

Shelter, Land + Site Coordination Sector (SLSC) Advocacy Note, June 2026.

Cyclone Ditwah Impact Overview

Cyclone Ditwah affected 2.2 million people in all districts of Sri Lanka, with 1.2 million people identified in need and by December 2025, 1441 safety centres hosted more than 233,000 displaced individuals. By May 2026, the SLSC Sector activities had reached over [96,000](#) people, under the Humanitarian Priorities Plan (HPP). As of April 2026, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) [reported](#) that almost **65,000 HHs** remain displaced from their homes. The Post Disaster Needs Assessment ([PDNA](#)) calculated that the cyclone **destroyed 5,945 and partially damaged 113,777 houses**, representing 2.14% of the total housing stock, due to flooding in low-lying zones, and landslides in the Central hilly regions, including Plantation Estate areas. The Government [extended](#) the State of Public Emergency on 28th May, 2026.

Landslides, High-risk Areas, HLP and Vulnerabilities Intersection

The landslide affected areas were prioritized by the SLSC Sector, given the levels of destruction, and the widespread ongoing relocations from high-risk areas, in line with National Building Research Institute (NBRI) [categorizations](#). Cyclone Ditwah underscored the critical need to address long-standing environmental factors and Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) vulnerabilities intersecting with disaster risk in the Central Region. Landslides are an inherent hazard in the central hills; however, risk exposure is heavily exacerbated by historical socio-economic factors and land allocation legacies that concentrated settlements and worker housing in high-risk areas. In April 2026, the HCT established district coordination and focal points in the 4 most affected districts, namely Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kegalle and Kandy.

Safety Centres and Informal Settlements

As of June 2026, 16 official safety centres (SC) remain operational hosting over 600 HHs, the majority in Badulla District. The people remaining at safety centres are considered the most vulnerable, due to their lack of community hosting, rental or return options. Informal settlements also remain, with groups sized from 3-70HHs across the Central Region. Wash, shelter, and protection risks persist, and current tented and make-shift shelter solutions are unsuitable for the current monsoon rains.

From Transitional to Durable Solutions

The rental support programme has been extended until November, with over 6,700HH in receipt across the 4 Priority Districts¹. There is variance² between the HHs in receipt of this allowance versus displaced HHs numbers. In Nuwara Eliya, 1 in 20 displaced HHs are in receipt of the rental allowance reflecting a high hosting, high return rate or barriers to access. In Kandy, there are more HHs in receipt of the allowance than the Ditwah-displaced HH numbers show, reflecting the extensive landslide high-risk zone categorizations in this district, requiring evacuations from these areas, as reflected in the NBRI reports.

A Transitional Shelter model and [guidance](#) was released by the Government in March 2026. There are commitments to provide over 1100 transitional shelters, across Badulla, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya, with construction labour provided by Defence Forces. As of June 2026, the construction of 135 TS's is ongoing.

An ambitious Resettlement Programme was announced in December 2025 by the Government, and the Guidelines³ were published in January, comprising primarily of cash grants for owner-driven housing, for partially damaged, fully damaged and HHs in high-risk areas, required to be relocated.

¹ As per information provided by District focal points and District Authorities, in June 2026.

² Displaced HHs versus HHs in receipt of Rental Allowance Proportions- Nuwara Eliya: 1 in 20HH; Kegalle: 1 in 10HH; Badulla: 1 in 5HH; Kandy: 1+ in 1HH.

³ [Guidelines for Implementing the Resettlement Program for Families Whose Houses Were Fully Damaged Due to Floods, Landslides, Other Disasters and Families Identified as Living in High-Risk Landslide Zones Caused by Cyclone "Ditwah"](#)

13-Point Call to Action- June 2026 (Follow-on from the *March Advocacy Note*)

