

VOICE OF THE PLANTATION PEOPLE ORGANIZATION

Meeting Report with the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Date of Meeting: 16th January 2025

Venue: Office of the Prime Minister, Colombo

Introduction

On 16th June 2025, the Voice of the Plantation People Organization (VPPO) held a significant meeting with the Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasooriya, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, at the Prime Minister's Office in Colombo.

The Prime Minister and her team welcomed the delegation warmly and engaged in a meaningful discussion. Each concern was listened to attentively, and the Prime Minister gave thoughtful responses, outlining potential pathways forward

Participants:

1. Anthony Jesudasan – Executive Director – Voice of the Plantation People Organization - VOPP
2. K.H. Lavina Hasanthi Perera – Program Director – VOPP
3. Francis Raajan - National Program officer - VOPP
4. Anton Wanaththaiya – Field Manager – Matara District -VOPP
5. Arokkiyam Jesman – Coordinator – Galle District -VOPP
6. K. Yogasuji – Coordinator – Kalutara District --VOPP
7. S. Jeyakumar – Labour (Active member of - Galle District -VOPP)
8. S. Sadasivam – Consultant - Matara District -VOPP
9. Dinesh Sevandi – Volunteer - Matara District -VOPP
10. P.Chandra Dilan – Labour – (Active member of Galle District -VOPP)
11. M. Devika – Labour – (Women leader Galle District -VOPP)
12. Sandanam Valliyamma – Labour (Women member - Galle District -VOPP)
13. K. Chandramadi – Labour (Women leader Matara District -VOPP)
14. Kathiresan Nandaguri (Teaching advisor – Kalutara District - VOPP)
15. Melani Manel Perera – Chairperson of Director Bord – VOPP

Key Issues Discussed

1. Land and Housing Rights

The first issue raised was the lack of legal ownership documents for lands and houses given to Malayaha families under various government programs from 1994 to 2022. Although some families received land alone, and others received both land and housing, approximately 90% still do not possess legal deeds or any documentation proving ownership.

The delegation requested the Prime Minister to:

- Expedite the issuance of legal documents for those who have been allocated land and/or houses.
- Provide permanent housing for families still living in line rooms under poor conditions.

Prime Minister's Response:

Hon . Dr. Amarasooriya responded positively, assuring that she would discuss the matter with relevant authorities. She encouraged the delegation to meet with Hon. Minister Samantha Widyaratna of the Ministry of Estate Infrastructure and Community Development, as well as District and Divisional Secretariats. Madam Prime minister promised to inform those officers and departments about the issue for further action.

2. Education Issues

The delegation highlighted the education challenges faced by Tamil-medium Malaiyaha (estate areas) schools in Kalutara, Matara, and Galle districts. These schools suffer from:

- A lack of teachers for core subjects like Mathematics, Science, English, Music, and Dance.
- Limited A/L streams, restricted to Arts and Commerce, with only a few subjects being offered.
- Teachers frequently transferring after only a short period, causing instability in learning.

The organization proposed:

- Appoint qualified teachers for Mathematics, Science, English, Music, and Dance subjects.
- Identifying qualified individuals from the estate communities for the teachers.
- Providing teacher training and appointing them locally to ensure long-term service.
- Providing facilities for the Matara, Galle and Kalutara Tamil Malaiyaha schools.

Prime Minister's Response:

As this falls under her ministry, Hon. Dr. Harini assured immediate attention. She committed to addressing the teacher shortages, expanding subject options, and looking into ways to retain teachers in estate schools.

Other Key Issues Raised

Women's Facilities on Estates

Women working in tea, rubber, and palm oil estates are particularly affected due to the lack of toilet and restroom facilities. These basic amenities are essential for ensuring dignity, hygiene, and safety.

Prime Minister's Response:

She expressed concern and committed to directing estate owners and relevant institutions to address this issue promptly.

Infrastructure and Living Conditions

Several infrastructure concerns were discussed:

- Many Malaiyaha families still live-in line rooms without access to clean water, proper toilets, or electricity.
- Roads from estates to towns are in very poor condition, some impassable during the rainy season.
- Nine families in Baddegama Hemmeliya Estate are reportedly being forced to vacate by private security personnel, creating a humanitarian crisis.

The delegation also asked for reconstruction of damaged internal estate roads.

Prime Minister's Response:

The Prime Minister acknowledged the seriousness of these issues and assured the delegation that she would take action. She also informed the group of a government plan to construct flat housing for underserved communities and requested assistance in identifying unused or government-owned land in plantation areas suitable for such developments.

Conclusion

The meeting was conducted in a cordial, respectful, and participatory manner. A key highlight was the Prime Minister's willingness to listen to each participant individually, creating a sense of equality and inclusiveness.

The Voice of the Plantation People Organization deeply appreciates the time, commitment, and positive responses of Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasekera. We look forward to seeing these issues prioritized and addressed with concrete actions in collaboration with the relevant ministries and local authorities.

Prepared by:

Voice of the Plantation People Organization

Date: 25th January 2025



