



Minutes | Meeting of HLP Working Group meeting

Shelter, Land, and Site Coordination Sector

13th March 2026 | 15:30-17:00 hrs | Hybrid: Online (Ms Teams) & IFRC office

Participants: Sector Co-leads IFRC, IOM; HLP Technical Advisor (UN-Habitat), members and partners of the Working Group (list attached)

- **Formation and Objectives of HLP Working Group:** Sandra, Angela, Aziza, and other participants discussed establishing a technical working group focused on housing, land, and property (HLP) issues, aiming to coordinate expertise from multiple agencies and set clear deliverables for an eight-week period.
 - **Working Group Structure:** Sandra explained the purpose of forming a focused, operational working group under the cluster, emphasizing voluntary participation and technical expertise from various agencies, including IFRC, IOM, UN Habitat, and sector partner and new individual experts. The group aims to connect humanitarian and development partners, align with government policies, and remain solution-oriented.
 - **Roles and Deliverables:** The group intends to assign roles and workspaces, with deliverables expected within 10-12 days. Sandra highlighted the importance of disseminating outputs to government counterparts and maintaining a technical, practical approach to support ongoing response and recovery efforts.
 - **Time-Bound Modality:** The working group will operate for eight weeks, meeting every two weeks, with the possibility to expand participation as needed. Sandra stressed the need for clear deliverables and an exit strategy, ensuring the group's work is actionable and handed over appropriately.
 - **Terms of Reference and Work Plan:** Participants were asked to review the draft Terms of Reference (TORS) and contribute feedback. Rasika volunteered to help draft initial recommendations and documentation, and Sandra mentioned setting up a repository for relevant documents and a dedicated online workspace.
- **Key HLP Challenges in Response and Recovery:** Aziza, Gowthaman, Nadesan, Antony, and others identified and discussed major HLP challenges, including land tenure documentation loss, landlessness, displacement, tenure security for female-headed households, intra-community tensions, and complexities in reconstruction, drawing from field assessments and past experiences.
 - **Land Tenure and Documentation:** Aziza outlined urgent issues such as loss of land tenure and civil documentation, lack of legal tenure, and landlessness, especially affecting renters, communities from urban informal settlements and plantation communities. Delays in documentation issuance and lack of awareness on access processes were highlighted as barriers to assistance.
 - **Displacement and Red Zone Restrictions:** Safety-induced displacement, particularly in landslide and flood-affected areas, was discussed. The conflict between the right to return and safety, scarcity of suitable land for resettlement,



and challenges in negotiating land release with plantation companies were emphasized.

- **Tenure Security for Female-Headed Households:** Aziza and Sandra addressed power imbalances and exclusion of women from assistance due to customary laws and administrative practices, referencing past mistakes during tsunami recovery and the need for due diligence in shelter allocation.
- **Community Tensions and Informal Settlements:** Overcrowding in safety centers and the rise of informal settlements by displaced communities were reported, leading to increased risk of eviction, protection issues, and conflicts within and between communities.
- **Reconstruction Complexities and Funding:** Delays in land release, unclear entitlements, and insufficient reconstruction guidelines were noted. Aziza estimated a need for \$800-900 million for housing reconstruction, with current funding constraints and global challenges impacting progress.
- **Policy, Coordination, and Government Engagement:** partners discussed gaps in government policy, lack of clarity on entitlements, coordination challenges among agencies, and the need to strengthen government capacity and community consultation in HLP response.
 - **Policy Gaps and Entitlements:** Gowthaman highlighted the lack of clear government policy on land alienation and tenure in plantation areas, noting slow progress on consultative committees and pending circulars to clarify entitlements for affected communities.
 - **Coordination Challenges:** Participants noted poor vertical and horizontal coordination among government, UN, and NGOs, with insufficient funding and capacity for local organizations. Partners emphasized the need for improved coordination and capacity building of government counterparts and the newly appointed Presidential TaskForce for sustainable response and lessons from previous large-scale reconstruction efforts in country.
 - **Community Consultation:** The importance of involving affected communities in site selection and resettlement decisions was stressed, referencing past failures in relocation and the risk of creating unused 'ghost' communities if consultation is lacking.
 - **Government Capacity Building:** OSTI and others discussed the need to engage and build capacity within government organizations, such as the Housing Authority, and avoid excluding them from reconstruction processes. Recommendations included recruiting technical officers and providing tailored training on owners and community-driven reconstruction (capitalised in several guidances and tools used worldwide)
- **Immediate Actions and Advocacy Priorities:** Sandra, Rasika, Antony, and others outlined immediate actions for the working group, including mapping ongoing initiatives, developing practical guidance, advocating for grievance mechanisms, and supporting documentation and rental assistance for affected populations.



