 proposed areas for electoral reform covering topics such as establishing an electoral calendar, introducing advance voting, campaign financing regulations, political party registration, expanding and strengthening the independence of the Election Commission, criteria for national list appointments, party crossovers, protection of voting rights for differently-abled citizens, limiting the number of candidates contesting presidential elections, electoral system improvements and measures to further empower voters was prepared and shared with political parties prior to the discussions. Following the meetings, the parties were invited to submit additional proposals or reforms they wished to see incorporated as part of a collective pathway toward meaningful electoral reform.

The project team met with the SJB and had discussions with Secretary Ranjith Madduma Bandara and several party members. Another meeting was held with the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, attended by several party representatives including its General Secretary, Dr. G. Weerasinghe. Discussions focused on strengthening the financial independence of the Election Commission, limiting campaign expenditure and ensuring elections were held within constitutionally mandated timelines. The engagement was enriched by contributions from senior party members known for their long standing political experience and association with late prominent political figures.

The team also met with the Social Justice Party. Party Leader Arqam Muneer and senior representatives participated in a comprehensive discussion on each of the reform recommendations.

These engagements will continue with other political parties in the coming months with the aim of building broad-based consensus among political and civic stakeholders to strengthen a fair, transparent and accountable electoral framework in Sri Lanka. Project Manager Ben Perinpanayagam and Senior Project Officer Sampath Randunna attended these meetings representing NPC.



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Advancing Community Engagement Through Interventions

NPC's Women Organized for Inclusion through Community Engagement (WOICE) project carried out a series of intervention programmes addressing locally identified community issues. These activities, implemented across multiple districts, aimed to empower communities, improve livelihoods and promote awareness of critical social issues.

In Polonnaruwa, the district WOICE women's team initiated its first intervention by creating a natural elephant fence in the Minneriya area to mitigate the impact of elephant invasions on local communities. Lime and hana plants were used to establish the fence, which is expected to offer environmental and economic benefits contributing to the long term empowerment of the residents. Their second activity focused on water security with a shramadana programme organised in Hingurakgoda to clean and maintain a natural water spring. Villagers and government officials participated, ensuring proper upkeep of the spring and access to clean water for the community. The third intervention in Hingurakgoda targetted youth health, raising awareness among young people about the dangers of using harmful cosmetic products, aiming to prevent skin diseases and promote healthier choices.

In Matara, the WOICE team conducted a programme guiding school leaving youth towards vocational education opportunities, equipping them with knowledge and referral pathways to pursue sustainable careers. In Kegalle, a programme was organized to integrate marginalised communities involved in the pot industry. The initiative provided a platform to discuss daily challenges, professional concerns and foster engagement with local authorities.

The Badulla District WOICE team carried out a mobile programme at Spring Valley Estate to provide essential identity documents including birth certificates, national identity cards and marriage certificates to community members who lacked them. The initiative received strong support from government agencies and the WOICE Women's Team continues to assist residents in completing the necessary documentation.

A cluster intervention by the Badulla and Nuwara Eliya District WOICE women's teams focused on enhancing women's representation in upcoming Provincial Council elections and addressing verbal violence against women. Activities included a peaceful community march, public awareness sessions and lectures on women's leadership. The chief police officers of the Women's and Children's Affairs Division of the Badulla Hali Ela police played a significant role in supporting the programme.



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Grassroots Initiatives Pave the Way for an Unified Sri Lanka

Sixteen actualisation activities were held across the country under NPC's Plural Action for Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Social Justice (PAIRS) project, funded by Misereor and co-funded by CAFOD. Driven by District Inter Religious Committees (DIRCs), youth leaders and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), these initiatives engaged over 6,828 (1,707 direct and 5,121 indirect) beneficiaries, transforming identified issues into tangible solutions for peace and inclusion.

Badulla

NPC and its partner Future In Our Hands Badulla held a session on promoting equal language access and inclusive transport services at the Sri Lanka Transport Board depot in Badulla. This community driven intervention addressed the lack of accurate trilingual signage in a district that is home to a large Tamil speaking population. The programme secured a commitment to rectify 100 inaccurate bus name boards and install new trilingual signage. Key actions included upgrading destination boards, installing inclusive seat stickers for clergy, women and persons with disabilities and coordinating with authorities for sustainable implementation.