1. **Ensure Minimum Habitability and Safety:** While reliance on safety centres and the number of informal settlements has reduced, minimum habitability and protection standards must be maintained to closure, and site management including consistent presence, clear roles and responsibilities, and strengthened coordination at site level to improve service delivery, accountability, and oversight must be strengthened. Future readiness planning of existing and planned SCs, Evacuation sites, and Transitional Shelter Settlements as future SCs, will also form part of the de-activation plan.
2. **Undertake Transitional Shelter (TS) Model Interim Review:** TS's are not intended to delay or replace Permanent Housing but to support HHs through the process. For HH expected to have secure land tenure, Core Shelter solutions should be prioritised. An interim review of the suitability and environmental impact of the current TS model, following first phase completion, is recommended, to ensure lessons learned are captured before beginning the next phase, and model readiness for future emergencies. SLSC technical partners have raised concerns regarding the size, cost, resource-intensity and environmental sustainability of the model. Environmental screening⁴ should be an integral part of all assistance.
3. **Ensure Rental Programme Access and Sustainability:** Rental assistance should be complemented by monitoring of Housing, Land and Property (HLP) conditions, and a clear exit strategy that enables households to progressively assume rental costs until they can safely return or access a durable solution, thereby reducing the risk of renewed displacement. Additionally, for those entitled but facing barriers to accessing the scheme, there should be pathways available and supports given, especially for vulnerable HHs.
4. **Scale-up support for HHs in Partially Damaged Houses:** A significant proportion of affected HH's remain in partially damaged or structurally compromised homes, facing heightened exposure to future shocks. Scaling up full household-level damage assessments and shelter repair assistance, combined with technical guidance, is essential to stabilise housing conditions and reduce the risk of secondary displacement, and pathways available where homes unfeasible to brought back to a habitable and safe condition.
5. **Improve pathways to safe housing for affected HHs in Landslide "Medium Risk" Zones:** Support is needed with awareness on nature-based solutions and risk-reduction interventions to improve safety for HHs who must remain in NBRI-classified "Medium-risk" zones. Additionally, where HHs have left their homes in medium-risk zones due to the home environment becoming uninhabitable, or where access or surrounding area damages has diminished the home's safety, case-management and referral pathways must be available to them, to reduce prolonged displacement or returns to unsafe housing conditions.



Image 1. An 8HH Makeshift-tent settlement in Ranthanawatte, Kandy, part of a wider community in similar shelter conditions, awaiting completion of TS's. (Photo: Hazel Mealy, June 2026)



Images 2 and 3. Examples of the 63 TS, in Ranthanawatte- Expected Completion June 2026. (Photo: Hazel Mealy, June 2026)

⁴ NEAT+ or Similar: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/nexus-environmental-assessment-tool-neat-enesfr>

6. **Transparency on permanent housing (PH) plans, phasing strategy and expected timelines will improve accountability, manage expectations and enable transition plans to be put in place.** The shift towards permanent housing solutions is welcomed by the SLSC Sector, but we urge increased acknowledgement that the process of relocation and reconstruction requires adequate time and resources for sustainable and successful outcomes.
7. **Outstanding barriers to accessing the rebuilding programme must be addressed,** particularly those related to choice of relocation site, housing options, HLP issues as outlined by the [HLP working group](#) gap matrices for Urban, Rural and Plantation areas. Promoting flexible and inclusive eligibility criteria is essential to ensure that vulnerable households are not excluded from recovery support.
8. **Scale-up [socio-technical](#) facilitation and community mobilization for Owner-Driven Housing:** Targeted support, advice, guidance and accompaniment should be available to vulnerable HHs to ensure maximum house completion rates and quality. Gaps exist in the implementation modality at ground level for CBOs to support with constructing houses for the most vulnerable HHs, as noted in the operational [guidelines](#).
9. For households unable to safely return and in newly classified no-build/ high-risk zones, **site-based relocation solutions must be prioritised,** including the identification and development of safe, serviced land with access to livelihoods and basic services. This requires coordinated planning and sustained investment to ensure that relocation is viable, dignified, and sustainable.
10. Across all interventions, **shelter responses must be systematically integrated with site planning and basic infrastructure.** Addressing gaps in drainage, sanitation, accessibility, and lighting is critical to reducing health and protection risks and ensuring that shelter assistance translates into safe living environments.
11. Ensuring that return and recovery processes are sustainable requires **accelerated hazard verification and risk-informed decision-making.** Strengthening technical capacity and coordination for landslide and flood risk assessments will enable timely and safe decisions on return, relocation, or reconstruction, reducing uncertainty and delays.
12. To break cycles of secondary displacement and safeguard current recovery investments, **housing interventions must systematically integrate optimal [nature-based](#) Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approaches, ensuring reconstructed settlements are resilient against future cyclonic and environmental shocks.** We support, for example, the scale-up of the NBRI-led Pilot Community Based Landslide Risk Reduction [Initiative](#).
13. Finally, **community engagement and accountability must be strengthened** throughout the response. Clear, transparent, and multilingual communication, alongside accessible feedback and grievance mechanisms, is essential to ensure that affected populations can make informed decisions and actively participate in shaping their recovery pathways, with the support and involvement of local CSOs, CBOs, and ground-level partners. Community knowledge is also key to managing landslides and other environmental risks.



Image 4. Partially damaged House, Concordia Area, Nuwara Eliya-Affected; HH hosted by family members nearby. (Photo: Hazel Mealy, June 2026)



Image 5. A 3HH (7 Adults, 5 Children) Tented Settlement in Concordia, Nuwara Eliya, of families from Medium-risk areas, with partially destroyed homes (Photo: Hazel Mealy, June 2026)



Image 6. A voluntarily evacuated partially-damaged home in a medium-risk area, indicating pre-existing vulnerabilities (Photo: Hazel Mealy, June 2026)