



## Minutes | Meeting of HLP Working Group – Meeting No. #2

### Shelter, Land, and Site Coordination Sector

27th March 2026 | 15:30 – 17:00 | Hybrid (Online via MS Teams & IFRC office)

#### Co-Chairs:

- Sandra D’Urzo, IFRC (Sector Co-coordinator)
- Aziza Usoof, UN-Habitat (HLP Technical Advisor / Co-convenor)

#### 1. Executive Summary & Strategic Roadmap

**Overview:** The HLP Working Group has identified a critical gap between high-level policy and field-level recovery. To bridge this, the group is transitioning from assessment to the rapid production of functional tools designed to resolve land and property bottlenecks within an eight-week window.

Meeting	Date	Key Outcomes
Meeting #1	13th March 2026	Introductions and identification of HLP issues and goals of the Working Group
Meeting #2	27th March 2026	Identified 2 workstreams to move from "Problems to Solutions"

#### Draft Problem Statement (as discussed):

*"Current recovery efforts for post-Cyclone Ditwah housing follow a top-down, bureaucratic model that fails to account for the diverse legal and practical realities of affected populations. This misalignment results in acute financial and housing insecurity for vulnerable communities in urban informal settlements, rural reservations, and tea plantations."*

#### Operational Framework – "Problems to Solutions":

To move from identified barriers to scalable solutions, the group will utilize a dual-track approach:

- **Workstream 1 (Policy & Framing):** Codifying HLP issues across three key contexts (Urban, Rural, and Plantation).
- **Workstream 2 (Practical Implementation):** Developing "Referral & Documentation Maps" to empower field teams and displaced families to navigate specific authorizations required for permanent relocation or rebuilding.



### Next Steps & Immediate Milestones:

- Finalize contextual guidance for the three identified contexts (Urban, Rural, Plantation).
- Formalize referral pathways defining which authorities deliver specific land authorizations.
- Support advocacy efforts at the upcoming meeting with the Indian High Commission.

### 2. Welcome and Introductions

Sandra D'Urzo (IFRC) opened the meeting, welcoming participants and introducing the collaborative leadership structure with Aziza Usoof (UN-Habitat) and Muhammad Maaji (CO Coordinator for Sheltered Lands and Sites).

Gowthaman shared ongoing Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) efforts to address housing needs via the "*Rebuilding Sri Lanka*" Presidential Taskforce, emphasizing the importance of aligning working group outputs with national processes.

### 3. Meeting Objectives & Context

The primary goal of the session was to translate technical expertise into actionable deliverables within a five-to-eight-week timeline. Sandra emphasized the need to move from discussion to rapid production of functional tools.

Insights were drawn from:

- Recent field visits to affected districts.
- Internal agency efforts to address transitional housing needs.
- Lessons learned from past large-scale reconstruction in Sri Lanka.

### 4. Field Visit Insights

Sandra presented observations from recent field visits, highlighting the case of **Selva Kumari**, a mother living in an informal settlement. This case illustrated several systemic challenges:

- **Lack of financial compensation** for households in designated "red zones," leaving families in limbo without resources for relocation or rebuilding.
- **Extreme legal hurdles** for residents in informal settlements seeking to prove occupancy or access assistance.
- **Poor living conditions** in temporary safety centers, with no clear pathway to permanent housing or secure tenure.



Participants agreed that such cases are not isolated but representative of broader systemic failures requiring urgent HLP interventions.

## 5. Proposed Work Streams

To address the challenges identified, the Working Group established two distinct but complementary work streams:

Work Stream	Focus	Key Activities	Lead(s)
<b>Workstream 1: Framing Guidance (Policy)</b>	Developing high-level guidance on HLP issues across three contexts	Codify issues per geography; draft guidance notes; align with government policy	Aziza, Rasika, Gowthaman
<b>Workstream 2: Practical Documentation &amp; Referral Pathways (Implementation)</b>	Creating "how-to" guides for field teams and affected populations	Map documentation requirements; define referral pathways; develop do-no-harm guidance	CRS / IOM

### **Contextual Framework (applicable to both workstreams):**

The group agreed that HLP solutions must be tailored to three distinct geographic and tenure contexts:

- 1. Urban/peri-urban (Colombo, Gampaha, secondary cities):** Dense informal settlements, urban regeneration pressures, rental housing, state/private land complexity.
- 2. Rural/reservation areas (river basins, NBRO red zones, state land):** Buffer zones, environmental restrictions, agricultural livelihoods, flood-prone village patterns.
- 3. Tea plantation areas (Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kandy, Kegalle):** Estate line housing, plantation company land, worker rights vs. land ownership, landslide risks.

## 6. Workstream 1: Policy & Framing Guidance

### **Discussion**

Gowthaman, supported by Rasika Mendis and Aziza, outlined the scope of Workstream 1. The group discussed the need for immediate, high-priority products to support caseloads requiring urgent HLP clarity.