Vavuniya

NPC, in partnership with the Federation of Institution for Rural Management, executed a CSO actualisation activity at the Vavuniya District General Hospital to address a critical barrier in a hospital that serves a diverse multi ethnic population. The initiative focused on the language inequality that caused confusion and delays for non-Sinhala speaking patients. The solution was the installation of 32 comprehensive trilingual nameboards throughout the facility, providing clear information in Sinhala, Tamil and English to ensure every patient, regardless of linguistic background, can navigate the hospital with dignity and ease.

The impact of this initiative was illustrated by a returning visitor from Britain who had previously endured a stressful experience trying to find his way through the hospital to purchase medicine, hindered by the lack of English directions. The new signs guided him effortlessly to his destination.

In a revival of a cherished tradition Vavuniya DIRC, in partnership with NPC, reinvigorated the historic Pournami Festival. This festival had stood as a powerful symbol of coexistence in a region scarred by ethnic conflict, yet in recent years its spirit of inclusivity had diminished with declining participation. The DIRC orchestrated a remarkable comeback by broadening engagement across religious lines and generations through the involvement of school students. The result was an event attended 200 participants, including multi-faith religious leaders, local residents and youth.



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Matara

NPC, in collaboration with the Environment and Community Development Information Centre and Ratnapura DIRC, conducted an actualisation activity for youth leaders. Many youths in plantation communities face unemployment after completing school due to limited access to vocational training opportunities, which forces them to continue working on plantations and perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality. To address this issue, a programme on directing unemployed youth to vocational training courses was organized to connect youth with career and training opportunities. The session featured a discussion highlighting government-led vocational programmes and employment pathways with officials from the National Youth Services Council, National Youth Corps, National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority and the Technical College, Ratnapura. Over 100 youth participants attended, engaging with representatives who distributed recruitment forms, collected participant details and initiated steps to enroll interested youth in vocational courses.

“These young people, born and raised on plantations, have finally received a rare and valuable opportunity. It is not easy for officials from government institutions to reach such remote areas. This initiative is a remarkable first step that can transform lives and contribute to a more prosperous nation,” said K. Udayakumar, Plantation Community Officer, Divisional Secretariat, Ratnapura.

In an intervention to save a declining traditional industry NPC, in collaboration with the Community Development Centre and Matara DIRC, convened a dialogue to address the challenges faced by reed industry entrepreneurs - a community marginalised by caste and now struggling with limited innovation, generational disinterest and a distrust of government support systems. The forum bridged this gap, bringing together over 60 artisans with officials from the National Crafts Council, Vocational Training Authority, Industrial Development Board and National Youth Services Council. While immediate production issues were addressed and officials pledged ongoing support, the key outcome was a formal agreement for Matara DIRC to consolidate these concerns into a concrete proposal for state and political authorities.

NPC, in partnership with the Community Development Centre and Matara DIRC, held a dialogue on enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities, convening 50 participants with disabilities from across five divisions with officials tasked with serving them. The initiative marked a shift from passive receipt of services to active civic engagement as the community advocated for their rights and accessed crucial information on legal entitlements and opportunities. The dialogue revealed a willingness from both sides to bridge existing gaps; government officials demonstrated notable enthusiasm, using the platform to establish direct connections and commit to immediate solutions. M.A.M. Yeise of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, said, “The government has also provided various opportunities for the disabled community and I am truly happy to have participated in this programme, which helped us learn more. If we continue to work together without discrimination, we can move forward in unity and strength.”



Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura DIRC, in collaboration with NPC and a coalition of government bodies, held a dialogue between the district state mechanism and the community to address the marginalisation of the Telugu community. The discussion unveiled a spectrum of critical issues from systemic discrimination in public services and schools to drug abuse, lack of land rights and serious child safety concerns related to fortune telling practices. District Secretary Ranjith Wimalasooriya pledged immediate action against discrimination and announced the development of a model mechanism to solve these issues while the Senior Superintendent of Police committed to involving mothers in school committees to monitor child safety and substance use.