- **Mapping and Red Flagging Initiatives:** Sandra proposed mapping ongoing initiatives and identifying priority HLP issues affecting shelter recovery, with partners supporting follow-up on safety centers and displacement assessments to address urgent needs.
- **Practical Guidance and Coordination Tools:** The group aims to develop guidance notes and coordination tools on topics such as land access, tenure security, and urban HLP issues, leveraging expertise and documentation from participants.
- **Grievance Mechanisms and Advocacy:** Advocacy for grievance mechanisms to address ad hoc decision-making and exclusion from grants was discussed, with suggestions to surpass local administrative barriers and support renters and vulnerable groups.
- **Documentation and Rental Support:** Antony described plans for documentation camps and extended rental support for those in safety shelters, requesting input from the group to develop guidance and coordinate with the cash working group for inclusion of rental in the minimum expenditure basket.
- **Next Steps and Meeting Logistics:** Sandra confirmed the group will meet every two weeks, with Friday afternoons proposed, and outlined plans for a shared online workspace, [document repository](#), and follow-up on deliverables and government engagement.
 - **Meeting Schedule:** The HLP working group will convene every second Friday afternoon, with a hybrid format and online document sharing. Sandra will send a save-the-date and manage logistics for ongoing collaboration.
 - **Document Repository and Online Workspace:** A dedicated section on the [shelter land and cluster website](#) will host key documents, work plans, TORS, and participant lists, allowing for ongoing exchange and updates between meetings.
- **Legal Aid and Civil Documentation Support:** Sandra and Aziza noted UNDP's legal aid initiatives in Badulla and Kandy, focusing on civil documentation and land entitlements, and discussed potential collaboration and expansion to other districts.
 - **UNDP Legal Aid Projects:** UNDP is conducting legal aid activities in select districts, addressing new questions related to civil documentation and land entitlements post-disaster, with relevant government departments involved and potential for broader engagement. UNDP to be invited to the Working Group.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Terms of Reference Validation:** Review and provide feedback on the draft Terms of Reference for the HLP working group before next week's meeting. (All working group members) > by Wednesday 18.03.2026
- **Work Plan Development:** Draft a detailed eight-week work plan for the HLP working group based on priority topics and deliverables discussed. (Aziza/Sandra)
- **Initial Recommendations Drafting:** Prepare initial recommendations for the working group based on the meeting discussion and share with the group. (Rasika)
- **Document Repository Setup:** Upload key documents, work plan, Terms of Reference, and participant list to the dedicated HLP working group section of the shelter cluster website. (Sandra/Aziza)



- **Identify and invite Government counterparts/ Presidential TF members?** Connection via the CSO representatives (Gowthaman/USF and Iromi/Urban Lab)
- **UNDP Legal Aid Engagement:** Invite a UNDP focal point to brief the working group on ongoing and planned legal aid activities in affected districts. (Aziza)
- **Guidance Note on Documentation:** Develop a guidance note outlining required documentation for affected people and referral pathways for support, to assist CRS and other partners. (Antony)
- **Rental Support Advocacy:** Refer the need to include rental support in the minimum expenditure basket to the cash working group and follow up for integration. (Sandra/cash working group contact)
- **Colombo Community Status Report Sharing:** Share the trilingual status report from the Colombo Community Leaders network with the working group for reference on urban issues and recommendations. (Colombo Urban Lab)
- **Meeting Schedule Confirmation:** Send a save-the-date and confirm the biweekly Friday 3:00–4:30pm meeting schedule for the HLP working group with all members. (Sandra).
- **Next meeting to be held hybrid:** Friday 27th of March.

Resources shared (Hardcopies are available on request):

1. Owner-driven Reconstruction Guidelines (ODHR) by IFRC: learning from Sri Lanka's owner and community driven response [Sans titre-1](#)
2. Sri Lanka Flood response; case study on Transitional shelter and CSO support (UNHabitat), find in Shelter Projects and Aziza would translate this piece

[SP17-18_A24-SriLanka-2017.pdf](#)

3. All under one roof: disability inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies

[All Under One Roof: Disability-inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies | IFRC](#)

4. Shelter safety Handbook and PASSA (key simple to explain principles to build safer for floods and landslides, easy to understand and train in situ)

[Participatory Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness \(PASSA\) Manual | IFRC](#)

5. [305400-Shelter_safety_handbook-EN-LR.pdf](#)

6. Building, Owning, Belonging: from assisting owner-driven reconstruction to co-production in Sri Lanka, India and beyond

[NO MERGE_FINAL](#)

Minimum elements of community. based land mapping approaches in post disaster context

7. [Minimum elements for community-based land mapping approaches in post disaster contexts - IFRC - 2015 | Shelter Cluster](#)

8. Rapid tenure assessment guidelines for post-disaster response planning

[Rapid Tenure Assessment Guidelines – IFRC – 2016 \(English\) | Shelter Cluster](#)

Annex 1: Detailed list of Participants



	Name and agency	In person/ Virtual
1	Aziza Usoof, UNHABITAT Technical partner/co-convener HLPWG	In person
2	Sandra D'Urzo, IFRC, Sector co-coordinator	In person
3	Angela Osti, IOM, Operations Coordinator	In Person
4	Harshini Halangode , Director, UNHABITAT SL	Virtual
5	Nasedan Suresh , UVA Shakti Foundation	Virtual
6	Gowthaman, CSO Representative Pres. Taskforce	Virtual
7	Rasika Mendis, attorney, independent expert land rights	Virtual
8	Chularatna , Sevanatha	In Person
9	Anthony Vivek, CRS	Virtual
10	Vincika Desaram, UN Res co office human rights	Virtual
11	Ranjit Kap, Sevanantha resource centre	Virtual
12	Upali Sumitrehrej, Jana Rakula (CLM and Kandy)	Virtual
13	Amr Saeed , Qatar aid	Virtual
14	Vincika De Saram, Associate Human Rights Officer, UN RCO	Virtual
15	Ted, UN-Habitat, volunteer	In person
16	Jarathna, expert urban planner , CRRP	In person
17	Iromi Perera, Urban Lab Colombo, CSO rep. Presidential TF	In person