### **Summary:**

### **Proposed 6-week deliverables (tailored by geography):**



- A clear guidance note (max 10) outlining HLP challenges and recommended policy approaches for each of the three contexts.
- A 2-page executive summary (or a matrix format) for government counterparts and donors.
- A set of advocacy messages addressing gaps in government policy on land alienation and tenure.

#### **Discussion points:**

- Agree on the scope and format of the guidance note.
- Identify which partners have field data or caseloads to inform each geographic context.
- Ensure alignment with the Presidential Taskforce framework.

**Decision:** Aziza, Rasika, and Gowthaman will co-lead drafting, with input from all partners. A draft will be circulated before Meeting #3.

### **7. Workstream 2: Practical Documentation & Referral Pathways**

#### **Discussion**

CRS and IOM co-led this discussion, focusing on developing practical tools for field teams and affected populations.

#### **Summary:**

#### **Core components of the 6-week deliverable:**

##### **1. Documentation Guidance:**

- Minimum acceptable proof of occupancy (deeds, permits, affidavits, Grama Niladhari letters).
- Special provisions for women-headed households and cases of missing male titleholders.
- Estate-specific documentation (line room allocation letters, company records).

##### **2. Referral Pathways:**

- Clear mapping of which authorities (local government, Land Commissioner, plantation companies, etc.) handle specific land authorizations.
- Step-by-step guidance for affected persons to navigate the system.

##### **3. Do-No-Harm Guidance for Agencies:**

- When to step back from a case.



- What not to promise to affected communities.
- Basic risk indicators for HLP-related protection issues.

**Discussion points:**

- Agree on scope and format (4–6 page guidance note + 1-page visual pathway).
- Confirm co-lead roles and identify 2–3 additional drafting team members.

**Decision:** CRS and IOM will lead drafting, with support from UNDP (legal aid expertise) and UN-Habitat. A draft will be circulated before Meeting #3.

**8. Ways of Working & Timelines**

The group agreed on the following operational modalities:

Item	Agreement
<b>Meeting cadence</b>	Every two weeks (Friday afternoons, hybrid format)
<b>Information products</b>	Google Drive repository + monthly update to Shelter, Land, and Site Coordination Sector
<b>Geographic representation</b>	Ensure all three contexts (urban/rural/plantation) are covered in every product
<b>Government engagement</b>	Engage local and national authorities on draft products for validation
<b>Linkages</b>	UNDP has commenced documentation assistance – to be coordinated with Workstream 2

**Donor Dialogue Alert:**

Sandra announced that HLP Working Group co-chairs will use two upcoming donor briefings to highlight the ambition and resource needs of the HLP Working Group, particularly regarding funding for documentation camps and rental support.

**9. Action Items**



Action Item	Responsible	Deadline
Draft Framing Guidance (Workstream 1) across urban, rural, and tea plantation contexts	Aziza / Rasika / Gowthaman (with Sandra's support)	Next Meeting (TBA)
Lead Practical Guidance (Workstream 2) on pathways, documentation, and referrals	CRS (Antony) / IOM (Sushil)	Next Meeting (TBA)
Coordinate online working group workspace on behalf of IFRC	IFRC (Sandra)	1 Week
Invite UNDP focal point to contribute legal aid expertise to Workstream 2	Aziza	Before next meeting
Schedule and confirm Meeting #3 date (biweekly Friday, 3:00–4:30 PM)	Sandra	Within 1 week

## 10. Closing

Sandra concluded the meeting by emphasizing the urgency of these deliverables to support current caseloads. The group reaffirmed its commitment to a solution-oriented, time-bound approach with clear handover to government and humanitarian partners.

The next meeting will focus on initial draft outcomes from both workstreams.





## Annex 1: List of Participants

Name	Agency/Organization	In Person / Virtual
Sandra D'Urzo	IFRC (Sector Co-coordinator)	In Person
Aziza Usoof	UN-Habitat (HLP Technical Advisor / Co-convener)	In Person
Angela Osti	IOM (Emergency Coordinator)	In Person
Muhammad Maaji	Shelter, Land, and Site Coordination Sector (CO Coordinator)	In Person
Gowthaman	Local Civil Society Collective / CSO Representative to Presidential Taskforce	In person
Rasika Mendis	Independent Consultant (Land Rights Expert)	In Person
Aeneas	IOM (IM Associate, SLSC Sector)	Virtual
Todd Cracknell	UN-Habitat	In person
Harshini Halangode	UN-Habitat SL	Virtual
Sushil	IOM (Program Officer, SNFI)	Virtual
Anthony Vivek	CRS	Virtual
Mr. H. M. Dayananda	Jana Rakula	Virtual



<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency/Organization</b>	<b>In Person / Virtual</b>
Amr Saeed	Qatar Charity	Virtual