Polonnaruwa

An actualisation activity to address the lack of services in the Dimbulagala area was held, bringing documentation and governmental support directly to 180 beneficiaries across 56 Grama Niladhari divisions. The event marked a significant step toward administrative inclusion, particularly for indigenous communities, as experienced by tribal leader Amarasinghe Priyantha Attho and his wife S. Malkanthi who, after years of legal invisibility, finally began the process of obtaining identity cards and birth certificates for their children. The mobile clinic facilitated the issuance of numerous crucial documents including birth, marriage and death certificates while providing a platform for direct community engagement with officials. The Dimbulagala Divisional Secretary said that Polonnaruwa DIRC has built a sustainable bridge between the government and the people - a testament to NPC's strategic approach to inclusion.

Kegalle

NPC, in collaboration with the People Development Foundation and the Dehiovita Divisional Secretariat, launched the actualisation activity to confront a critical gap in local governance: the systemic under representation of key communities in formal reconciliation processes. The programme empowered participants from the plantation sector and Muslim backgrounds with mediation skills, transforming them from passive subjects of conflict into active architects of peace within their own communities.

Puttalam

In a move to address decades of systemic neglect, NPC, in partnership with the Wanathawilluwa Divisional Secretariat and DIRC Puttalam, launched an intervention in the marginalised village of Malwila. Home to 67 families from Buddhist, Hindu and Christian backgrounds, this community has endured water scarcity, treacherous roads and a lack of basic religious and educational facilities. An action plan was formulated after a discussion with villagers that included the presentation of a Village Development Report to authorities, the construction of a community water well to end the hardship faced by women and children who currently travel long distances for water and the establishment of an inter religious Sunday school to sow the seeds of harmony in the next generation.



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Government Must Seize the Moment to Deliver Justice and Reconciliation

Sri Lanka stands at a moment when political intent, social demand, and institutional opportunity align. The people have given the new government a decisive majority and a clear mandate for change. With a two-thirds majority in Parliament, a largely cooperative opposition, and an expectant population, the government now has a unique opportunity to deliver on its promises of system change and to move forward on long-delayed justice and reconciliation.

The National Peace Council (NPC) urges the government to act with urgency and decisiveness to implement its transitional justice commitments as part of building a fairer and more inclusive state. Delivering justice now would rebuild trust among communities, restore Sri Lanka's credibility internationally, and lay a foundation for renewed investment and rapid economic development. On the other hand, continued delay in addressing the grievances of communities affected by past violence not only erodes confidence in the government's sincerity but also risks allowing other issues to sidetrack the reform agenda.

Findings from the Sri Lanka Barometer, a national survey on reconciliation jointly funded by the EU and the German government, with field work done in the early part of this year, shows that political trust had declined in the Northern and Eastern provinces and was the lowest among all provinces. The report notes that "longstanding justice claims related to the war remain unresolved, continuing to erode trust and reflecting the fractured relationship between Tamil communities and the state."

At the community level, Tamil groups continue to demand reparations for losses suffered during and after the war. Reparations are not merely financial; they are acknowledgements that lives lost mattered and commitments to prevent recurrence. The Valvettithurai Citizens' Committee has appealed to the Office for Reparations regarding the 1989 massacre in which 66 civilians were killed and 34 injured during operations by the Indian Peacekeeping Force. This makes clear that time does not heal wounds that have never been recognised.

In addition, Muslim civic groups continue to seek justice for those killed in massacres and riots that remain unresolved to this day—Kattankudy (1990), Palliyagodella (1992), Aluthgama (2014), and Digana (2018). These tragedies still cast long shadows over communities whose pain has yet to be acknowledged. The Catholic Church has also voiced deep disappointment at the slow pace of investigations into the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings and has renewed its call for an independent public prosecutor, a key election pledge. Many years after tragedy, justice remains elusive.

NPC cautions against the danger of unjustified complacency following the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution adopted last month in Geneva, which gives Sri Lanka two more years to fulfil its commitments on accountability, truth-seeking, and reparations. The resolution also de-emphasises the need for an international mechanism at this time. NPC stands prepared to support the government in mobilising public and civil society support for reconciliation and transitional justice initiatives through national mechanisms and with international support. With the political power to legislate and the people's demand for change clear, this is the moment for the government to act.

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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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